

ANNEXES

FINAL EVALUATION UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK (UNSDCF) FOR MONTENEGRO (2023-2027)

*Prepared by UNSDCF Final Evaluation Team:
Tomislav Novovic, Team Leader
Olivera Komar, Senior Evaluation Expert*

*September 2026
Podgorica, Montenegro*

1 ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of Documents Consulted	4
Annex 2: Theory Of Change	7
Annex 3: List of interviewed and consulted stakeholders	11
Annex 4: Interview Statistics	14
Annex 5: Anonymous survey	15
Annex 6: List of interviews by institution type	16
Annex 7: Agenda of In-Country Visit and Meetings	20
Annex 8: Final Evaluation Terms of Reference	22
Annex 9: Inception report	38

ANNEX 1: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

UNSDCF core and coordination documents

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. Interagency groups functioning: Update (Internal working document).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. Outcome indicators (Data set).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UN Cooperation Framework coordination and management arrangements.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UNCT Montenegro disability inclusion employment statement.
- United Nations & Government of Montenegro. (2022). United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (n.d.). UNSDCF governance and management arrangements (Internal working document).
- UN Country Team Montenegro. (2026). National Partners Survey Report: Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027 (40 respondents; internal/confidential evaluation survey output).
- UN Country Team Montenegro. (2026). UN Management and Programme Survey Report: Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027 (18 UN programme-management staff respondents; internal/confidential evaluation survey output).

Joint programme evaluation reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026, January). Final evaluation report: EmpowHER joint programme.
- United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2024, August). Final evaluation report: UNPRPD joint programme - Montenegro.

Agency programme documents

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2023). Country Programming Framework for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- International Labour Organization. (2023). Decent Work Country Programme for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2022). Country Programme Document for Montenegro (2023–2027).
- United Nations Children’s Fund. (2022). UNICEF Country Programme Document for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). Strategic partnership framework.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). UNODC October public version (v. 2.0).

Business Operations Strategy

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026). Business Operations Strategy review 2026.

Common Country Analysis (CCA) and SDG policy briefs

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2021). Common Country Analysis: Montenegro.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2022). Common Country Analysis: 2022 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). Common Country Analysis: 2023 update.

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). Common Country Analysis: 2024 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). Common Country Analysis: 2025 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (n.d.). SDG policy brief 1: SDG financing.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (n.d.). SDG policy brief 2: Is Montenegro's North at risk of being left behind?
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (n.d.). SDG policy brief 3: Poverty and child poverty in Montenegro.

European Union progress reports

- European Commission. (2023). Montenegro 2023 report.
- European Commission. (2024). Montenegro 2024 report.
- European Commission. (2025). Montenegro 2025 report.

Flagship analyses and thematic studies

- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Fourth environmental performance review of Montenegro.
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. (2024). Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Montenegro. United Nations.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2024). Compendium of broadband mapping practices.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2023). Digital development country profile: Montenegro.
- DigitAll Montenegro. . Assessment of e-government and e-services in local self-government units in Montenegro.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026). EU accession and SDGs convergence analysis.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (n.d.). Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Montenegro.
- International Labour Organisation. (n.d.). Gender pay gap analysis.
- UN Women. Gender-responsive budgeting in Montenegro.
- Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. (2024). GREVIO baseline evaluation report on Montenegro. Council of Europe.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2024). Montenegro national broadband plan.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2025). Public early warning systems in the Western Balkans.
- United Nations Institute for Training and Research & International Telecommunication Union. (2023). Regional e-waste monitor.
- Committee on Enforced Disappearances. (2025). Review of Montenegro (Working document). United Nations.
- Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers. (2024). Country visit report: Montenegro. United Nations Human Rights Council.
- Human Rights Council. (2023). Summary of the Universal Periodic Review: Montenegro. United Nations.
- United Nations Human Rights Committee. (2025, May 7). Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Montenegro (CCPR/C/MNE/CO/2). United Nations.
- Montenegro: Media Freedom Rapid Response Mission Report. (2024). SafeJournalists Network and partners. Available at: <https://srfreedex.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/MNE-1-2024.pdf>
- United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures Communication AL MNE 1/2024 (gId=30354).. <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30354>
- United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures Communication AL MNE 2/2024 (gId=30330). <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30330>
- United Nations Human Rights Committee. (2025, May 7). Concluding observations on the second

- periodic report of Montenegro (CCPR/C/MNE/CO/2). United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025). Gender equality profile: Montenegro.
- United Nations Office for Project Services. (n.d.). Analysis of digital flows in Montenegro.

Joint Country Steering Committee

- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2022). JCSC 2022 minutes (Internal meeting minutes).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2024). JCSC 2024 minutes (Internal meeting minutes).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (n.d.). JCSC members (Internal working document).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2025). JCSC 2025 minutes (Internal working document).

Joint Work Plans

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023/2024). Joint Work Plan 2023/2024.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). Joint Work Plan 2025.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026/2027). Joint Work Plan 2026/2027.

Montenegro Acceleration Fund

- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. (2025). 2025 MAF report.
- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. (2024). MAF progress report 2024.
- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. (n.d.). MAF terms of reference.

Results Groups

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025, February). Članovi i ko-sazivači rezultatskih grupa (Members and co-conveners of Results Groups, internal document in Montenegrin).

UN SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2023.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2024.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2025.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (n.d.). UNCT Montenegro UN-SWAP report with action plan (final).

Annual Results Reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). UN country results report 2023 (English web edition).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). UN Montenegro annual results report 2024.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). UN Montenegro annual results report 2025.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2023). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2023.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2024). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2024.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2025.
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2023). UNICEF annual report - Montenegro 2023.
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2024). UNICEF Montenegro annual report 2024 (final, English).
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2025). UNICEF Montenegro annual report summary 2025.

ANNEX 2: THEORY OF CHANGE

Recognising the interconnected nature of Montenegro’s development challenges, the UNSDCF 2023–2027 addresses economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions in an integrated manner, while embedding the principles of sustainability, inclusion, resilience, gender equality and Leaving No One Behind across the full results chain. The overall theory of change, as presented in the approved UNSDCF, posits that if Montenegro advances inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability, human capital development, reducing vulnerability and social inclusion, and social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights, then the country will reduce multidimensional and income poverty and accelerate progress towards a sustainable, resource-efficient and innovation-based economy, with an improved state of the environment and increased respect for human rights, social justice and inclusion of the most vulnerable by 2027. The UNSDCF graphically represents this overall logic on page 14, alongside the cross-cutting themes of LNOB, GE&WE, EU accession, disaggregated data and digital transformation.

The Theory of Change is rooted in the CCA and in the consultation process that shaped the Cooperation Framework. The UNSDCF states that it was developed through the internally prepared Common Country Analysis and consultations with government, civil society, development partners, member states, and targeted consultations with women and youth. Technical consultations culminated in the Strategic Prioritisation Retreat and a high-level Strategic Prioritisation Workshop, which endorsed the strategic priorities. The earlier MAPS exercise also played an important role by demonstrating strong synergies between the 2030 Agenda and EU accession, particularly through Chapters 27, 23 and 19. This means that the ToC was not framed only as a UN programming device, but as a strategic articulation of how SDG progress, human rights obligations and accession-related reforms could reinforce one another.

The ToC is built around the understanding that Montenegro has already made substantial development progress, but that a number of structural bottlenecks continue to slow progress and reproduce exclusion. The UNSDCF identifies these bottlenecks as being typical of an upper-middle-income, EU-candidate country, and particularly linked to the cross-cutting issue of governance and institutions. Weak implementation capacity, incomplete policy execution, gaps in data use, insufficient coordination, uneven institutional performance and weaknesses in accountability affect all three strategic priorities. The Theory of Change therefore assumes that progress in Montenegro does not depend only on sector interventions, but on whether governance and institutional constraints can be addressed in ways that support the economy, environment, social sectors, and the realization of rights.

The UNSDCF identifies three broad **areas of opportunity** that anchor this logic:

- (i) promoting economic transformation and environmental sustainability;
- (ii) investing in human and social capital; and
- (iii) enhancing governance and institutional capacities.

These opportunity areas are clearly articulated in the country context and ToC narrative and together explain why the UNSDCF is organized around the three strategic priorities. The underlying premise is that vulnerability and poverty can only be reduced in a durable way if these three dimensions progress simultaneously and in a mutually reinforcing manner.

For evaluative purposes, the original Cooperation Framework Theory of Change was reconstructed to show explicitly how entity Country Programme Document outputs, Joint Work Plan outputs and joint-programme or pooled-fund outputs are expected to generate institutional and behavioural changes and contribute to the four Cooperation Framework outcomes. The reconstruction also makes the principal assumptions and risks available for testing across the evaluation criteria.

RECONSTRUCTED EVALUATION-USE THEORY OF CHANGE

How entity and joint outputs contribute to Cooperation Framework outcomes

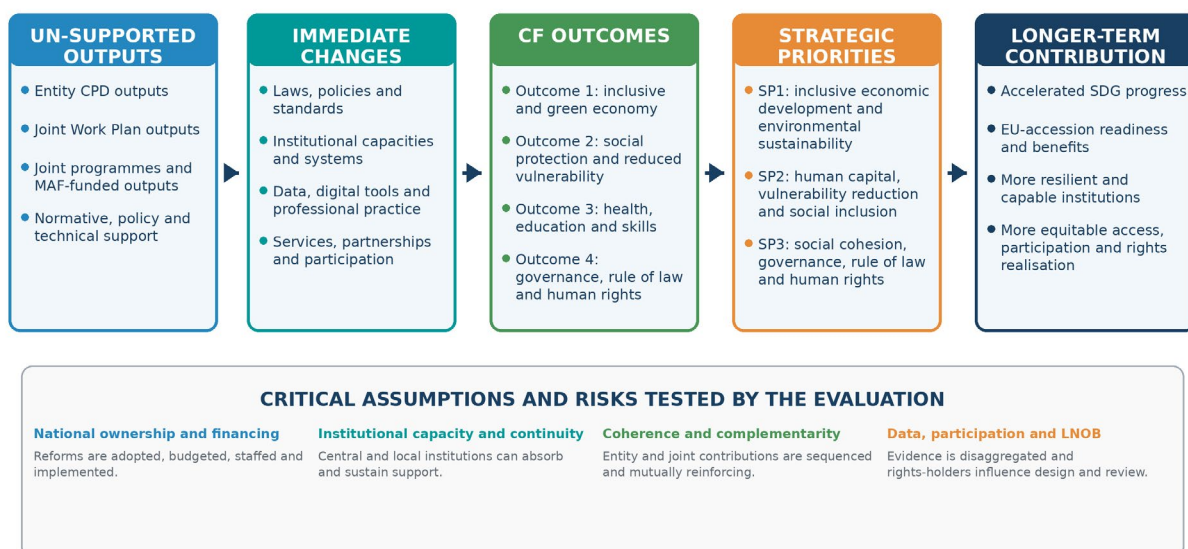


Figure 31. Reconstructed evaluation-use Theory of Change linking entity and joint outputs to Cooperation Framework outcomes.

The inception phase included a preliminary analysis of the soundness, relevance and evaluability of the UNSDCF Theory of Change and the broader results chain. This preliminary review focused on whether the original theoretical ToC was conceptually robust, whether it remained relevant in light of evolving country conditions, and whether it required major reconstruction for the purposes of the final evaluation. The assessment also drew on the guidance requirement that the ToC serves as the key reference framework for the evaluation and that the evaluation team should determine whether it is sufficiently articulated for selecting and analysing outcomes..

The analytical basis for the design of the ToC

The preliminary assessment is that the original theoretical ToC is **sound, relevant and strategically coherent**. First, it is clearly aligned with Montenegro's national development priorities, SDG commitments, international human rights obligations and the EU accession process. The UNSDCF explicitly links its priorities to the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the 2030 Agenda, EU accession requirements and a wide set of national reform strategies. This gives the ToC a strong policy anchor and ensures that it is not detached from the country's actual reform trajectory.

Second, the ToC is strong because it is based on an explicit diagnosis of **root causes**, not just sector outputs. The central theory is that Montenegro's remaining gaps and vulnerabilities are sustained by weak institutional performance, uneven governance quality, exclusion of vulnerable groups, a narrow and environmentally unsustainable growth pattern, and insufficiently inclusive and resilient social systems. The ToC therefore does not treat economic transformation, social inclusion, service quality, environmental sustainability and governance as separate agendas. Rather, it presents them as interdependent pathways that must advance together if Montenegro is to reduce multidimensional poverty, accelerate SDG progress and strengthen readiness for EU membership.

Third, the ToC is strong because it identifies **clear strategic pathways** under each priority area. Under **Strategic Priority 1**, the theory focuses on economic transformation, greener and more inclusive growth, labour-market reform, climate adaptation and mitigation, sustainable natural resource management and disaster risk reduction. Under **Strategic Priority 2**, the framework articulates two complementary pathways: one around social and child protection, labour activation, school-to-work transition, migration and vulnerability reduction; and another around health, education and early childhood development as drivers

of stronger human capital. Under **Strategic Priority 3**, the framework links rule of law, public administration reform, civic participation, gender equality, social cohesion and the fight against violence, hate speech, corruption and organized crime to stronger accountability and greater realization of rights. These pathways are elaborated both in the visual ToC and in the narrative explanations for Outcomes 1–4.

Fourth, the ToC is strengthened by a set of **cross-cutting acceleration strategies**. The UNSDCF identifies synergy with EU accession, production and use of quality disaggregated data, digital transformation and innovation, SDG financing, partnerships with IFIs and the private sector, youth participation, and a prevention approach as key accelerators. This is important because it clarifies not only what the UN wants to contribute to, but how those contributions are expected to gain traction in practice. These strategies also increase the realism of the ToC by acknowledging that outcome-level progress depends on financing, information, partnerships and systemic coordination, not only on programme delivery.

Fifth, the ToC embeds a clear **UN comparative advantage** logic. The UNSDCF states that the UN’s main comparative advantages in Montenegro lie in its rights-based mandate, neutrality, advocacy role, convening power, access to international and regional expertise, ability to create linkages across sectors, and capacity to support sensitive reforms such as gender equality, human rights and LNOB. The ToC is therefore not simply about doing more activities; it is about using the UN’s distinctive role to enable reforms, partnerships, learning and institutional change in areas where this added value matters.

That said, the ToC is also **highly ambitious and interconnected**, and this has implications for evaluability. Because the strategic priorities are mutually reinforcing and because many outcomes depend on policy and institutional changes influenced by multiple actors, the causal pathways between UN-supported outputs and broader national outcomes are not always sufficiently explicit for evaluative purposes. The outcome-level results framework is useful as a strategic direction-setting instrument, but for the final evaluation it will be necessary to reconstruct more clearly the **output-to-outcome contribution pathways** and test the assumptions behind them. In that sense, the ToC is strategically sound, but it still requires analytical unpacking during the evaluation

Real-time relevance and responsiveness to emerging issues

The preliminary conclusion is that the original ToC was flexible enough to accommodate emerging issues without requiring a fundamental redesign. The UNSDCF was formulated in the aftermath of the COVID-19 shock and explicitly notes that short-term policies would be guided by the principles of “building back better” and by a proactive response to regional and global developments. The CCA and UNSDCF narrative already recognized that Montenegro faced macroeconomic vulnerability, climate risk, demographic challenges, social exclusion, and institutional bottlenecks, and that future implementation would take place in a volatile environment.

The approved UNSDCF also includes an explicit set of assumptions and risks. These include continued political commitment to EU accession and human rights implementation, manageable macroeconomic and fiscal conditions, availability and use of disaggregated data, political stability and continuity of the development vision, absence of severe regional spillovers, no major escalation of COVID-19 or other health crises, and continued commitment to low-carbon development. The risk section further highlights political and administrative transition, social cohesion risks, infrastructure and service-access risks, displacement and migration pressures, public health crises, environmental and climate risks, and economic and financial instability. Because these risks were already identified ex ante, the ToC appears to have been designed with a substantial degree of strategic flexibility.

At the same time, the evaluation will still need to examine whether implementation practice remained faithful to the theory and whether adaptive management operated mainly at activity level or also altered the practical logic of contribution under some outcomes. In Montenegro’s case, important contextual developments after UNSDCF adoption included continued fiscal and policy reforms, growing attention to climate and disaster-risk frameworks, expansion of digitalization in social sectors and public administration, deepening accession-linked reform pressures, and persistent territorial and demographic disparities. These developments do not appear to invalidate the theoretical ToC, but they may have altered the relative importance of some pathways or the feasibility of some assumptions.

For that reason, the evaluation does not need to replace the original ToC with a new theory, **but it does need to produce an evaluative reconstruction of how the framework was actually implemented**. This

means clarifying which output pathways were most active, which assumptions held or did not hold, and where external factors, coordination dynamics, funding constraints or institutional bottlenecks changed the practical route from outputs to outcomes. In particular, the evaluation will need to pay close attention to the four outcome pathways, the role of cross-cutting strategies, and the extent to which governance and institutional reform functioned in practice as the intended cross-cutting enabler of change.

Overall preliminary conclusion on the ToC

On the basis of the preliminary documentary review, the Evaluation Team concludes that the original UNSDCF Theory of Change remains a valid strategic framework for the final evaluation. It is aligned with national priorities, SDG commitments, human rights obligations and the EU accession trajectory; it identifies the key structural bottlenecks and enabling conditions; and it already incorporates a degree of adaptability through its cross-cutting strategies, assumptions and risks. At the same time, because the ToC is highly interconnected and ambitious, the evaluation will need to clarify and test the more specific contribution pathways from UN-supported outputs to outcome-level changes, rather than rely only on the broad strategic logic. In that sense, the ToC does not require wholesale reconstruction, but it does require evaluative refinement so that the final report can assess what held, what changed, what enabled progress, and where the theory proved more ambitious than implementation conditions allowed.

ANNEX 3: LIST OF INTERVIEWED AND CONSULTED STAKEHOLDERS

List of Interviews / Consultations

No.	Name	Title	Mode	Type	Gender
1	Caroline Tissot	UNCT Resident Coordinator	IP, II	RCO	F
2	Miloš Popović	Member of RCO team	IP, GI	RCO	M
3	David Wright	Member of RCO team	IP, GI	RCO	M
4	Vanja Šćepović	Member of RCO team and EMG	IP, GI	RCO	F
5	Bojan Tenjović	EMG and UNDP	IP, GI	UN	M
6	Stevan Stanišić	EMG and UNDP	IP, GI	UN	M
7	Tijana Simić	EMG and IOM	Online GI, IP II	UN	F
8	Kamila Novak	EMG and FAO	Online GI	UN	F
9	Milijana Vukotić	EMG and UNOPS	Online GI	UN	F
10	Vlatko Otašević	Communication officer RCO	IP, II	RCO	M
11	Michele Servadei	UNICEF representative	IP, II	UN	M
12	Nina Krgović	EMG and ILO National project coordinator	IP, II	UN	F
13	Anjet Lanting	OHCHR and HR Adviser to the RC and UNCT, based in the RCO	IP, II	RCO	F
14	Mina Brajović	WHO representative	In writing	UN	F
15	Vladimir Gjorgjiev	IOM Chief of Mission	IP, II	UN	M
16	Sabina Žunić	RG 2 co-chair UNICEG	IP, II	UN	F
17	Remon Zakaria	Head of EBRD in Montenegro	IP, II	IP	M
18	Aleksandra Kiković	Co-chair RG 1 and UNDP	IP, GI	UN	F
19	Anđela Kiković	Co-Chair RG 1 and Ministry of Economic Development	IP, GI	GoM	F
20	Bernard Brunet	European Delegation to Montenegro	IP, GI	EUD	M
21	Brigitte Kuchner	European Delegation to Montenegro	IP, GI	EUD	F
22	Juliette Lequesne	European Delegation to Montenegro	IP, GI	EUD	F

23	Frieda Wunschmann	European Delegation to Montenegro	IP, GI	EUD	F
24	Mersida Aljićević	Co-chair RG 2 and Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography	IP, II	GoM	F
25	Sara Čabarkapa	Center for Civic education	IP, II	CS	F
26	Maja Simonović	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	IP, GI	GoM	F
27	Tamara Brajović	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	IP, GI	GoM	F
28	Aleksandra Đaković	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	IP, GI	GoM	F
29	Vesna Miranović	Academia	IP, GI	AC	F
30	Nikola Šaranović	Academia	IP, GI	AC	M
31	Mirko Knežević	Academia	IP, GI	AC	M
32	Ranko Andrijašević	Sustainable development office	IP, GI	GoM	M
33	Andrija Đukanović	Sustainable development office	IP, GI	GoM	M
34	Bojan Vujović	Ministry of European Affairs	IP, II	GoM	M
35	Majda Savićević	MONSTAT	IP, II	GoM	F
36	Snežana Remiković	MONSTAT	IP, II	GoM	F
37	Nabil Gangi	FAO	Zoom, GI	UN	M
38	Gordana Kozhuharova	FAO	Zoom, GI	UN	F
39	Jovana Šuković	FAO	Zoom, GI	UN	F
40	Siniša Šesum	UNESCO	Zoom, II	UN	M
41	Polina Tarshis	UNECE	Zoom, II	UN	F
42	Aleksandar Đorđević	UNODC	Zoom, II	UN	M
43	Michela Telatin	UNOPS	Zoom, II	UN	F
44	Jaroslav Ponder	ITU	Zoom, II	UN	M
45	Michele Ribotta	UN Women	Zoom, II	UN	M
46	Marija Ružić Stajović	Juventas	Zoom, GI	CS	F
47	Nataša Vukićević	Dostignuća mladih u CG	Zoom, GI	CS	F
48	Marija Pajović	Centar za prava djeteta	Zoom, GI	CS	F

49	Anđela Karadžić	Centar za prava djeteta	Zoom, GI	CS	F
50	Nichole Epting	UNHCR	Zoom, GI	UN	F
51	Mensur Bajramspahić	UNHCR	Zoom, GI	UN	M
52	Slobodan Raščanin	UNHCR	Zoom, GI	UN	M
53	Bojana Bošković	Ministry of European Affairs	Zoom, II	GoM	F
54	David Muckenhuber	ADA, Head of Office	Zoom, II	IP	M
55	Solomiya Omelyan	UNIDO	In writing	UN	F
56	Amela Orahovac	Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography	Zoom, II	GoM	F
57	Svetlana Dujović	Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography		GoM	F
58	Aleksandra Kuč	Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation		GoM	F
59	Milena Krsmanović Iković	Advisor to the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms		GoM	F
60	Dragana Pešić	Institute for child and social protection		GoM	F
61	Neda Vukotić	Public Institution “Komanski Most”		GoM	F
62	Sanela Žiga	NGO Zračak nade		CS	F
63	Sabra Dečević	NGO Children of Montenegro		CS	F
64	Savo Knežević	OPD Nardos		CS	M
65	Miroslava Mima Ivanović	I MI BOKE		CS	F
66	Tijana Mijušković	Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Montenegro		CS	F
67	Milisav Mimo Korać	OPD Naša inicijativa		CS	M

ANNEX 4: INTERVIEW STATISTICS

By institution type

Category	Count	%
RCO	6	9%
UN	24	36%
GoM	17	25%
EUD	4	6%
AC	3	4%
CSO	11	16%
International partner	2	3%
Total	67	100%

By gender

Category	Count	%
Female	43	64%
Male	24	36%
Total	67	100%

Gender breakdown by institution type

Institution type	Female	Male	Total
Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)	3	3	6
UN Agencies (UN)	13	11	24
Government of Montenegro (GoM)	14	3	17
European Union Delegation (EUD)	3	1	4
Academia (AC)	1	2	3
Civil Society (CS)	9	2	11
International Partners	0	2	2
Total	43	24	67

ANNEX 5: ANONYMOUS SURVEY

In addition to the interviews above, two anonymous online survey streams were administered, with a short supplementary operations questionnaire under the UN stream.

UN programme management survey - 18 of 77 respondents (23%); supplementary operations questionnaire - 3 of 6 respondents (50%)

Programme outcome	Respondents
Outcome 1	3
Outcome 2	3
Outcome 3	2
Outcome 4	10
Total	18

National partners survey — 40 of 113 respondents (35%)

Partner category	Respondents
Experts	6
State institution partners	28
Local self-government	3
Private sector	1
Trade unions	2
Total	40

ANNEX 6: LIST OF INTERVIEWS BY INSTITUTION TYPE

RESIDENT COORDINATOR'S OFFICE (RCO) — 6

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
1	Caroline Tissot	UNCT Resident Coordinator	F
2	Miloš Popović	Member of RCO team	M
3	David Wright	Member of RCO team	M
4	Vanja Šćepović	Member of RCO team and EMG	F
10	Vlatko Otašević	Communication officer RCO	M
13	Anjet Lanting	OHCHR and HR Advisor at RCO	F

UN AGENCIES (UN) — 24

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
5	Bojan Tenjović	EMG and UNDP	M
6	Stevan Stanišić	EMG and UNDP	M
7	Tijana Simić	EMG and IOM	F
8	Kamila Novak	EMG and FAO	F
9	Milijana Vukotić	EMG and UNOPS	F
11	Michele Servadei	UNICEF representative	M
12	Nina Krgović	EMG and ILO National project coordinator	F
14	Mina Brajovic	WHO representative	F
15	Vladimir Gjorgjiev	IOM Chief of Mission	M
16	Sabina Žunić	RG 2 co-chair UNICEG	F
18	Aleksandra Kiković	Co-chair RG 1 and UNDP	F
37	Nabil Gangi	FAO	M
38	Gordana Kozhuharova	FAO	F
39	Jovana Šuković	FAO	F
40	Siniša Šesum	UNESCO	M
41	Polina Tarshis	UNECE	F

42	Aleksandar Đorđević	UNODC	M
43	Michela Telatin	UNOPS	F
44	Jaroslav Ponder	ITU	M
45	Michele Ribotta	UN Women	M
50	Nichole Epting	UNHCR	F
51	Mensur Bajramspahić	UNHCR	M
52	Slobodan Raščanin	UNHCR	M
55	Solomiya Omelyan	UNIDO	F

GOVERNMENT OF MONTENEGRO (GOM) — 17

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
19	Anđela Kiković	Co-Chair RG 1 and Ministry of Economic Development	F
24	Mersida Aljićević	Co-chair RG 2 and Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography	F
26	Maja Simonović	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	F
27	Tamara Brajović	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	F
28	Aleksandra Đaković	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	F
32	Ranko Andrijašević	Sustainable development office	M
33	Andrija Đukanović	Sustainable development office	M
34	Bojan Vujović	Ministry of European Affairs	M
35	Majda Savićević	MONSTAT	F
36	Snežana Remiković	MONSTAT	F
53	Bojana Bošković	Ministry of European Affairs	F
56	Amela Orahovac	Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography	F
57	Svetlana Dujović	Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography	F
58	Aleksandra Kuč	Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation	F
59	Milena Krsmanović Iković	Advisor to the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms	F

60	Dragana Pešić	Institute for child and social protection	F
61	Neda Vukotić	Public Institution “Komanski Most”	F

EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION (EUD) — 4

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
20	Bernard Brunet	European Delegation to Montenegro	M
21	Brigitte Kuchner	European Delegation to Montenegro	F
22	Juliette Lequesne	European Delegation to Montenegro	F
23	Frieda Wunschmann	European Delegation to Montenegro	F

ACADEMIA (AC) — 3

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
29	Vesna Miranović	Academia	F
30	Nikola Šaranović	Academia	M
31	Mirko Knežević	Academia	M

CIVIL SOCIETY (CS) — 11

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
25	Sara Čabarkapa	Center for Civic education	F
46	Marija Ružić Stajović	Juventas	F
47	Nataša Vukićević	Dostignuća mladih u CG	F
48	Marija Pajović	Centar za prava djeteta	F
49	Anđela Karadžić	Centar za prava djeteta	F
62	Sanela Žiga	NGO Zračak nade	F
63	Sabra Decević	NGO Children of Montenegro	F
64	Savo Knežević	OPD Nardos	M
65	Miroslava Ivanović	Mima I MI BOKE	F
66	Tijana Mijušković	Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Montenegro	F

67 Milisav Mimo Korać OPD Naša inicijativa M

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS — 2

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
17	Remon Zakaria	Head of EBRD in Montenegro	M
54	David Muckenhuber	ADA, Head of Office	M

NOTES

- Institution codes: RCO (Resident Coordinator’s Office), UN (UN Agencies), GoM (Government of Montenegro), EUD (EU Delegation), AC (Academia), CS (Civil Society).
- Survey response rates and interview totals are independent; combined figures count each person once per method.
- Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

ANNEX 7: AGENDA OF IN-COUNTRY VISIT AND MEETINGS

The agenda for the Evaluation Team's in-country mission, **8–12 June 2026**, is provided below.

<i>DAY</i>	<i>Specific time</i>	<i>RESPONDENTS</i>	
<i>8 June, Monday</i>	9:00 - 9:30	Brief with Evaluation Manager	UN cafeteria
	9:30 - 10:00	UNCT Resident Coordinator	UN Eco House, PG
	10:00 - 11:00	RCO team	UN Eco House, PG
	11:00 - 12:00	Evaluation management group	UN Eco House, PG
	13:30 - 14:00	Communication officer	UN Eco House, PG
	14:00 - 15:00	Heads of Agencies: UNICEF	UN Eco House, PG
	15:00-16:00	Heads of Agencies: ILO	UN Eco House, PG
<i>9 June, Tuesday</i>	16:00 - 16:30	End of day briefing	UN Eco House, PG
	9:00-10:00	Heads of Agencies: OHCHR	UN Eco House, PG
	11:00-12:00	Heads of Agencies: WHO	UN Eco House, PG
	12:00-13:00	Heads of Agencies: IOM	UN Eco House, PG
	13:00-14:00	RG 2: co-chair	UN Eco House, PG
	14:00-15:00	Briefing	
	15:00-16:00	EBRD	EBRD
<i>10 June, Wednesday</i>	8:15	RG1: co-chairs	UN Eco House, PG
	10:30	EIB	UN Eco House, PG
	12	EU Delegation	EU Delegation

11 June, Thursday	14	RG 2: co-chair	Ministry of social care
	15	Civil society	UN Eco House, PG
	10:30	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	MFA
	12	Academia/specialized institutions FG	UN Eco House, PG
12 June, Friday	14	Sustainable Development Office	SD office
	9	Ministry Of European Affairs	MEA
	11:30	Co-chair RG3	IOM premises
	14:30	MONSTAT	Monstat
	15:30	Debriefing with UN RC	

ANNEX 8: FINAL EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

UNSDCF EVALUATION

Montenegro (2026)

1. Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in Montenegro (CF 2023–2027) represents the collective response of the UN development system to support Montenegro address national priorities and challenges in achieving the commitments from the key international human rights instruments and 2030 Agenda.

The Final Cooperation Framework 2023–2027 (hereinafter CF) Evaluation is an external, independent exercise aimed at generating an independent assessment of results, successes, challenges, and lessons learned to inform the main stakeholders and feed the next programming cycle. This evaluation will be conducted in 2026, the penultimate year of the CF implementation.

The evaluation will be guided by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016)¹ and the Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UNSDCF (September 2021, revised 2025)². It will ensure accountability, support learning, and inform decisions to guide the design of the potential next CF, or CF-corresponding document, depending on the nature of UN presence in Montenegro post 2028. The evaluation process will be transparent and inclusive (involving relevant stakeholders) with robust quality assurance. Evaluation results and recommendations will be derived from, and informed by, the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid evidence and data, including among others an assessment of gender resource allocation to evaluate the extent to which financial resources have been directed toward gender equality objectives.

The evaluation will be conducted by independent evaluators who exhibit professional and cultural competencies, and excellent understanding of the development context in Montenegro and the Western Balkans region. This Terms of Reference in its essential form repeats standards established by this Guidance. Through their work, the Evaluation Consultants will be guided by the afore mentioned Guidelines.

1. Background – Country Context and UNSDCF highlights

Montenegro is a small, **upper middle income Western Balkans country** undergoing intensive reforms in the EU accession process that shapes its policy priorities, legal alignment (Acquis Communautaire), and financing landscape. Its democratic and development trajectory features persistent structural challenges—narrow economic base, demographic pressures, and regional disparities—alongside opportunities linked to green transition, digitalization, and human capital development. These dynamics frame both the national reform agenda and the UN system's strategic response.

Evidence from the latest **CCA annual update** shows several emerging structural pressures: a **shrinking labour force**, accelerating **population ageing**, and ongoing **out-migration** from rural and northern municipalities—many of which now have an **average age above 43**. The 2023 census confirms substantial demographic shifts, including the presence of **over 40,000 foreign nationals** (primarily from Russia, Ukraine, and Türkiye), intensifying pressures on social services and local infrastructure. At the same time, around **44,000 Montenegrins live abroad**, particularly from the northern region, affecting labour supply and local development. This is the self-declared number, through census, while some estimates argue this is **only about 20%** of the actual diaspora.

The original UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) from 2021 identified key development gaps and root causes across inclusive growth and environmental sustainability, human capital and social inclusion, and governance, rule of law and human rights. It highlighted vulnerabilities exacerbated by external shocks and called for targeted institutional strengthening, policy coherence, and investments in resilience. These priorities continue to be relevant, due to continuous macro-fiscal pressures, a persistent implementation

gap, and the need to deepen capacity for acquis alignment, data systems, and front-line service delivery, all with a strong equity and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) lens.

The EU accession remains the central driver of Montenegro’s modernization, legal harmonization, and compliance with international standards. The UNSDCF 2023–2027 was explicitly designed to complement the EU agenda—prioritizing policy and institutional reforms that accelerate implementation of international human rights instruments, SDG and acquis alignment. The Framework, signed in July 2022 and effective from January 2023, anchors UN support in areas where multilateral normative functions, human rights commitments, and convening power can catalyze system level change.

The evaluation must assess how UN cooperation has adapted to evolving accession milestones and what **forward looking role** remains for the UN in a potential EU member environment. This evaluation will draw on Montenegro’s VNRs, HDI trends, and key national reform strategies and legislative changes that have shaped the country’s development trajectory.

The UNSDCF operationalizes **Montenegro’s SDG and human rights commitments** in close alignment with national plans and reform strategies that are, in turn, rooted in EU accession requirements. As a medium-term strategic planning instrument, the UNSDCF organizes the UN system’s collective response around three interdependent strategic priorities:

1. **Inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability**
2. **Human capital development, reducing vulnerability, and social inclusion**
3. **Social cohesion, people centred governance, rule of law and human rights³**

The **UN Country Results Reports** confirm that UN support has advanced reforms under these priorities—strengthening climate and disaster risk frameworks (including the National Adaptation Plan), supporting social sector reforms (development of the Law on Social and Child Protection, related Strategy, Strategy on Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence, Strategy on Deinstitutionalization, Strategy on Education system reform, Strategy on Early Childhood Development, National Social Cohesion Pledge etc.) enabling education modernization, expanding digital public services, and advancing rule of law and justice sector reforms—while maintaining a strong LNOB focus.

Recent **contextual developments** highlighted in the annual CCA Updates include fiscal and policy reforms (e.g., “Europe Now 2”), continued advancement of climate and DRR frameworks, expanding digitalization in health, social protection and administrative services, and ongoing reforms to strengthen public administration and data systems. Some of the key development indicators data show the following:

- **Poverty has declined to an estimated 7.5% in 2025** (upper-middle-income poverty threshold), driven primarily by wage growth.
- The **risk of poverty rate was 20% in 2024**, with **children (25.6%)** and **single parent families (34%)** particularly vulnerable.
- **Youth unemployment is 25.9%**, reflecting structural labour market challenges.
- Sub-national disparities remain wide, driven by demographic decline in the north, uneven consumption patterns, and rising **housing prices** (e.g., coastal municipalities reaching **€2,800/m²**) that place young households at a disadvantage.
- Health service pressures include **high out-of-pocket spending (37%)**, workforce shortages, and one of the lowest **MMR1 immunization coverages (32.3%) in Europe** among children born in 2023.
- Education performance continues to lag EU averages, with **60% of students scoring below basic proficiency in PISA mathematics**, and persistent disparities for Roma children (preschool enrolment at **22.7%**).

These shifts underscore the centrality of institutional capacity building, financing for development, and multi-stakeholder coordination to sustain progress and reduce regional and group-based disparities.

2. The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2023–2027)

Theory of Change (ToC) and intervention logic. The UNSDCF⁴ ToC suggests that, if the UN system, working with government and partners, strengthens policy, regulatory and financing frameworks; builds

institutional capacities and systems for inclusive, gender responsive, -human-rights based and -climate resilient services; and catalyzes -evidence based, participatory reforms and accountability, then Montenegro will accelerate SDG progress and be better prepared for EU membership benefits and obligations. The pathway highlights the UN's advocacy and normative role, convening power, capacity development and monitoring function, ensuring LNOB through targeted measures for children, Roma and other minorities, persons with disabilities, those exposed to poverty and adversity, migrants, children without parental care, victims of violence and exploitation and people in the least served- regions.

Results framework. The CF organizes outcome level results under the three strategic priorities, with outputs covering green and inclusive growth; climate action and risk reduction; sustainable management of natural and cultural assets; quality and equitable health and education services; social protection and child protection; decent work and skills; migration management; justice and rule of law; human rights, social cohesion, child centered governance, financing and participation, public administration reform, data and digitalization; civic participation; and combating violence against children, GBV and hate speech.

Participating UN entities and stakeholders. The UNCT brings together in-country entities (UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, IOM, UNHCR, ILO, OHCHR, FAO, UNESCO) and nonresident/regional agencies (UNECE, UN Women, UNIDO, UNODC, UNDRR, ITU, IFAD, UNEP), with **UNCTAD joining in 2025**. Key partners include national and local institutions, the EU Delegation, bilateral donors, municipalities, civil society actors, academia and the private sector.

Resources and financing modalities. The CF is supported through a mix of core and non-core resources and innovative financing tools. The national pooled financing mechanism—the **Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF)**—aggregates partner funds for UNSDCF-aligned priorities and is capitalized with a **EUR 1 million contribution from Government**, supplemented by the EU and bilateral partners (Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Ireland).

Cross-cutting issues and normative commitments. The CF mainstreams gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights and LNOB. These are to be reflected across all evaluation criteria - relevance & adaptability, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, coordination, sustainability and impact orientation.

Risks, assumptions, and emerging factors. The CF's intervention logic assumes steady political commitment, continued alignment with the acquis, and adequate fiscal space and development financing. Risks include political turnover, fiscal pressures, disaster and climate shocks, and potential shifts in development financing related to EU accession. Demographic decline, labour shortages, and territorial disparities further strain institutional capacities. The evaluation will assess how the CF adapted to these risks and implications for UN relevance post-accession.

Monitoring, evaluation and evidence base. The UNSDCF includes an outcome and output-level results frameworks, annual **UN Country Results Reports (2022–2025)**, Joint Work Plans, and **CCA updates** that together form the evaluative evidence base. Additional evidence includes agency-level evaluations, national statistics (including 2023 Census findings, MICS), and thematic assessments. Together, these sources will inform triangulation, analysis of contributions to outcomes, and forward-looking recommendations as Montenegro approaches a potential new CF cycle.

2. Purpose and Objectives

Purpose of the Evaluation. The **UNSDCF Evaluation for Montenegro (2023–2027)** serves two mutually reinforcing purposes, consistent with UN system-wide evaluation policy and tailored to Montenegro's current development trajectory and EU accession context:

I. Learning and operational improvement. The evaluation will generate forward-looking, actionable learning to inform programming and strategic positioning for the next UNSDCF cycle. This includes understanding the effectiveness and efficiency of UN coordination mechanisms, joint programming approaches, and financing modalities such as the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) in driving system-level results, supporting reforms (including country level UN reform), and accelerating SDG progress. The evaluation will help the UNCT and Government of Montenegro to identify good practices, areas requiring adaptation, and opportunities to strengthen coherence, particularly as Montenegro approaches EU accession.

II. Accountability to stakeholders. The evaluation will provide an objective and evidence based assessment of progress toward the expected results of the UNSDCF. It will offer a transparent account of the UN's collective contribution to national development priorities, international human rights commitments and SDGs, assessing the effectiveness of technical assistance, strategies, use of resources, partnerships, and coordination mechanisms. This will support accountability of the Government of Montenegro, the EU and other development partners, civil society, rights-holders, and the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO).

The timing of the evaluation is aligned with global UNSDCF cycles and the national planning calendar, ensuring that findings feed into the **next UNSDCF/ or UNSDCF corresponding document development process**, the **new fully-fledged Common Country Analysis (CCA)**, and UNCT repositioning as Montenegro advances toward EU accession.

Objectives of the Evaluation. The evaluation will pursue four interrelated objectives:

1. Assess the UN's contribution to national development results (Accountability)

The evaluation will examine the extent to which the UNSDCF has contributed to Montenegro's development outcomes across its three strategic priorities. It will apply internationally recognized evaluation criteria (relevance & adaptability, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coordination, and orientation toward impact) to provide evidence-based judgements on performance.

2. Identify factors explaining performance, including enabling conditions and bottlenecks (Learning)

The evaluation will analyse why progress has been achieved or constrained, paying particular attention to: policy and institutional factors influencing results; advocacy, coordination, partnership, UN in house technical assistance, leveraging for results and financing arrangements (including pooled funding through the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund); external dynamics related to EU accession, demographic shifts, regional inequality, and governance capacity; internal UNCT factors such as interagency coordination mechanisms, Results Groups, and operational coherence. This will highlight systemic enablers and obstacles shaping outcome-level progress.

3. Draw conclusions on the UN's overall contribution across the full scope of the UNSDCF

The evaluation will synthesize findings across outcomes, identify cross-cutting patterns (e.g., gender equality, human rights, LNOB), and articulate the UN's value added in Montenegro's evolving development and accession landscape.

4. Provide actionable recommendations for the future UN programming

Recommendations will be forward-looking, feasible, and directly linked to the evaluation's conclusions. They will help identify the critical reforms needed to ensure Montenegro's long-term sustainable development, democracy and rule of law and clarify the UN system's added value and comparative advantage in supporting these reforms. The recommendations will also outline the optimal model for future UN engagement with the country, inform future programming scenarios, and strengthen coordination, governance, financing and inter-agency mechanisms. In addition, they will support the differentiation of UN roles in a future EU-member context, enhance evaluability and data use, and improve adaptive management across programming. Recommendations will be aligned with the reforms stemming from the UN80 initiative and its Action Plan.

The evaluation will yield: a credible and impartial assessment of UNCT performance; evidence-informed insights for the next Cooperation Framework; strengthened mutual accountability between the UN and national partners; clearer strategic positioning of the UN development system in Montenegro as the country approaches EU accession.

3. Scope

The evaluation will cover the period **from January 2023 to June 2026**, corresponding to the first four years of implementation of **UNSDCF 2023–2027** in Montenegro. This period allows for assessment of progress toward planned outcomes, the effectiveness of UN coordination and financing arrangements, and the responsiveness of the UN system to emerging contextual changes, including EU accession milestones and national reform dynamics.

The evaluation will encompass **all three strategic priorities, outcomes and associated outputs** of the UNSDCF: Inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability; Human capital development, reducing vulnerability, and social inclusion; Social cohesion, people-centered governance, rule of law and human rights. Within this scope, the evaluation will assess UN contributions to:

- **Policy and Systems Change** (Contributions to policy development and system-level reforms; Alignment and coherence with national strategies, SDG commitments, and EU accession requirements; Efforts addressing persistent development challenges (regional inequality, demographic pressures, public administration capacity gaps, and gaps between policy adoption and implementation))
- **Institutional and Capacity Strengthening** (Institutional capacities to implement reforms and deliver inclusive, quality services; Strengthening of national institutions in areas such as governance, justice, rule of law and human rights, climate resilience, health, education, digital transformation, child and social protection, and territorial development)
- **Programme Effectiveness and Outcome-Level Progress** (Progress toward outcomes under each strategic priority; Effectiveness, relevance, and quality of interventions across all resident and non-resident agencies; Contributions to behavioural or structural change and improvements in service delivery)
- **UN Coherence, Collaboration, and Coordination** (Effectiveness and efficiency of joint programming, shared analytics, and inter-agency collaboration; Functioning and added value of UNCT coordination mechanisms: Results Groups, thematic groups—including Gender, Human Rights, and LNOB–MEL Group, inter-agency task teams, and RCO support)
- **Financing for Development** (Design, management, performance, efficiency, and catalytic role of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF); Broader resource-mobilisation efforts and the UN’s contribution to innovative financing solutions).
- **Adaptiveness and Responsiveness** (UN agility in responding to shifting political, economic, and social contexts; Ability to adjust programming and strategic focus as conditions evolve)

The evaluation will also examine “hard to shift” development challenges highlighted in the CCAs, including regional inequality, demographic pressures, capacity gaps in public administration and services, and gaps between policy adoption and implementation.

The evaluation will **systematically integrate** all UN programming principles and normative commitments across its analysis, conclusions, and recommendations, including Gender equality and the empowerment of women, Human rights and nondiscrimination, including the rights of persons with disabilities, Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), child centered and gender sensitive approaches. These crosscutting areas will be assessed both as standalone considerations where relevant and mainstreamed across evaluation criteria and questions.

As for **geographic scope**, evaluation will be sensitive of territorial disparities, and geographic disaggregation will align with LNOB principle and ensure that progress or bottlenecks are contextualised. While these can still be all captured through national-level coverage of evaluation, given that stakeholders and institutions are centralized, there is the flexibility to include sub-national level to a certain extent, should this be agreed with the Evaluation Team.

When it comes to institutional scope, the evaluation will examine: the collective functioning of the **UN Country Team**; the role of **resident and non-resident agencies** in delivering results; governance and management arrangements supporting UNSDCF implementation (internal and those including Government); the performance and added value of the **Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund**, including its governance model, contributions to coherence, and catalytic financing role. With respect to the country based pooled fund, the evaluation should also examine the effectiveness and efficiency in achieving results against the bilateral and agency-specific approaches.

The primary users of the evaluation are: **Government of Montenegro** (central and local levels); **UN Country Team (UNCT)**, including all resident and nonresident agencies; **UN Development Coordination Office (DCO)**; **development partners**, including the EU Delegation and bilateral donors; **Civil society organisations**, including organisations of persons with disabilities; **UNCT Results Groups (including**

Government and UN members). and coordination platforms. Secondary users include academia, private sector actors, and regional UN entities.

4. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

1. Evaluation criteria

The evaluation will assess the UNSDCF using the following criteria: Relevance & Adaptability, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence (internal and external) and Coordination (UN specific criterion reflecting the one UN nature of CFs), Sustainability and Orientation towards Impact. All analyses will be theory based, aligned to the UNSDCF theory of change and results framework, and will systematically integrate cross cutting commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights and non discrimination (including disability inclusion), and LNOB.

The final set of questions and the Evaluation Design Matrix (EDM)- linking questions to assumptions, indicators, methods, sources and triangulation–will be confirmed by the Evaluation Team in the Inception Report. Adaptation of criteria/questions may be proposed by the Evaluation Team and agreed with the Evaluation Manager.

4.2 Initial evaluation questions

The questions presented in the table below **are indicative suggestions to be finalized by the Evaluation Team** during the Initial Phase and presented in the Inception report upon agreement between the Team leader and Evaluation Management Group (EMG). While the TOR presents 15 indicative questions (some of them compound/with sub-questions included), the Evaluation Team will further prioritize and consolidate them in the Inception Report to ensure feasibility and alignment with available data and resources.

Criteria	Evaluation questions
Relevance and Adaptability The extent to which the objectives of the CF are consistent with the needs of the Montenegrin people, the needs and priorities of Montenegro and its international obligations, Montenegro's EU integration agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	1.To what extent have the UNSDCF priorities been shaped by the voices of marginalized groups (sub question: have rights-holders meaningfully participated in defining those priorities adaptations responded to their expressed needs)? 2.In which areas have the UN shown to have a unique comparative advantage vis-à-vis EU/IFIs/bilateral and multilateral actors and national institutions–especially in “hardest-to-achieve” domains? (accordingly, in which domains should the UN continue, scale or tailor its support?) 3. To what extent over the implementation have the objectives of the CF remained consistent and contributing to those needs and priorities coming from the international obligations such as CRC, CRPD, CEDAW, UPR, etc.?
Effectiveness: Assessment of the performance of CF support to Montenegro's development in terms of achievement of results.	4.To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to outcome level changes (policy, institutional, service delivery and/or behavioural), and what explains progress or shortfalls across different regions and groups (LNOB, gender, children, disability)? (Sub-question: Have there been some unintended effects and who may have benefited more or less from these outcomes?) 5.What bottlenecks limited results (e.g., what institutional capacity issues, enforcement, data, cross-sector coordination, governance, implementation, monitoring, participation, financing) and what course corrections are warranted? (Sub-question: What are the remaining challenges - or system level changes hardest to achieve?)
Efficiency:	6. To what extent did <i>Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund</i> (MAF) achieve its purpose in relation to attracting additional financing for strategic, catalytic, and innovative UN interventions, value-for-

The extent to which the CF established and implemented clear procedures to provide coordinated support and the relationship of inputs (financial and staff) to the achieved results.	money and advancement of UN reform in the UN System in Montenegro? 7. To what extent did the CF M&E system effectively inform decision-making and enable adaptive management through data analysis, monitoring, and learning? 8. To what extent has the CF collectively prioritized and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary, and to what extent have inputs (such as funds, expertise, time, and other resources) been converted into outputs, outcomes, and impacts efficiently and with due care?
Coherence and Coordination: To what extent has the CF strengthened the coherence and coordination of support by UNCT members	9. Post UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programs and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the CF both in design and implementation? For agencies with existing programming instruments, assess the type of derivation applied amongst the 3 Options for country programming instrument derivation. 10. How coherent is the UNCT's support across agencies and outcomes (clarity of roles, avoidance of duplication, use of joint programming), and how well does it leverage normative mandates? (Sub-question: To what extent have the coordination mechanisms contributed to coherence, planning and adapting the CF?) 11. 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: The evaluation will examine the sustainability of the CF results and benefits and explore whether CF outputs and activities develop/strengthen mechanisms to promote scaling up and replication of successful results.	12. What are the main results achieved by CF that are likely to last and/or can be sustained without further interventions or UN support? (Sub-question: What facilitates and impedes the sustainability of CF results, including the extent to which government institutions/ministries are committed to further support and sustain efforts in the field.) 13. Has CF enabled innovative approaches embedded in institutional learning for national capacity development (government, civil society and NGOs) to enable these actors to continue achieving positive results without the UN/development partners' support?
Orientation toward Impact: The progress to impact criteria will be used to assess of the overall CF stakeholder contributions to the well-being of vulnerable groups, individuals, households and communities that could be credited to the CF implementation.	14. What evidence is there of the UN's contribution to higher level change (e.g., systems strengthening, normative alignment as a precondition to system level change, resilience and equity gains), and what are the most plausible contribution pathways in Montenegro's accession and post accession trajectory? 15. To what extent have UN activities stemming from the CF made a difference for its beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their well-being and their human rights overall?

4.3 Cross-cutting integration

Each question will be examined through **gender responsive** and **human rights based** lenses, with explicit consideration of **disability inclusion** and **LNOB**. Disaggregation (by sex, age, disability and, where feasible, region and other relevant markers) will be pursued to the extent data allow.

4.4 Finalization of questions and evaluation matrix

The final question set and the Evaluation Design Matrix (template to be provided) will be finalized during inception. The Evaluation Team may propose refinements to ensure utility, feasibility and proportionality; such changes will be agreed with the Evaluation Manager and reflected in the Inception Report.

5. Evaluation Approach and Methodology

5.1 Overall Evaluation Approach. The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the **UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation** and the **UNEG Ethical Guidelines**, ensuring impartiality, credibility, transparency, and respect for human rights, inclusion and dignity throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation will follow a **theory based, utilization focused, and participatory** approach, promoting national ownership and the practical use of findings by the Government of Montenegro, UNCT, development partners, and civil society.

The evaluation will adopt a **mixed methods approach**, combining qualitative and quantitative evidence to assess UN contributions across the UNSDCF outcomes. Special emphasis will be placed on ensuring meaningful engagement with diverse national stakeholders - including government institutions at national and local levels, civil society, organizations of persons with disabilities, private sector, development partners (particularly the EU), and rights holders. The evaluation will also ensure **ethical and safe data collection**, especially when exploring sensitive issues such as work with adolescents, gender-based violence, discrimination, governance, or vulnerable populations' access to services.

5.2 Methodological Approach. The methodological design will be finalized during the **Inception Phase**, during which the Evaluation Team will prepare an Evaluation Design Matrix, sampling strategy, detailed data collection plan, analysis plan, and workplan. Key elements of the methodological approach include:

a) Reconstruction and analysis of the Theory of Change (ToC). If found necessary, the evaluation may reconstruct and analyse the UNSDCF's ToC to examine the plausibility of causal pathways between outputs (produced by individual agencies or joint programming mechanisms) and outcome level changes (the level at which the UNSDCF operates). The analysis will: test ToC assumptions, risks, and pathways to contribution; examine contextual factors influencing progress (e.g., EU accession requirements, demographic change, territorial disparities, implementation gaps); assess how well the UN adapted to shifting political, institutional, and economic conditions. The ToC reconstruction is limited to the outputs - outcomes sequence, in line with UNSDCF guidance.

b) Participatory and inclusive evaluation design. The evaluation will adopt a participatory approach to ensure that key stakeholders meaningfully shape the evaluation and its use. This includes: stakeholder mapping conducted during inception; interviews, focus groups, and validation workshops with government, UN agencies, civil society (including women's, children, youth and disability organizations), development partners (notably the EU), academia, private sector actors and final beneficiaries; end of mission debriefings; a final validation workshop involving primary users. This ensures use of the evaluation findings for decision-making, adaptation, and next UNSDCF design.

5.3 Data Collection Methods. The evaluation will use multiple, complementary data collection methods to triangulate findings and ensure robustness:

- **Document and evidence review;** Including but not limited to the UNSDCF, annual Country Results Reports, CCAs, JWPs, agency programme documents, joint programmes, MAF documentation, policy papers, national statistics, monitoring dashboards, and relevant evaluations.
- **Secondary quantitative data analysis;** Using existing national datasets (e.g., MONSTAT surveys, Gov. data and reports, administrative reports and datasets), agency data and evaluations, UN monitoring systems (UNINFO), EU progress reports, and other partner-generated data.
- **Key informant interviews (KIIs);** Semi-structured interviews with senior government counterparts, UN agency leadership and programme managers, results group co-chairs, MAF governance actors, the EU Delegation, bilateral donors, municipalities, civil society organizations, academia, and private sector representatives.

- **Focus group discussions (FGDs);** With rights-holders and groups relevant to LNOB considerations: youth, women, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, migrants, and other vulnerable populations.
- **Observation and, where relevant, field visits;** Particularly in areas with pronounced territorial disparities (e.g., northern municipalities) where bottlenecks to implementation are frequently observed.

5.4 Data Analysis and Validation. The evaluation will use **triangulation** across data sources, stakeholder perspectives, and analytical methods. Analyses will include: contribution analysis (assessing plausible UN contribution pathways); thematic analysis aligned to evaluation criteria; comparative analysis across regions and population groups; gender and human rights lens analysis; coherence analysis (UNCT internal coherence, complementarity with EU and donors); efficiency analysis (transaction costs, joint arrangements, pooled funds including the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund). Validation of evidence will occur through: cross-checking of data across multiple sources; regular consultations with the Evaluation Manager; validation meetings with UNCT and government; presentation of emerging findings for feedback before finalization.

5.5 Integration of Gender Equality, Human Rights and Disability Inclusion. The evaluation will be fully **gender-responsive and human rights-based**, applying the following principles:

- Data will be **systematically disaggregated** by sex, age, disability status, migration status, ethnicity (particularly Roma/Egyptian communities), geography, and other equity markers, to the extent possible.
- The evaluation will examine whether UNSDCF interventions addressed structural inequalities and discriminatory norms and strengthened duty-bearers' and rights-holders' capacities.
- Gender equality, LNOB, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability will be integrated **within each evaluation criterion** rather than treated separately.

The evaluation team will identify and address any limitations in the availability of disaggregated data and propose mitigation strategies (e.g., purposive sampling, qualitative evidence).

5.6 Evaluation Design Matrix. During the Inception Phase, the Evaluation Team will prepare a full **Evaluation Design Matrix (EDM)** to guide data collection and analysis. The matrix will: align evaluation questions (Section 4) with evaluation criteria; break down questions into assumptions and sub-questions; specify indicators and data sources; list data collection and triangulation methods; highlight cross-cutting elements to be systematically integrated; identify contributions pathways to be tested using ToC reconstruction. The EDM becomes the primary technical tool for ensuring methodological rigour and coherence.

5.7 Quality Assurance and Ethical Standards. Quality assurance will be undertaken at all stages of the evaluation, including: **Internal quality assurance** by the Evaluation Manager and the UNCT; **External quality assurance** by DCO where applicable; Assessment of deliverables against the **UNSDCF Evaluation Quality Assurance Checklist**; Compliance with **UNEG Ethical Guidelines**, including informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and safe data collection (especially concerning vulnerable or at-risk groups). All evaluation products (inception report, draft report, final report, annexes) will undergo systematic quality review.

5.8 Use of Existing Evaluative Evidence. The evaluation will systematically use existing evaluative evidence, including Gov and ministries annual reports, UN agency evaluations (project, programme, thematic); Joint programme evaluations; National oversight body reports (Ombudsperson, audit institutions); EU progress reports and evaluations; Previous UNSDCF/UNDAF evaluations in Montenegro. This helps assess contribution, identify patterns, and avoid duplication.

5.9 Utility and Use of Evaluation Findings. The methodology is designed to support high utilization, informing: future UN programming; UNCT coordination and strategic positioning; Government-UN dialogue on reform priorities; national planning and monitoring processes; improvement of pooled financing mechanisms (e.g., MAF); adaptive management and results based and participatory programming. A participatory final validation workshop will ensure all key users can interpret and use findings.

The Final CF evaluation methodology must meet the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System⁵ and demonstrate effective use of the UNEG Guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality during all phases of the evaluation using the norms of the United Nations System Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP 2.0).

6. Management Arrangements

6.1 Governance Structure and Reporting Lines. The UNSDCF evaluation will be overseen through a **three-tiered governance structure** to ensure independence, credibility, and utility of the evaluation:

1. Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC). The ESC is the highest oversight body for the evaluation. It will: provide strategic direction and oversight throughout the evaluation process; review and clear key deliverables (Inception Report, Draft Evaluation Report, Final Report); facilitate engagement with national authorities and ensure alignment with national processes; ensure evaluation use by linking findings to the next programming cycle and national planning cycles. The existing UNSDCF Steering Committee will assume this role. It is composed of the Government of Montenegro (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as JSC co-chair and other participating ministries); UN Resident Coordinator (co chair); Heads of UN Agencies (or delegated senior representatives). The ESC endorses the evaluation ToR, approves deliverables, and ensures final evaluation results are validated with national partners.

2. Evaluation Management Group (EMG). The EMG is responsible for the **day-to-day management** of the evaluation and serves as the primary interface between the Evaluation Team and the UNCT. **Roles include:** managing the recruitment and contracting of the Evaluation Team; providing logistical facilitation and access to documents and stakeholders; quality assuring deliverables before ESC review; monitoring progress against timelines; ensuring independence and adherence to UNEG Norms and Standards; Ethical standards, coordinating stakeholder and beneficiary engagement and availability. The existing UNCT Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Group will resume the function of Evaluation Management Group (EMG), and will be expanded to include Results Group co-chairs to ensure alignment with programmatic areas.

The RC and UNCT appointed the RCO Data Management & Results Monitoring Officer to serve as an **Evaluation Manager (EM)**, responsible for day to day management, quality assurance coordination, support to procurement, liaison with DCO, and facilitation of stakeholder engagement.

4. Evaluation Team (ET). The Evaluation Team will report **directly to the EMG**, ensuring independence and avoiding influence from implementers. The team will have unrestricted access to evidence and stakeholders necessary for conducting the evaluation, subject to ethical safeguards.

DCO Evaluation Advisor supports the evaluation manager, the RC and the UNCT in quality assurance of all key products. DCO is responsible for reviewing all evaluation products including the TOR, inception report, final report and other associated products. UNEG will be informed about the evaluation by the DCO, and may be engaged in exceptional circumstances.

6.2 Evaluation Team Composition and Required Qualifications. The evaluation team will consist of independent external consultants: Evaluation Team leader and one additional Team member – evaluation specialist.

The **Evaluation Team Leader** will conduct the evaluation process in a timely manner and communicate with the Evaluation Manager on a regular basis and highlight progress made/challenges encountered. The Evaluation Team Leader will be responsible for producing the inception report and the draft and final evaluation reports. In close collaboration with the Evaluation manager the Team Leader will take the lead role in conceptualization and design of the evaluation deliverables and shaping the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the report. The **Team member** will contribute to the evaluation process substantively through data collection and analysis. The Team member will share responsibilities for conducting desk review and interviews and conduct field visits identified and collect data. They will provide substantive input to the inception report, the presentation of preliminary findings as well as to the draft and final reports.

The Evaluation Team must collectively demonstrate: **(i)** strong expertise in evaluation methodology; **(ii)** thematic expertise aligned with the three UNSDCF priority areas; **(iii)** fluency in English (and working

proficiency in Montenegrin is an advantage); **(iv)** knowledge of UN programming principles and modalities; **(v)** ability to work fully independently from the UN agencies being evaluated.

A. Team Leader (external international) responsibilities:

- Develops an inception report and details the design, methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis criteria for selection of projects, required resources), and work plan of the evaluation team.
- Directs and conducts the research and analysis of all relevant documentation;
- Decides the division of labour within the evaluation team and coordinates team tasks within the framework of the TORs;
- Oversees and quality assures the preparation of the report and takes a lead in the analysis of the evaluative evidence;
- Oversees the administration, and analysis of the results of the data collection exercise;
- Drafts the inception and evaluation reports, and coordinates the inputs from team members;
- Prepares for meetings with ESC, UNCT and other stakeholder to review findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- Regularly briefs JSC, UNCT, EM and EMG on the evaluation progress through informal sessions and finalizes the report based on feedback from the quality assurance process;
- Delivers and presents the final evaluation report.

B. Evaluation team member - specialist (external national) responsibilities:

The Evaluation Specialist will provide the expertise in the local development issues with sound understanding of the Montenegrin social and economic environment and Agenda 2030 in the national context. The evaluation specialist is expected to:

- Review relevant documents
- Participate in the design of the evaluation methodology and provide inputs to the inception report
- Conduct an analysis of the outcomes, outputs, Join Work Plans
- Carry out fieldwork and data collection as per the Inception report and Terms of Reference
- Draft related parts of the inception and evaluation reports as agreed on the division of labor with the team leader
- Assist the Team Leader in finalizing the evaluation final report including incorporating suggestions received on draft related to assigned sections.

C. Required skills and experience for the evaluation team members:

Evaluation Team Leader

- At least a master's degree in a relevant field (international development, law, economics, political science, governance, social sciences or a related field);
- At least 10 years of working experience in evaluation of UN's or other international organization strategic documents; UN agency country programme experience would be an advantage.
- Experience with participatory approaches, organizational assessments, partnership strategies and capacity development;

- Strong understanding of human rights and the ability to identify related issues across political, ethnic, gender-equality, and socio-economic dimensions;
- Ability to facilitate, evaluate and integrate information from a variety of sources and assess the impact on human rights and gender equality. Ability to incorporate child rights/human rights, disability and gender perspectives in all aspects of the evaluation report;
- Regional expertise in the region of the Western Balkans; Specific experience in Montenegro's rule of law, development and economic context will be an asset;
- Proven experience as an evaluation team leader with ability to lead and work with other evaluation experts;
- Facilitation skills and ability to manage diversity of views in different development contexts;
- Ability to produce well-written reports demonstrating analytical ability and communication skills
- Excellent command of English. Knowledge of the local language will be considered a significant asset.

Team Member – Evaluation Specialist⁶

- At least a master's degree in a relevant field (international development, economics, political science, governance, social sciences or a related field);
- Minimum five years of relevant professional experience. Previous work with UN would be advantage;
- Strong data collection and analysis skills; Prior experience in working with multilateral agencies;
- Strong experience and knowledge in the UN programming principles including leaving no one behind LNOB, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusion; forced displacement and statelessness, environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability;
- In-depth knowledge and strong research record of country socio-economic development and environment context;
- Excellent timely delivery and time management;
- Process management skills such as facilitation skills and ability to negotiate with a wide range of stakeholders;
- Technical competence in undertaking complex evaluations which involve use of mixed methods;
- Knowledge of UN role, UN reform process and UN programming at the country level, particularly UNSDCF;
- Excellent command of English and Montenegrin language.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The selected consultants are required to clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches to the evaluation, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in their proposal.

7. Evaluation Process and Timeline

The UNSDCF Evaluation for Montenegro will follow five key phases. Preparatory work begins **February 2026**, and all deliverables–Inception Report, Draft Report, Final Report, Validation, and Management Response–are completed **by end-September 2026**. A detailed workplan will be finalized during the Inception Phase.

Phase	Timeline	Key Tasks	Lead and responsibility	Output
I. Preparation	Feb – Mar 2026	Constitution of the Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC) and Evaluation Management Group (EMG). Finalization and endorsement of the evaluation ToR. Preparation of the Evaluation Roadmap. Publication of the ToR and recruitment of the Evaluation Team. Compilation of core documentation: UNSDCF, CCAs, Results Reports, MAF documentation, agency programme documents, existing evaluations, national statistics, EU reports.	Evaluation Manager (EM), Evaluation Management Group (EMG)	Evaluation roadmap and completed recruitment
II. Design/Inception	Apr – Mid May 2026	Introductory consultations with UNCT, Government, EU and civil society. Reconstruction of the Theory of Change, focusing on output - outcome linkages. Development of the Evaluation Design Matrix (EDM), including final evaluation questions, indicators, assumptions, and data sources. Sampling strategy, fieldwork plan, stakeholder mapping and ethical risk mitigation. Submission, review, and approval of the Inception Report (ESC approval required).	Evaluation Team Leader (ETL), EMG, EM, ESC	Inception Report approved
III. Fieldwork (collection of qualitative and quantitative evidence)	June 2026	Key informant interviews with government, municipalities, UN agencies, EU Delegation, donors, civil society, private sector. Focus groups with rights-holders (women, youth, Roma/Egyptian communities, migrants, persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups).	Evaluation Team Leader (ETL), EMG	Primary data collection completed

		Field visits to regions demonstrating territorial disparities (north, coast, Podgorica). Extraction and review of quantitative and administrative data. Ongoing triangulation and validation with EMG.		
IV. Reporting (Analysis, reporting, quality assurance and validation)	July and August 2026	Data analysis and synthesis aligned to evaluation criteria. Drafting of key findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and actionable recommendations for the next UNSDCF. Submission of the Draft Evaluation Report to EMG for internal quality assurance. Feedback integration and preparation of the Final Evaluation Report. Validation workshop(s) with Government, UNCT, EU, civil society, and other partners. Final endorsement by the ESC.	Evaluation Team Leader (ETL), EM, UNCT, ESC	Final Evaluation Report
V. Use & Management Response (Management response is finalized in parallel with report endorsement)	Sep 2026	UNCT and Government jointly produce a Management Response with concrete commitments and timelines. Dissemination of findings to national partners, UNCT, development partners and rights-holders. Integration of findings into the updated CCA and the design of the next UNSDCF/ or UNSDCF corresponding document. Uploading the final report and management response to UN/DCO platforms.	EMG, UNCT	Management Response finalized and disseminated

8. Evaluation Deliverables

The Evaluation Team will be responsible for producing the following key deliverables. All deliverables must be prepared in **English**, using the **standard templates** provided in the **UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines (2021 revised)** and any formats agreed with the Evaluation Manager. All deliverables must adhere to **UNEG Norms and Standards**, the **UNEG Code of Conduct**, and the **UNSDCF Evaluation Quality Assurance System (EQAS)**. They must ensure gender responsive, disability inclusive, human rights based, environmentally aware evaluation practices; use clear and concise language, with evidence-based argumentation; apply triangulation of data sources; be free of conflict of interest; and reflect a transparent audit trail of evidence

used. A detailed schedule for deliverable submission will be finalized in the **Inception Report**, but indicative deadlines aligned with the agreed timeline (completion by September 2026) are provided below.

Deliverable	Timeline	Main Content	Format/Length	Quality Assurance
Inception Report	Mid-May 2026	Reconstructed ToC; Methodology; Sampling; Data plan; Ethics; GE/HR/Disability/LNOB; Workplan; Docs & interview list	Word template (provided), 20–30 pages	EMG review; ESC approval; QA Checklist
Preliminary Findings Presentation	July 2026	Emerging findings; Initial conclusions; Bottlenecks/enablers; <i>No recommendations unless agreed</i>	PowerPoint template (provided) Presentation in validation meeting	EMG review; ESC feedback
Draft Evaluation Report	End of August 2026	Exec summary; Context; Methodology; Findings; Cross-cutting; Coordination; Conclusions; Recs; Lessons; Annexes	Word template (provided) Approx. 40–60 pages (excl. annexes)	EMG review; ESC feedback; EQA if required
Final Evaluation Report	End of September 2026	Integrated feedback; Evidence-based narrative; Updated annexes; UN contribution & recommendations	Word + PDF (professionally formatted) 40–60 pages (excl. annexes)	QA Checklist; ESC approval; Upload to platforms

Follow-up and validation

The findings of the evaluation report will be reviewed jointly by Evaluation Steering Committee, (ESC). The UNCT will draft a management response outlining how the evaluation findings will be applied, including a timeframe and responsibilities for follow up.

Lessons learned from the evaluation will be extracted and disseminated by the UNCT in order to contribute to strategic planning, learning, advocacy and decision-making at all levels, including for the formulation of the CF successor document. The full evaluation report will be made public through the UN Montenegro website and shared in the form of electronic and hard copies to the key national stakeholders.

Evaluation deliverables and estimated number of working days

Deliverables	Estimated working days for the International expert	Estimated working days for the National expert
Inception phase (desk review; meetings with UNCT, EMG, etc)	7 days	3 days
Inception report	8 days	6 days
Field phase data collection (online and in person)	14 days	13 days
Data analysis and First draft	14 days	10 days

Final draft	6 days	4 days
Final presentation event	1 day	
Total	50 days	36 days

9. Evaluation budget and payment schedule

Funding for the UNSDCF 2023-27 evaluation will be provided by the Special Purpose Trust Fund (SPTF) allocation to the Office of the Resident Coordinator. Payments will be tied to deliverables as follows:

No.	Deliverables/Outputs	Target Due Dates	Payment
1	Satisfactory completion of the inception report	June 2026	30%
2	Submission of first draft report	July 2026	30%
3	Submission and approval of final report and PPT presentation	September 2026	40%

10. Administrative issues

The Team Leader and National Team Member will be responsible for their own travel arrangements. No additional costs outside of the scope of this TOR will be covered. The consultants will have to possess their own computer and other technical equipment to complete the assignment. The documents produced during the period of this consultancy will be treated strictly confidential and the rights of distribution and/or publication shall solely reside with the United Nations Country Team in Montenegro.

ANNEX 9: INCEPTION REPORT

INCEPTION REPORT

FINAL EVALUATION UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK (UNSDCF) FOR MONTENEGRO (2023-2027)

*Prepared by UNSDCF Final Evaluation Team:
Tomislav Novović, Team Leader
Olivera Komar, Senior Evaluation Expert*

*May 2026
Podgorica, Montenegro*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CAZAS	Montenegrin Association Against AIDS (NGO)
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CF	Cooperation Framework
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTUM	Confederation of Trade Unions of Montenegro
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
EIB	European Investment Bank
EM	Evaluation Manager
EMG	Evaluation Management Group
EQ	Evaluation Question
EQAS	Evaluation Quality Assurance System
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ERP	Economic Reform Programme
ESC	Evaluation Steering Committee
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
F2F	Face-to-Face
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FE	Final Evaluation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	Gender Equality

GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation)
HEMIAS	HEMIAS Foundation (philanthropic foundation, Montenegro)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JC	Judgement Criterion / Criteria
JSC	Joint Steering Committee (MAF)
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Development Bank)
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind
MAF	Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund
MAPS	Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMR₁	Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccine (first dose)
MNE	Montenegro
MONSTAT	Statistical Office of Montenegro
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
N.D.	Not dated
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMT	Operations Management Team

OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
QA	Quality Assurance
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
RG	Results Group (RG1, RG2, RG3)
RRF	Results and Resources Framework
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEPA	Single Euro Payments Area
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SP	Strategic Priority (SP1, SP2, SP3)
SQ	Sub-Question
SWD	Staff Working Document (European Commission)
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TUI	TUI Care Foundation
UFTUM	Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNINFO	UN information management platform
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WHO	World Health Organization
ZID	NGO Association for Democratic Prosperity (Montenegro)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	<i>Background – UNSDCF evaluation context 45</i>
2.1	Introduction 45
2.2	Country Context 45
2.3	UNSDCF Montenegro (2023–2027) – Main Characteristics 48
3	<i>Purpose, Scope and Users 50</i>
3.1	Purpose of the evaluation 50
3.2	The main objectives of the CF evaluation 50
3.3	The scope of the CF Evaluation 51
4	<i>Evaluation Criteria and Methodology 51</i>
4.1	The evaluation approach 51
4.2	Evaluation questions and criteria 52
4.3	The evaluation process and methodology 56
5	<i>UNSDCF Evaluation Matrix 64</i>
6	<i>Theory Of Change 77</i>
7	<i>Evaluation Work Plan and Management Arrangements 81</i>
7.1	Overall work plan 81
7.2	Management arrangements 84
8	<i>EVALUABILITY, RISKS AND LIMITATIONS 86</i>
8.1	Evaluability 86
8.2	Risks and Limitations and mitigation measures 87
9	<i>Annexes 89</i>
	Annex 1: List of Documents Consulted 89
	Annex 2. Comprehensive Stakeholder Map 92
	Annex 2.1 Justification of the Comprehensive stakeholder map 101
	Annex 2.2. Stakeholder prioritisation summary 102
	Annex 2.3. Indicative stakeholder sampling summary 103
	Annex 2.4. Geographic sampling note 104
	<i>Rights-holder consultation note (HRBA and safeguards) 105</i>
	<i>Stakeholder-method matrix 106</i>
	<i>Supporting stakeholder mapping files reviewed 107</i>
	Annex 3: Interview Guides 108
	Annex 3.2. ONLINE Questionnaire for UN Management and Programme / Project Staff 121
	Annex 3.3. ONLINE Questionnaire for UN Operations Staff 128

Annex 3.4. ONLINE Questionnaire for NATIONAL PARTNERS 133**Annex 4: Tentative Agenda of In-Country Visit And Proposed Meetings 136****TABLE OF FIGURES AND TABLES**

Table 1: Strategic priorities and outcomes of UNSDCF	49
Table 3: UNSDCF evaluation matrix	64
Table 4: Work plan	81
Table 5: Key Deliverables and Indicative Deadlines	83
Table 6: Key Actors and Principal Responsibilities	85
Table 7: Risks and limitations and mitigation measures overview	87
Figure 1: Phases of UNSDCF Montenegro Final Evaluation.....	57
Figure 2: UNSDCF Theory of Change.....	78
Figure 3: Overall Evaluation Work Plan.....	82
Figure 4: Key Deliverables and Milestones	83
Figure 5: Evaluation Governance and Management Structure	84

2 BACKGROUND – UNSDCF EVALUATION CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

General Assembly resolution A/RES/72/279 designated the United Nations Development Assistance Framework as the most important instrument for planning and implementing United Nations development activities at country level in support of the 2030 Agenda. Renamed the **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework** (hereinafter CF or UNSDCF), it represents the centerpiece of UN reform and the collective response of the UN development system to national priorities and development challenges.

In Montenegro, the **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (CF 2023-2027)** serves as the medium-term strategic framework through which the UN system supports the country's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the fulfilment of international human rights commitments, and the advancement of the EU accession agenda.

The **Final UNSDCF Evaluation** is an external and independent exercise aimed at generating an impartial assessment of progress, achievements, constraints and lessons learned under the current cycle in order to inform principal stakeholders and feed into the next programming cycle. In line with the Montenegro ToR, the evaluation is being conducted in **2026**, the penultimate year of implementation. It is guided by the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation and the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines, and is expected to serve both accountability and learning purposes by informing the design of the next Cooperation Framework, or a corresponding programming instrument, depending on the future nature of UN presence in Montenegro after 2028.

The primary goal of the Inception Phase was to reaffirm the nature, objectives and process of the Final Evaluation of UNSDCF as outlined in the ToR. During this phase, a comprehensive desk review of secondary data was conducted, including critical documents from the Evaluation Manager and UN Agencies, key national strategies and action plans, statistics, and reports from development partners in Montenegro. Initial discussions with the UN RCO, UNSDCF Evaluation Manager (EM), the Evaluation Management Group (EMG) focused on refining scope, evaluation approaches and methodology and identifying potential interviewees. The EMG compiled and delivered a selection of secondary data to the Evaluation Team (ET) and identified key stakeholders for the in-country mission, including representatives from UN agencies, Montenegrin government ministries, donors and other partners involved in UNSDCF preparation and implementation.

The Inception Report outlines the specific methodology for the final UNSDCF evaluation, detailing the approach the ET will take to analyze UNSDCF relevance, coherence, performance, and progress toward outcomes. Furthermore, the Inception Report provides an overview of the methodology, sampling, data collection and analysis methods aligned with the evaluation criteria. It includes the detailed evaluation matrix based on the ToR/guidance questions, which integrates all evaluation criteria, core questions and specific questions, indicators, source of verification and data collection method. Additionally, the Inception Report includes comprehensive stakeholder mapping, interview guides tailored to different stakeholders and an example of online survey questionnaires, work plan and deliverables as well as a draft of in-country visit agenda.

2.2 COUNTRY CONTEXT¹

Montenegro is a small upper-middle-income country in the Western Balkans, a NATO member and EU candidate country advancing toward the final stages of accession, whose development trajectory continues to be shaped by the accession process and by the interaction between economic vulnerability, demographic

¹ Data derived from the UNCT Montenegro Common Country Assessments (2023-2025).

change and governance reform². Like several countries in the region, Montenegro is facing increasingly adverse demographic trends, including population ageing, a shrinking labour force, and continued out-migration from rural and northern municipalities, many of which now have an average age above 43.³ The 2023 census also confirmed significant demographic shifts, including the presence of over 40,000 foreign nationals, mainly from Russia, Ukraine and Türkiye, while around 44,000 Montenegrins were recorded as living abroad, particularly from northern areas. These pressures affect labour supply, local development, social services and long-term demographic sustainability. In the decades preceding the current UNSDCF, Montenegro struggled with a narrow economic base, high dependence on tourism and imports, regional disparities, and recurrent exposure to external shocks. More recent reforms have improved disposable income and helped sustain growth and employment, but structural vulnerabilities remain pronounced⁴.

Montenegro's development priorities are aligned with the 2030 Agenda, international human rights commitments and the strategic goal of EU membership, with strong complementarities between these processes⁵. Accession negotiations were opened in 2012, all 33 chapters have been opened, and the country entered a more advanced phase after the setting of the closing benchmarks for Chapters 23 and 24 in June 2024. The 2025 European Commission report notes that Montenegro subsequently advanced with the provisional closure of additional chapters and maintained its focus on European integration despite domestic political tensions⁶. At the same time, the CCA update underlines that while the EU accession framework has provided the predominant anchor for legal harmonisation, governance reforms and economic modernisation, there remain important SDGs that are off-track and structural constraints that are likely to persist beyond accession unless implementation capacity and institutional effectiveness improve.

In the past four years, Montenegro has continued to implement reforms aimed at aligning its legal, political and economic systems with EU standards. The 2025 European Commission report points to progress in several areas, including aspects of judicial reform, anti-corruption legislation, digital transformation, selected internal market chapters, education reform, public financial management, and some parts of the green agenda. Progress has also been recorded in company law, intellectual property, financial services, public procurement and financial control, while further reforms remain necessary in statistics, social policy and employment, public administration, environment and climate change, and implementation of core rule-of-law commitments. The 2025 CCA update similarly identifies several consolidated gains and near-term enabling factors, including continued EU track credibility, SEPA integration, stronger climate ambition, adoption of the 2025–2035 Education Strategy, and continued poverty reduction.

At the same time, progress on gender equality has remained uneven. Recent analytical and treaty-body evidence points to persistent gender inequalities, including lower labour-market participation of women and a continuing gender pay gap, the underrepresentation of women in decision-making processes, and the unequal distribution of unpaid care responsibilities. Women and girls also continue to face gender-based violence and discriminatory social norms, particularly in rural areas and among those facing multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage.

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Montenegro embedded SDG implementation within its broader national development and accession architecture rather than through a single standalone mechanism. In practice, progress on the SDGs is advanced through the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016–2030, the Economic Reform Programme, the Reform Agenda under the EU Growth Plan, sectoral strategies, MONSTAT reporting, and the broader accession process. The CCA update stresses that stronger cross-sectoral coordination, more systematic use of disaggregated data and clearer institutional accountability remain essential if SDG commitments are to be translated into results, especially in areas where reforms are advanced on paper but weakly implemented in practice.⁷

While many challenges remain, Montenegro continues to make progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda in several areas. The latest iteration of the Sustainable Development Report places Montenegro as

² United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023–2027* and United Nations Country Team Montenegro, *Terms of Reference: UNSDCF Evaluation, Montenegro* (2026).

³ United Nations Montenegro, *Common Country Analysis Update 2025 and 2024*.

⁴ World Bank, *Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No. 29: Adjusting to Shocks, Mobilizing Untapped Potential*, Spring 2026.

⁵ United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023–2027* and United Nations Country Team Montenegro, *Terms of Reference: UNSDCF Evaluation, Montenegro* (2026).

⁶ European Commission, *Montenegro 2025 Report*, Commission Staff Working Document, SWD(2025) 754 final/2, Brussels, 11/2025.

⁷ Ibidem, CCA

55th out of 193 countries, yet the CCA update cautions that cross-country ranking alone risks obscuring important contextual vulnerabilities and implementation gaps. The same update identifies seven thematic areas that currently shape broader sustainable development in Montenegro: good governance and effective institutions, human rights and civic participation, employment, skills and demographic sustainability, quality and equity in human capital development, inequality and social inclusion, climate action and biodiversity preservation and gender equality. These areas were selected because they are highly relevant to Montenegro's current development trajectory, correspond to SDG targets where progress is uneven or lagging, and carry systemic implications across sectors⁸. At the same time, the UNSDCF was developed against a backdrop in which Montenegro was already classified as a very high human development country, yet still faced sizeable gaps in inclusion, service quality, and institutional performance.

The most recent evidence points to a mixed pattern of progress and continuing vulnerability. Poverty has declined to an estimated 7.5 per cent in 2025, yet the risk of poverty remained 20 per cent in 2024, with children and single-parent families particularly exposed. Youth unemployment stood at 25.9 per cent, reflecting persistent structural labour-market weaknesses. Sub-national disparities remain wide, driven by demographic decline in the north, uneven consumption patterns, and rising housing prices, particularly in coastal municipalities, which increasingly disadvantage younger households. Health service pressures also remain significant, including high out-of-pocket spending, workforce shortages, and one of the lowest MMR1 immunisation coverages in Europe among children born in 2023, while education outcomes continue to lag EU averages and show persistent disparities affecting Roma children and other vulnerable groups. These trends underscore that Montenegro's main development challenge is not only accelerating aggregate progress, but doing so in ways that reduce inequality and ensure that groups furthest behind benefit from reform and growth. The pattern of vulnerability is also gendered. Available evidence points to continued labour-market inequalities between women and men, gaps in access to economic opportunities and services for women in rural areas, and persistent risks related to violence and discrimination, reinforcing the need to assess progress through sex-disaggregated and equity-sensitive evidence wherever such data are available.

The 2025 European Commission report, read together with complementary UN and treaty-body assessments, points to a broadly positive but uneven reform trajectory. For the purposes of this evaluation, the most relevant issue is not simply the existence of legal and strategic frameworks, but the capacity of institutions to implement them consistently, coordinate across sectors, use evidence effectively, and deliver tangible results for people, especially vulnerable groups.

On rule of law and justice, both the European Commission and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers underline continuing institutional and practical constraints, including vacancies, backlogs, infrastructure and ICT weaknesses, and barriers affecting judicial independence, prosecutorial effectiveness and access to justice. These findings reinforce that implementation capacity and institutional performance remain central contextual factors for the evaluation.

On civic space and freedom of expression, the European Commission and the 2025 Human Rights Committee observations point to persistent implementation gaps, including attacks and intimidation against journalists, concerns related to media freedom safeguards, and weaknesses in broader human rights implementation mechanisms. These issues are relevant to the evaluation insofar as they shape the enabling environment for accountable governance, participation and rights realization.

The background evidence suggests that Montenegro's central challenge is now implementation: translating reforms, coordination mechanisms and strategic commitments into consistent delivery, stronger institutions and more equitable outcomes. This is the main contextual lens through which the evaluation will examine CF relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and contribution.

Montenegro's strategic planning framework increasingly integrates national development objectives, SDG commitments and EU accession requirements. This framework is articulated through the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016–2030, the Economic Reform Programme, the Reform Agenda under the

⁸ Ibidem, UN CCA

Growth Plan, and a wide range of sectoral strategies and action plans.⁹ The UNSDCF itself is explicitly anchored in Montenegro's priorities, including E

U accession, the 2030 Agenda and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, with a focus on recovery, economic growth, sustainable management and use of natural resources, quality and inclusive services, effective social and child protection, enhanced public sector performance, and stronger realisation of the rule of law and human rights.¹⁰

The **Economic Reform Programme (ERP)** forms a key part of Montenegro's strategic planning architecture. As reflected in the EC report, the ERP links macroeconomic stability, fiscal governance and structural reform, while also serving as a bridge between national economic planning and the EU accession framework.¹¹ It addresses fiscal sustainability, labour market reform, public administration improvement, SOE governance, business environment, digitalisation and competitiveness. At the same time, wider sectoral strategies address the specific areas most relevant to Montenegro's medium-term development path. These include the Public Administration Reform Strategy, Public Finance Management Reform Programme, the new Education Reform Strategy 2025–2035, Judicial Reform Strategy, Digital Transformation Strategy, National Gender Equality Strategy, strategies related to migration and reintegration, social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians, social and child protection reform, science and research, as well as the National Adaptation Plan and broader energy and climate planning instruments.¹²

Montenegro's strategic framework therefore reflects a multidimensional approach to development, centred on three mutually reinforcing imperatives: economic transformation and environmental sustainability; investment in human and social capital; and stronger governance, rule of law and institutional accountability.¹³ In effect, the country's future progress depends not only on sustaining the accession process, but on ensuring that the reforms introduced through that process are actually implemented, financed, monitored and translated into measurable results for all people, especially those who continue to face vulnerability, exclusion and unequal access to opportunity.¹⁴

2.3 UNSDCF MONTENEGRO (2023–2027) – MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

The Government of Montenegro and the United Nations Country Team jointly developed the UNSDCF for the period 2023–2027, which was signed in Podgorica on 20 July 2022 and became effective from January 2023. The Framework articulates the collective vision and response of the UN development system to national development priorities and is intended to support Montenegro in achieving the 2030 Agenda, implementing international human rights commitments, and advancing along the EU accession path. It was developed through the internally prepared Common Country Analysis and a broad consultative process involving government institutions, development partners, civil society, and specific consultations with women and youth.

The UNSDCF was explicitly designed to complement the EU agenda and prioritise policy and institutional reforms that can accelerate SDG progress, strengthen the implementation of international human rights obligations, and improve readiness for EU membership benefits and obligations. The MAPS exercise carried out earlier in Montenegro demonstrated strong synergies between SDG implementation and EU accession, indicating that achieving EU accession benchmarks could significantly advance SDG targets, especially through Chapters 27 on the environment and climate change, 23 on the judiciary and fundamental rights, and 19 on social policy and employment. In this sense, the UNSDCF is both a development framework and a strategic vehicle through which UN normative support, technical assistance, convening power and capacity development are aligned to the country's medium-term reform trajectory.

⁹ European Commission, *Montenegro 2025 Report* and United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023–2027*.

¹⁰ United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023–2027*

¹¹ European Commission, *Montenegro 2025 Report*

¹² United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023–2027*

¹³ European Commission, *Montenegro 2025 Report*

¹⁴ European Commission, *Montenegro 2025 Report*, United Nations Montenegro, *Common Country Analysis Update 2025* and United Nations Country Team Montenegro, *Terms of Reference: UNSDCF Evaluation, Montenegro (2026)*

The Framework is organised around three interdependent strategic priorities:

Table 1: Strategic priorities and outcomes of UNSDCF

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOME
Strategic Priority 1 – Inclusive Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability	By 2027, all people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved management and state of natural resources and increasingly innovative, competitive, gender-responsive and inclusive economic development that is climate resilient and low-carbon.
Strategic Priority 2 – Human Capital Development, Reducing Vulnerability and Social Inclusion	By 2027, all people, especially the vulnerable, increasingly benefit from equitable, gender-responsive and universally accessible social and child protection systems and quality services, including labour market activation and capabilities. By 2027, all people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from strengthened human capital including early childhood development, and more resilient, gender-responsive, and quality healthcare and education.
Strategic Priority 3 – Social Cohesion, People-Centred Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights	By 2027, all people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved social cohesion, increased realization of human rights and rule of law, and accountable, gender-responsive institutions.

The strategic priorities and outcomes reflect both Montenegro's development needs and the UN's comparative advantage in supporting the country's transition. The Framework is grounded in a theory of change that links economic transformation and environmental sustainability, strengthened human capital and social protection, and more effective, accountable institutions as mutually reinforcing pathways toward reduced multidimensional poverty, improved social justice and inclusion, and greater readiness for EU membership. Its cross-cutting emphasis on LNOB, gender equality, human rights, data and digitalisation is intended to ensure that progress is not judged only by aggregate outcomes, but also by the extent to which those furthest behind benefit from reform and development gains.

Specifically, the ToC posits that progress toward sustainable development in Montenegro depends on a combination of economic transformation, strengthened human capital and social protection, and stronger institutions, rule of law and rights realisation. The theory of change further emphasises several cross-cutting themes: leaving no one behind, gender equality and women's empowerment, EU accession, the use of disaggregated data, and digital transformation.

The implementation of the UNSDCF is operationalised through a joint governance structure. The Joint Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the UN Resident Coordinator, serves as the highest oversight body. For implementation, one Results Group is established for each strategic priority, bringing together UN entities and relevant government representatives. These Results Groups are responsible for Joint Work Plans, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning plans, progress monitoring, and identifying opportunities for joint programming and course correction. In support of the Results Groups, the UNSDCF also envisages thematic and programme support structures, including the Gender and Human Rights Working Group, the SDG Working Group, the Operations Management Team and the Joint UN Communications Team. Progress data and reporting are linked to UN Info and annual performance review processes.

The UNCT configuration for the Montenegro UNSDCF combines resident and non-resident capacities. According to the ToR, the in-country entities include UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, IOM, UNHCR, ILO, OHCHR, FAO and UNESCO, while non-resident or regional agencies include UNECE, UN Women, UNIDO, UNODC, UNDRR,

ITU, IFAD and UNEP, with UNCTAD joining in 2025. The Framework is financed through a mix of core and non-core resources and innovative financing arrangements, including the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund, which aggregates resources for UNSDCF-aligned priorities and includes a EUR 1 million contribution from the Government, complemented by EU and bilateral partner support.

3 PURPOSE, SCOPE AND USERS

Evaluation of the UNSDCF is a mandatory independent system-wide country evaluation and is distinct from annual review processes. Cooperation Framework evaluations serve accountability and learning functions and inform decisions on the design of subsequent programming cycles. They assess the contribution of the Cooperation Framework by examining achieved development results, as well as gaps, constraints and overlaps affecting progress towards the SDGs. Such evaluations are guided by the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation and by the Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UNSDCF. They are expected to be credible, impartial and methodologically rigorous. Within this context, the Final Evaluation of the UNSDCF in Montenegro is an external and independent exercise designed to generate an objective assessment of achievements, challenges, lessons learned and emerging implications for future UN engagement, in the penultimate year of implementation of the current Cooperation Framework.

3.1 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

Against this background, the **purpose of the Final Evaluation** of the UNSDCF is two-fold:

- *Promote greater learning and operational improvement.* The evaluation will generate forward-looking and actionable learning to inform future programming and the strategic positioning of the UN system. In particular, it will help assess the effectiveness and efficiency of coordination mechanisms, joint programming approaches and financing modalities in supporting system-level results, accelerating SDG progress, and strengthening coherence across the UN offer.
- *Support greater accountability of the UNCT to UNSDCF stakeholders.* By providing an objective and evidence-based assessment of progress towards expected results, the evaluation will support accountability to national institutions, development partners, civil society, rights-holders and the wider public. It will assess the UN's collective contribution to national development priorities, international human rights commitments and SDGs, including the effectiveness of strategies, technical assistance, partnerships, coordination arrangements and the use of resources.

3.2 THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE CF EVALUATION

The **main objectives** of the Final CF Evaluation are to:

- *Assess the contribution of the UNSDCF to national development results* through evidence-based judgments using the agreed evaluation criteria.
- *Identify the factors that have enabled or constrained performance*, including policy, institutional, financing, partnership and coordination factors, and explain why progress has occurred or where and why it has fallen short.
- *Reach conclusions on the UN's overall contribution* across the scope of the UNSDCF, including cross-cutting patterns related to gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and Leaving No One Behind.
- *Provide actionable, forward-looking and feasible recommendations for future UN programming.* These recommendations should be clearly grounded in the findings and conclusions of the evaluation and informed by the lessons emerging from implementation.

The evaluation will provide key information on achieved development results primarily to the Government of Montenegro, the UN Country Team, including resident and non-resident agencies, and the wider United Nations Development System. It will also serve as an important source of information for the Development Coordination Office, the EU Delegation, bilateral donors, civil society organisations, including organisations

of persons with disabilities, and other partners engaged in Montenegro's development and reform agenda. More broadly, it will support learning and accountability for academia, private sector actors, regional UN entities and other stakeholders with an interest in Montenegro's development trajectory and the role of the UN system within it.

3.3 THE SCOPE OF THE CF EVALUATION

The scope of the Final Evaluation has been determined as follows:

- **Programme scope:** The evaluation will cover the UNSDCF 2023–2027 in Montenegro as a whole and its implementation architecture across all three strategic priorities, outcomes and associated outputs. It will examine UN contributions to policy and systems change, institutional and capacity strengthening, programme effectiveness and outcome-level progress, UN coherence and coordination, financing for development, and the adaptability of the UN system to changing political, economic and social conditions. Particular attention will be paid to the integration and application of the core programming principles and normative commitments of the Cooperation Framework, including gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights and non-discrimination, disability inclusion, Leaving No One Behind, child-centred and gender-sensitive approaches, and environmental sustainability. In line with the evaluation guidelines, the evaluation team will also draw on existing evaluative evidence, including relevant agency-specific, joint and thematic evaluations, as part of the broader evidence base.
- **Time scope:** The evaluation will cover the implementation period from **January 2023 to June 2026**, corresponding to the first four years of implementation of the UNSDCF 2023–2027.
- **Geographic scope:** The evaluation will be national in scope, while remaining sensitive to territorial disparities and the LNOB principle. Given that many stakeholders and institutions are concentrated at central level, much of the evaluation can be conducted through national-level coverage. At the same time, the evaluation may include selected sub-national inquiry and field visits, to the extent agreed during inception, particularly in areas that help illustrate territorial disparities, implementation bottlenecks and service-delivery challenges. The indicative fieldwork framework foresees possible visits to **Podgorica**, the **coastal region** and the **north**.
- **Users:** Primary users of the evaluation will include institutions and stakeholders directly involved in the implementation and oversight of the UNSDCF, including the Government of Montenegro at central and local levels, the UN Country Team and participating UN entities, the Development Coordination Office, development partners, civil society organisations and relevant coordination platforms. Secondary users will include academia, private sector actors, regional UN entities and the wider public.

4 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 THE EVALUATION APPROACH

The proposed evaluation methodology is grounded in the Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks issued by the United Nations Development Coordination Office and the United Nations Evaluation Group. This approach aligns with evaluation standards established by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and conforms to the Norms and Standards for evaluations established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). The review will focus on six key evaluation criteria: relevance and adaptability, coherence and coordination, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and orientation towards impact. Additionally, the review will explicitly incorporate cross-cutting issues including gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), child rights, human rights and non-discrimination, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Because the object of the evaluation is the Cooperation Framework as a collective strategic instrument, the analysis will focus on CF-level results, available indicators, official reporting and collective coordination arrangements, while

drawing on Joint Work Plans and agency-level evidence only insofar as they help assess the CF's overall performance and contribution.

In its design and implementation, the Cooperation Framework evaluation will align with UN Women standards and with the principles of gender-responsive evaluation. It will also integrate child-rights considerations in line with relevant UN guidance, while keeping the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines as the principal methodological reference for the exercise. Accordingly, the evaluation criteria, questions, indicators, methods and analysis will systematically assess results from the perspective of gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEWE), child rights, and broader LNOB and human-rights commitments. At the same time, the evaluation process will promote the meaningful, safe and equitable participation and representation of women and men throughout all stages of the exercise.

The evaluation will adopt a participatory and consultative approach, ensuring that key stakeholders and national partners are engaged throughout the evaluation process and that their views and feedback are reflected in the analysis, validation of findings, and formulation of conclusions and recommendations. Early and sustained stakeholder engagement will strengthen national ownership and enhance the evaluation's utility for the remainder of the current UNSDCF cycle and for the design of the next programming cycle. The evaluation will include both internal and external consultative processes. The Evaluation Team will work closely with the Resident Coordinator, the Resident Coordinator's Office, the UN Country Team, Results Groups and thematic groups, as well as representatives of government institutions and other key stakeholders, including development partners, civil society organisations, the private sector and academia.

Ethical considerations. The evaluation will adhere to the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016) and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020) at every stage of the process. Ethical safeguards will cover, at a minimum, informed consent, voluntary participation, privacy, confidentiality, data protection and the avoidance of harm. The inception report will identify the ethical risks relevant to the evaluation and specify measures to mitigate them and ensure compliance with applicable standards throughout the process. Dedicated interviews or focus groups with children are not currently envisaged, because the evaluation assesses CF-level progress under outcomes and strategic priorities rather than the performance of individual agency interventions. Child-related evidence will therefore be drawn primarily from secondary data and from consultations with institutions, service providers, CSOs and youth representatives. If any evidence activity directly involving children or adolescents becomes necessary, it will be subject to additional child-rights-based and safeguarding protocols, including informed consent and assent procedures, in line with relevant UNICEF ethical guidance.

The Evaluation Team will uphold the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and accountability throughout the exercise. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to interviews, focus groups or any other form of consultation. Participants will be clearly informed about the purpose of the evaluation, the intended use of the information they provide, and their right to decline to answer specific questions or to withdraw from the process at any stage without consequence.

The privacy and confidentiality of respondents will be protected throughout the evaluation. Sensitive information will be handled with particular care, and data will be stored securely in a manner that prevents the identification of individual informants where confidentiality has been assured. The Evaluation Team will not disclose confidential information without appropriate authorisation and will ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced back to its source where this could expose respondents to risk or reprisal. Interview notes and other primary data will be retained in secure files for the duration of the evaluation process and used solely for evaluative purposes.

The Evaluation Team will remain alert to any actual or potential conflicts of interest and will ensure that the evaluation is conducted in a manner that safeguards the rights, dignity and safety of all participants. Throughout the process, the evaluation will be carried out with due professional care and in full respect of ethical standards, ensuring a rigorous, transparent and trustworthy assessment.

4.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND CRITERIA

The evaluation will assess the UNSDCF using the criteria established in the ToR and consistent with the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines: Relevance and Adaptability, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence and Coordination, Sustainability, and Orientation towards Impact.

Across all criteria, the analysis will be theory-based and aligned with the UNSDCF theory of change and results framework. Gender equality and the empowerment of women, human rights and non-discrimination, including disability inclusion, Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), child-centred and gender-sensitive approaches, and environmental sustainability will be integrated across the evaluation as cross-cutting analytical lenses.

4.2.1 Finalisation of the evaluation questions

The ToR presents an initial set of **indicative** evaluation questions and explicitly allows the Evaluation Team to refine them during the inception phase to ensure feasibility and alignment with available data and resources. The UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines further note that evaluation questions should be clear, specific, relevant, directly grounded in the theory of change, limited to a manageable number, and supported by an Evaluation Design Matrix that unpacks them by outlining assumptions, indicators, methods, and sources.

In this context, the questions have been lightly revised rather than fundamentally restructured. The purpose of the revision is to improve clarity, reduce overlap, and make the evaluation framework more operational. In particular, several embedded sub-questions in the ToR have been shifted out of the main question wording and will instead be treated through the judgment criteria / assumptions to be assessed in the Evaluation Design Matrix. This applies especially to issues such as unintended effects, which groups or territories benefited more or less, the bottlenecks that constrained results, and the remaining system-level changes that are hardest to achieve. The revised question set is therefore intended to assess not only the extent of progress, but also how results were pursued and why progress was or was not achieved, using concrete examples and evidence. The modifications concern formulation and evaluability, not a reduction of substantive scope. Montenegro-specific issues identified in the ToR remain fully retained, including the voices of marginalized groups, the UN's comparative advantage, the role of the post-reform Resident Coordinator system, the performance and value added of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund, and the question of the UN's contribution to Montenegro's accession and post-accession trajectory. Joint Work Plans and agency interventions will be examined as implementation instruments of the Cooperation Framework, but they are not treated as separate objects of evaluation.

4.2.2 Relevance and Adaptability

Focus on the design process, consistency with national priorities, Agenda 2030 and SDG commitments, international human rights obligations, and adaptability to a changing context.

Under this criterion, the evaluation will assess the relevance of the UNSDCF by determining the extent to which its strategic priorities have responded to Montenegro's development needs, national reform priorities, and international and regional commitments. This assessment will analyse how well the UNSDCF aligns with and supports key areas identified in the Common Country Analysis and wider strategic framework, including the EU accession agenda. In parallel, the evaluation will examine the relevance of the UNSDCF in responding to emerging needs, especially those of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, and the extent to which UN support adapted to evolving institutional, socio-economic, territorial and demographic pressures during implementation. It will also assess whether the UNSDCF outcomes, outputs and indicators were logically connected, grounded in a sound problem analysis, and informed by adequate attention to gender equality, child rights, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB. In doing so, the evaluation will take into account the way in which CF priorities were translated into Joint Work Plans and collective implementation choices, as well as the extent to which UN support adapted to shocks and emerging needs, including migration and displacement pressures associated with the war in Ukraine.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ1.1.** To what extent has the CF integrated the key development issues and challenges identified by the Common Country Analysis and other strategic diagnostics for Montenegro?
- **EQ1.2.** To what extent are the CF objectives aligned and consistent with the needs, priorities and policies of Montenegro, including national development goals and targets, international human rights obligations, the SDGs and the EU accession agenda?

- **EQ1.3.** To what extent are the CF objectives responsive to emerging needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

4.2.3 Effectiveness

Focus on the progress of UNSDCF implementation, real-time results, and the extent to which outputs and outcomes have been achieved and translated into meaningful change.

The evaluation will assess the achievement of outputs and their contribution to the UNSDCF outcomes, examining the extent to which the envisaged results have been realized and have progressed towards intended outcome-level changes. This includes assessing whether the targets set under the UNSDCF have been met and how effectively outputs have driven progress towards the strategic priorities defined in the framework. The evaluation will also examine the extent to which the UNSDCF has contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes necessary to advance intended results, with particular attention to gender equality and women's empowerment, child rights, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability. In addition, the evaluation will assess the benefits derived by the people targeted by the interventions, especially the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including whether there were unintended effects and whether some groups or territories benefited more or less from the outcomes achieved. It will also analyse what bottlenecks limited results - including institutional capacity constraints, enforcement gaps, weaknesses in data, cross-sector coordination, governance, implementation, monitoring, participation and financing - and what course corrections appear warranted, including in relation to the remaining challenges and system-level changes that continue to be hardest to achieve. These issues will be explicitly reflected in the judgment criteria and assumptions under the effectiveness questions in the Evaluation Design Matrix. The assessment of benefits for vulnerable groups will rely on available official indicators, country results reporting and other secondary evidence, triangulated with primary qualitative data collection; where disaggregated quantitative data are limited, the evaluation will make this explicit and use qualitative evidence to assess differential effects.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ2.1.** Have the outputs envisaged in the CF been achieved, and to what extent have they contributed to progress under the CF outcomes?
- **EQ2.2.** To what extent has the CF contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes necessary for advancing its intended results?
- **EQ2.3.** What have been the benefits for the people targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

4.2.4 Efficiency

Focus on the extent to which the Cooperation Framework established and implemented clear procedures to provide coordinated support and the relationship between inputs and achieved results.

The evaluation will assess the adequacy and efficiency of the oversight, coordination and implementation structures, including oversight from the Government, the functioning of Results Groups and thematic groups, and existing monitoring and reporting practices. It will also review resource mobilisation, including joint fundraising and any relevant resource-mobilisation planning and monitoring beyond the MAF, budget allocations and delivery, and the extent to which the UNCT used results-based management to ensure a logical chain of results and a monitoring and evaluation framework capable of supporting adaptive management. In line with the Montenegro ToR, the efficiency analysis will explicitly examine the role and performance of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund, including the extent to which it achieved its intended purpose in attracting additional financing for strategic, catalytic and innovative interventions, generated value for money, and contributed to UN reform and collective UN action in Montenegro. The evaluation will also consider whether the CF collectively prioritized and, where necessary, reallocated resources according to collective priorities and changing needs, and whether financial, technical and human inputs were converted into outputs and outcomes efficiently and with due care. To the extent possible, the analysis will also consider whether the balance between programme-focused and project-focused budgeting affected collective delivery under the CF.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ3.1.** To what extent did the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund achieve its intended purpose in relation to attracting additional financing for strategic, catalytic and innovative UN interventions, value for money, and advancement of UN reform in Montenegro?
- **EQ3.2.** To what extent did the CF monitoring, evaluation and learning system, together with broader management and coordination arrangements, support adaptive management and the efficient prioritization, mobilisation, allocation and use of resources?

4.2.5 Coherence and Coordination

Focus on the coherence of the UNSDCF, its oversight and implementation frameworks, and the UN's role in coordinating with other actors.

The evaluation will assess the UNSDCF's coherence and coordination by examining the extent to which UN agency programmes and work plans have been effectively and meaningfully derived from the CF in both design and implementation. It will consider how well the strategic priorities outlined in the UNSDCF were translated into actionable programmes and work plans by the participating UN agencies and how coherently the UNCT's support has been organized across agencies and outcomes, including clarity of roles, avoidance of duplication, and use of joint programming. In addition, the evaluation will analyse the role of the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office in enabling coherence in implementation and in strengthening the UNCT's joint convening power. It will further assess how the UNSDCF promoted complementarity, harmonization and coordination among UN agencies and with key development partners, including the adequacy and efficiency of oversight, coordination and implementation structures, the functioning of Results Groups and internal inter-agency thematic groups (including gender, human rights and LNOB), and the degree of actual synergies established among UN agencies in planning, prioritization and delivery.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ4.1.** Post-UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programmes and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the CF in both design and implementation?
- **EQ4.2.** How coherent is the UNCT's support across agencies and outcomes, including clarity of roles, avoidance of duplication, use of joint programming, and the leveraging of normative mandates?
- **EQ4.3.** To what extent did the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT joint convening power and better coherence of the country team?

4.2.6 Sustainability

Focus on the sustainability of the CF results and benefits, and the extent to which the CF has developed or strengthened mechanisms that promote continuity, scaling up and replication of successful results.

The evaluation will assess the likelihood that progress achieved under the UNSDCF will be sustained over time, taking into account institutional, financial, socio-political and environmental factors. It will examine what facilitates and impedes the sustainability of CF results, including the extent to which government institutions and other national actors are committed to supporting and sustaining efforts in the relevant fields. The evaluation will also analyse whether the CF enabled innovative approaches embedded in institutional learning and national capacity development, allowing government institutions, civil society organisations and other actors to continue achieving positive results without further UN or development partner support.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ5.1.** What are the main results achieved by the CF that are likely to last and/or can be sustained without further interventions or UN support?
- **EQ5.2.** Has the CF enabled innovative approaches embedded in institutional learning for national capacity development, including government, civil society and NGOs, so that these actors can continue achieving positive results without UN or development partner support?

4.2.7 Orientation towards Impact

Focus is on the extent to which the CF contributed to higher-level change and to the well-being, rights and resilience of vulnerable groups, individuals, households and communities, with explicit attention to LNOB.

Although a formal ex-post impact evaluation is not feasible at this stage, the evaluation will assess the anticipated impact and the most plausible contribution pathways through which the UNSDCF may have influenced higher-level change. This includes systems strengthening, normative alignment, resilience and equity gains, as well as the broader trajectory of Montenegro's accession and post-accession environment. The evaluation will also assess whether UN activities stemming from the CF made a meaningful difference for beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their well-being and the realization of their human rights. This will include considering the extent to which the UN system helped strengthen evidence generation, monitoring and data use relevant to tracking the situation of beneficiaries and changes in their rights and well-being.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ6.1.** What evidence is there of the UN's contribution to higher-level change, including systems strengthening, normative alignment as a precondition to system-level change, resilience and equity gains, and what are the most plausible contribution pathways in Montenegro's accession and post-accession trajectory?
- **EQ6.2.** To what extent have UN activities stemming from the CF made a difference for beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their well-being and their human rights overall?

4.2.8 UN normative work, programming principles and cross-cutting issues

The analysis of UN normative work and core programming principles will be integrated throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation will examine the extent to which the UNCT prioritized the needs of the most vulnerable, the poor and the marginalized and whether these groups have benefited from assistance in terms of accessibility, quality and relevance. It will assess how the human rights-based approach, gender equality, disability inclusion, environmental sustainability, results-based management and capacity development have been considered and mainstreamed during both the preparation and implementation of the Cooperation Framework. These dimensions will be reflected across all criteria and questions and, where necessary, operationalized through specific assumptions, indicators and disaggregation requirements in the Evaluation Design Matrix.

4.2.9 Implications for the Evaluation Design Matrix

In line with the evaluation guidance, the Evaluation Design Matrix will be the primary analytical tool of the evaluation. It will link the evaluation questions above to the relevant criteria, assumptions or aspects to be examined, indicators, data sources, and data collection methods. The matrix will therefore carry the more detailed analytical unpacking of each question, including the treatment of unintended effects, differential benefits across groups and regions, bottlenecks and course-correction needs, and the specific contribution pathways to be tested. This structure is intended to ensure both analytical depth and operational feasibility in data collection and synthesis

4.3 THE EVALUATION PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Team (ET) followed a four-phase evaluation approach tailored to Montenegro's development, governance and accession context. This includes: an **inception phase** (refining methodology, finalising the evaluation matrix and producing the Inception Report); a **data collection phase** (desk review, key informant interviews, online partner survey and event-level feedback); an **analysis and synthesis phase** (triangulation across data sources and drafting of findings under each evaluation criterion); and a **reporting and validation phase** (preliminary findings, draft report, ERG validation and final report).

Figure 1: Phases of UNSDCF Montenegro Final Evaluation

The approach is grounded in the UNEG Norms and Standards¹⁵, the UNEG Ethical Guidelines¹⁶, and the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines¹⁷. It combines a theory-based approach with mixed methods and a strong emphasis on participation, inclusion and use.

The ET assesses the UN's collective contribution to the Cooperation Framework outcomes through the reconstruction and testing of contribution pathways, triangulation of quantitative and qualitative evidence, and systematic attention to cross-cutting dimensions such as gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion, LNOB and environmental sustainability.

Phase 1. Inception – desk review and document analysis

During the inception phase, the ET undertook a structured review of the key strategic, programmatic and evaluative documents that define the UNSDCF and its implementation environment. This phase enabled the ET to develop a comprehensive understanding of the theory of change, the results framework, the coordination architecture, financing modalities, and the broader national reform and development context within which the Cooperation Framework operates.

The desk review covered, at a minimum, the UNSDCF 2023–2027, its results framework, annual UN Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans, governance and coordination documents, the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund documentation, and available monitoring, evaluation and learning materials. These were analysed alongside key national and international reference documents, including the Common Country Analysis and its updates, relevant national strategies and legislation, national statistical and survey evidence, EU accession and progress documentation, and existing evaluative evidence produced by UN agencies, national institutions and development partners.

This review served four purposes. First, it allowed the ET to assess the conceptual soundness and operational relevance of the theory of change and identify areas requiring further clarification during fieldwork. Second, it helped the ET map major contextual developments, programme trajectories, cross-sector linkages, and key implementation bottlenecks. Third, it provided the analytical basis for the Evaluation Design Matrix, including the refinement of indicators, assumptions, evidence needs and data-collection tools. Fourth, it supported the preparation of a stakeholder mapping and sampling strategy grounded in the actual intervention footprint of the UNSDCF and in the distribution of responsibility and influence across different actors.

¹⁵ https://www.unevaluation.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/UNEGNormsStandardsforEvaluation_English-2017_1914_11512579289962.pdf

¹⁶ https://www.unevaluation.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/2020EthicalGuidelinesforEvaluation_2866_11603124552541.pdf

¹⁷ [https://www.unevaluation.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/UNSDCF%20Evaluation%20Guidelines-Engl-Revised-2025%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.unevaluation.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/UNSDCF%20Evaluation%20Guidelines-Engl-Revised-2025%20(1).pdf)

To ensure completeness and internal consistency of the Theory of Change review, the ET also used a synoptic table for the analysis of the ToC, mapping the main strategic priorities, outcomes, causal pathways, assumptions, risks, external factors and cross-cutting considerations that required further testing during the evaluation.

During the inception phase, special attention was made by the evaluation team to:

- Ensure the completeness of the sampling frame, including the inclusion of all major programme components and all relevant stakeholder groups;
- Ensure the triple representativeness of the sample of stakeholders to be consulted, namely programmatic representativeness, geographic representativeness, and stakeholder representativeness;
- Ensure a thorough analysis of the Theory of Change and, if needed, its reconstruction to reflect the actual implementation logic of the programme;
- Ensure the soundness of the evaluation questions under each criterion and the completeness of the Evaluation Design Matrix.

Sampling strategy

A purposive and stratified sampling approach will be used. The current stakeholder mapping will serve as the sampling frame, and the sample will be selected to **ensure triple representativeness: programmatic, geographic, and stakeholder**.

Programmatic representativeness means that the sample will cover all three strategic priorities and their outcomes, as well as the main cross-cutting commitments of the UNSDCF. It will deliberately include actors linked to policy and systems change, institutional capacity strengthening, social inclusion, justice and human rights, climate and environmental governance, pooled financing, digital transformation, migration, and local service delivery. Particular attention will be paid to institutions with the highest degree of programmatic exposure, including the ministries responsible for education, labour and social welfare, justice, interior, health, ecology and finance, as well as MONSTAT, the Ombudsperson and other high-exposure institutions identified through the stakeholder mapping.

Geographic representativeness means that the sample will include both national-level actors in Podgorica and selected local actors in the north and on the coast, in order to capture territorial disparities, different implementation environments and LNOB-related bottlenecks. In line with the ToR and stakeholder mapping, the northern cluster will prioritize municipalities such as Berane, Bijelo Polje and Pljevlja, while the coastal cluster will prioritize Bar and Ulcinj. These sites are particularly relevant because they concentrate issues related to youth unemployment, migration, rural disadvantage, social cohesion¹⁸, environmental pressure and differential access to services.

Stakeholder representativeness means that the sample will include duty-bearers and rights-holders, as well as institutions and organizations positioned at different points of the intervention chain. This includes UN agencies, government institutions, justice and oversight bodies, municipalities, civil society and implementing partners, child-rights and youth organizations, Roma NGOs and representatives, organizations of persons with disabilities, development partners and IFIs, academia and think tanks, private sector and social partners, and rights-holder / beneficiary groups.

The ET will tailor interview and consultation modalities to different stakeholder groups. Senior government, UN and development partner interlocutors will be approached primarily through individual semi-structured interviews. Results Groups, thematic groups, MAF governance actors and selected institutional clusters will be approached through group interviews or structured discussions where this is more efficient and analytically useful. Rights-holder perspectives will be captured primarily through FGDs or representative / mediated consultations, depending on the ethical feasibility of direct engagement. No dedicated FGDs with children are currently envisaged; child-related evidence will instead be gathered primarily through secondary data, institutional sources, CSOs and youth representatives. A brief online survey will be used mainly with UN programme and operations staff, and selectively with other stakeholders who cannot participate in person or through remote interviews.

¹⁸ The findings of the ongoing evaluation of the joint programme on social cohesion will be used in lieu of field visit, where applicable

The sampling strategy also incorporates a dedicated lens on the MAF. Rather than creating a fully separate sample, MAF-related actors will be deliberately oversampled across categories, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of European Affairs, the RC/RCO, the EU Delegation, bilateral contributors, the MPTF Office and the participating implementing agencies. This is necessary to assess the Fund's governance, strategic value, financing role and contribution to coherence and reform.

To reduce selection bias, the ET will not rely exclusively on stakeholders nominated by UN entities. While the UNCT, RCO and Results Groups remain central entry points, the ET will also use the stakeholder mapping, publicly available institutional information, prior evaluations and documentary evidence to identify additional respondents and validate the balance of the sample. This is particularly important for justice and oversight institutions, CSOs, representative organizations and rights-holder groups.

Table 2: Stakeholder sampling summary – Montenegro UNSDCF Evaluation

STAKEHOLDERS			DATA COLLECTION METHOD				
Stakeholder Type	Total number of Stakeholders identified	Representative Sample for data collection	Semi-structured Interviews (F2F)	Group interviews/ Discussions/FGDs (F2F)	Semi-structured Interviews (remote)	Group interviews/ Discussions/FGDs (remote)	Online Survey
Podgorica, central level							
UN officials (UNCT agencies + RCO)	20	16	8	4	4	–	25–30 respondents
International community (EU, bilateral donors, IFIs, selected regional / global actors)	18	10	4	–	6	–	–
Government institutions (ministries, central agencies)	18	14	8	3	3	–	–
Justice, oversight and specialized institutions	16	10	6	2	2	–	–
Civil society and implementing partners	23	12	3	5	2	2	6–8 respondents
Private sector / social partners / media	8	5	2	1	2	–	–
Academia and think tanks	4	3	1	–	2	–	–
Rights-holder / beneficiary groups (through FGDs or mediated consultation)	11 priority group types	6 consultations	–	4	–	2	–
Other							
Subtotal Podgorica / central level	118	76	32	19	21	4	31–38 respondents

Local community cluster 1: North (tentative, otherwise online interview/survey and secondary data collection will be used)							
Local self-government	3	3	3	–	–	–	–
Government / service institutions	3	3	3	–	–	–	–
Civil society / local implementing partners	3	3	–	3	–	–	–
Rights-holder groups	2	2	–	2	–	–	–
Subtotal North	11	11	6	5	–	–	–
Local community cluster 2: Coast (tentative, otherwise online interview/survey and secondary data collection will be used)							
Local self-government / city-level actors	2	2	2	–	–	–	–
Government / service institutions	1	1	1	–	–	–	–
Civil society / community partners	1	1	–	1	–	–	–
Rights-holder groups	1	1	–	1	–	–	–
Subtotal Podgorica community level	5	5	3	2	–	–	–
Indicative total sample	142	100	45	30	21	4	31–38 respondents
Total		5	5				

The proposed sample in Table 2 is indicative and will be discussed with the Evaluation Manager, the UNCT and the ESC before field implementation is finalised, in order to confirm that the final sample secures adequate coverage across programmes, stakeholder groups and geographic areas. The total number of stakeholders identified is based on the current stakeholder mapping and will be further refined through deduplication and consolidation of agency-specific lists during inception. The Evaluation Team will also monitor, to the extent possible, the gender balance of respondents and will seek a reasonably balanced representation of women and men across stakeholder categories.

Quality assurance throughout the entire evaluation process will be based on the following premises:

- the recommendations will be based on the analysis and presented in a separate section of the report; they will be clear, realistic, prioritized and actionable, and will be validated through discussion with key stakeholders; for each recommendation, the target audience, scope, expected outcome and indicative timeframe will be clearly defined.
- the lessons learned will add value to the evaluation by considering the potential implications of the findings beyond the immediate scope of UNSDCF design and implementation, including for future policymaking and development programming;
- the conclusions will build on the findings from the analysis, but go one step further by highlighting the key overall insights, successes and shortcomings of UNSDCF implementation in Montenegro during the period covered by the evaluation;
- the findings and conclusions will be based on robust evidence collected through desk review and primary data collection, triangulated and cross-referenced across sources and methods.

Additional sampling and consultation modalities

Group interviews and structured discussions will be used particularly with Results Groups, thematic groups, MAF governance actors, clusters of ministries or agencies, and some institutional partners. This modality is appropriate where the evaluation needs to capture the collective functioning of coordination mechanisms, inter-agency dynamics, or different perspectives within one institutional setting.

Focus group discussions will be used selectively and with strong ethical safeguards. They will be prioritized for stakeholder groups where interaction among participants is likely to generate richer evidence on shared barriers, access issues, inclusion, discrimination or differential outcomes. In Montenegro, this is particularly relevant for Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, youth in northern municipalities, migrants and stateless persons, and women affected by GBV, though the latter may in some cases require representative or mediated consultation rather than direct group discussion. No dedicated focus groups with children are currently envisaged, given the CF-level scope of the evaluation; child-related evidence will instead be drawn primarily from secondary sources and from consultations with institutions, service providers, CSOs and youth representatives.

The online survey will be used mainly to widen coverage of UN staff perspectives, particularly among those not interviewed directly, and may be extended selectively to implementing partners or local actors where participation constraints prevent direct engagement. The survey is not intended as a stand-alone evidence stream but as a complementary source for triangulation. For the purposes of the online data collection a state of the art professional software Dooble Survey to Go, that ensures the highest standards of data protection (<https://surveytogo.net/>) will be used.

Sampling limitations and mitigation measures

As in any country-level evaluation, there is a risk of selection bias if the sample relies too heavily on stakeholders nominated by UN entities or already closely involved in the UNSDCF coordination architecture. There is also a risk that respondents with direct ownership of the process may overstate achievements or understate implementation challenges. To mitigate these risks, the ET will apply a broad purposive sampling strategy, actively include external and less centrally positioned actors, and use systematic triangulation of documentary, statistical and interview-based evidence. In addition, the ET will seek out independent data sources and existing evaluation evidence beyond UN-generated material, including oversight reports, partner assessments and relevant national or international analyses.

A second limitation relates to the geographic concentration of institutions in Podgorica and the relatively short fieldwork window. To mitigate this, the evaluation will complement selective sub-national visits with remote interviews and use existing evaluative evidence where appropriate to strengthen territorial coverage. A third limitation concerns potential access and ethical constraints in relation to particularly vulnerable rights-holder groups. In such cases, the ET will work through established representative bodies, civil society organizations and service providers and will adapt methods to ensure safety, voluntariness and confidentiality. A fourth limitation concerns the uneven availability of official statistics disaggregated by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, geography and other vulnerability markers, which may constrain the precision of equity-focused quantitative analysis.

The findings from this phase were consolidated in the Inception Report, which defines the final evaluation methodology, the refined question set, the evaluation matrix, the sampling strategy, the fieldwork plan, the ethical risk mitigation measures, and the overall work plan for the remainder of the evaluation.

Phase 2. Data collection and analysis

The ET will employ a comprehensive approach to the final evaluation of the UNSDCF in Montenegro, integrating both summative and formative components. The evaluation is centred on the Cooperation Framework as the unit of analysis, not on the separate assessment of individual UN agencies, projects or activities. The summative dimension will critically assess the realization of results at output and outcome levels, drawing on evidence of achievements, good practices, innovations, bottlenecks and lessons learned. The formative dimension will look ahead, identifying areas for improvement, surfacing operational lessons, and informing the design of the next UNSDCF cycle or equivalent future programming arrangement.

The framework for this evaluation has been set out in the Terms of Reference and has guided the ET in developing a tailored methodology for Montenegro. The methodological approach is centered on a Theory of Change (ToC) perspective, which provides a structured way of analysing the sequence of events and causal pathways linking outputs, outcomes and broader change under the Cooperation Framework. By articulating assumptions and risks, the ToC-based approach enables the ET to assess the coherence of the UNSDCF, test the plausibility of contribution pathways, and identify the critical variables for measurement and analysis. Given the complexity of the UNSDCF - covering multiple sectors, diverse target groups, resident and non-resident agencies, and an evolving accession and reform context - the ET will complement this theory-based perspective with contribution analysis. This will help trace the logical chain from activities and outputs to observed outcomes, while considering alternative explanations and the influence of contextual factors.

Within this overall framework, the ET will apply a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative enquiry with a structured review of secondary quantitative evidence to answer the evaluation questions and ensure robust triangulation of findings. The evaluation will use a well-balanced combination of desk research, key informant interviews, group discussions, focus group discussions, field observation where relevant, a limited online survey or questionnaire used as a structured consultation tool, and reflective analytical sessions. The collection and analysis of secondary evidence - including UNSDCF and UN agency reports, Government and municipal documentation, statistical data, evaluation reports, and studies from CSOs, think tanks and development partners - will form the backbone of the desk phase. Because the object of evaluation is the CF as a collective framework, available indicators, official reports, Joint Work Plans and other secondary evidence will be used as the primary basis for assessing progress, while primary data collection will be used to triangulate, validate and explain those findings rather than to evaluate individual agency programmes as standalone objects. In line with the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines, no primary quantitative analysis is envisaged for this evaluation because the primary evidence base relies on purposive rather than statistically representative sampling. Quantitative findings presented in the evaluation will therefore be drawn from secondary sources already available and, where relevant, from financial and resource analysis.

Data collection modalities

Desk review. The desk review will provide the evidence base for understanding the intervention logic, planned and reported results, implementation context and existing monitoring data. It will also be used to identify evidence gaps, refine the evaluation questions and judgement criteria, and prepare tailored data collection tools.

Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders directly involved in the design, implementation, coordination or use of results. They will allow the evaluation to explore relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and emerging evidence of uptake or institutional change in greater depth.

Group interviews and focus group discussions. Group interviews and focus group discussions will be used where collective reflection can generate richer evidence, particularly among implementing partners, institutional beneficiaries, service providers, civil society actors or end users. These discussions will help identify shared experiences, differences in perception, and practical factors affecting the use and sustainability of results.

Online survey. Where used, the online survey will complement qualitative data collection by reaching a wider group of stakeholders and generating structured, perception-based feedback on the quality, usefulness, accessibility and perceived effects of the intervention. Survey findings will be interpreted as supplementary, non-generalizable evidence and triangulated with interviews, documents, monitoring data and any relevant financial analysis.

Direct observation and site visits. Where feasible, direct observation and site visits will be used to verify the existence, functionality, accessibility and practical use of supported outputs. This modality will help the evaluation move beyond reported results and assess whether outputs are operational, visible and relevant in their intended institutional or community setting.

Triangulation. Evidence from all modalities will be systematically triangulated to distinguish between reported achievements, stakeholder perceptions and independently verifiable evidence

of use, uptake and contribution to results. This will strengthen the credibility of findings and support balanced, evidence-based conclusions.

During the data collection phase, special attention will be given to the completeness of the sampling frame, including the inclusion of all major programme components and all relevant stakeholder groups- the triple representativeness of the sample of stakeholders. In addition, the ET will work on tailoring of interview and consultation approaches to different groups of stakeholders.

Phase 3. Synthesis and reporting

This phase will focus on the analysis and synthesis of the evidence collected during the desk and field phases and on the preparation of the draft and final evaluation reports. The ET will analyse data systematically against the Evaluation Design Matrix, using the evaluation questions, assumptions, indicators and stakeholder categories as the primary coding structure. Additional analytical categories may be added where necessary to capture cross-cutting themes, emerging patterns, territorial contrasts or stakeholder-specific perspectives. Qualitative coding software may be used to support systematic analysis of interview and focus group notes.

The analysis will proceed through triangulation across methods, sources and stakeholder categories. Findings will be derived from patterns that recur across more than one type of evidence and will be tested against available documentary and statistical material wherever possible. Interim analytical synthesis will be used during the reporting phase to identify inconsistencies, evidence gaps and emerging explanatory patterns. This will support the formulation of findings, conclusions and recommendations that are firmly grounded in evidence and clearly linked to the evaluation criteria.

The final report will present findings, conclusions and recommendations in a clear cause-and-effect logic. It will explain both what has happened and why, including the enabling and constraining factors shaping progress. Lessons learned will be distilled with a view to informing future programming, strengthening coordination and improving the strategic relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the next UNSDCF cycle or equivalent future programming arrangement. Recommendations will be actionable, prioritized and directed to the relevant stakeholders.

Phase 4. Review and validation

The draft evaluation findings and report will be reviewed by the UNCT, the Evaluation Steering Committee, government counterparts and other relevant stakeholders, in line with the management and quality assurance arrangements set out in the ToR. This phase will include preparation of the first draft report, review by DCO and country-level stakeholders, incorporation of comments, validation of findings, correction of factual inaccuracies, and finalization of the report. A validation workshop or structured validation meetings will be used to test the robustness, clarity and practical utility of the main findings and recommendations.

The ET will present preliminary findings before finalization of the report in order to ensure common understanding of the evidence, reduce factual uncertainty and enhance ownership of the final recommendations. This process is intended to support not only report quality, but also the future use of the evaluation in programme design, strategic positioning, pooled-fund governance and management response. The final report will include key findings, conclusions, actionable recommendations, lessons learned and good practices relevant to the design of the next programming cycle.

5 UNSDCF EVALUATION MATRIX

The UNSDCF Final Evaluation Design Matrix is based on the United Nations Development Coordination Office/ United Nations Evaluations Group Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks,¹⁹ which was broadly designed in line with the evaluation criteria defined by OECD DAC²⁰ and adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for evaluations. The Final Evaluation will be organised around the following key evaluation criteria – relevance & adaptability, coherence & coordination, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and orientation towards impact. The core questions and specific questions defined in the boxes below are based on the examples of potential evaluation questions in the above-mentioned Guidelines as well as the questions proposed in the FE Terms of Reference and similar FE Reports reviewed during the Inception Phase. The Evaluation Design Matrix is also based on an in-depth discussion with UN RCO staff and other UN stakeholders.

Using this Evaluation Matrix, the FE has prepared interview guides with specific question for each of the identified stakeholders' groups and on-line survey (see Annex V. for more information).

Table 2: UNSDCF evaluation matrix

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE AND ADAPTABILITY				
EQ1.1. To what extent has the CF integrated the key development issues and challenges identified by the Common Country Analysis	<i>JC1.1.1. The extent to which the CF was based on a participatory and analytically robust CCA and reflected the key development issues and challenges identified in it.</i>	Evidence that the CF reflected key development issues and challenges identified in the CCA and related diagnostics.	Desk-based research	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans

¹⁹ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2972>

²⁰ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
(CCA) and other strategic diagnostics for Montenegro?	<i>JC1.1.2. The extent to which the CF outcomes and outputs are logically connected and formulated on the basis of a sound problem analysis.</i>	Evidence, including examples and opinions, that the CF was based on a sound problem analysis and that outcomes and outputs are logically connected to identified problems.	Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF Review of the results framework and performance indicators	Common Country Analysis and CCA updates National development and sectoral strategies, including those covering cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, disability inclusion and human rights EU accession documentation Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies and development partners
	<i>JC1.1.3. The extent to which the CF included performance indicators with baselines and targets that are relevant, measurable and realistic.</i>	Adequacy, measurability and relevance of the performance indicators, baselines and targets.	Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders concerning the UNSDCF	
	<i>JC1.1.4. The extent to which the CF design reflects territorial disparities, structural bottlenecks and groups at risk of being left behind.</i>	Evidence that regional inequality, demographic pressures, service-delivery gaps, governance weaknesses and LNOB concerns were reflected in the CF design.		
EQ1.2. To what extent are the CF objectives aligned and consistent with the needs, priorities and policies of Montenegro, including national development goals and targets, international human rights obligations, the SDGs and the EU accession agenda?	<i>JC1.2.1. The extent to which the CF responded to Montenegro's main development priorities and country needs.</i>	Evidence and examples that the CF addressed priority needs and responded to strategic priorities of Montenegro.	Desk-based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans
	<i>JC1.2.2. The extent to which the CF responded to national policies, plans, strategies and reform agendas.</i>	Evidence and examples that the CF responded to national policies, plans, strategies and programmes.	Review of the results framework and performance indicators Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders concerning the UNSDCF	Common Country Analysis and CCA updates National development and sectoral strategies, including those covering cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, disability inclusion and human rights
	<i>JC1.2.3. The extent to which the CF addressed international commitments, including Agenda 2030, LNOB, human rights, disability inclusion, gender equality and EU accession-related obligations.</i>	Evidence and examples that the CF responded to international commitments and the EU accession agenda.		

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC1.2.4. The extent to which the CF focused on areas where the UN holds a distinctive comparative advantage.	▪ Examples of UN comparative advantage in specific sectors or harder-to-address reform domains.		EU accession documentation, treaty commitments and relevant national reform documents Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, OPDs, rights-holder groups, academia and development partners
EQ1.3. To what extent are the CF objectives responsive to emerging needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?	JC1.3.1. The extent to which the CF remained relevant in a changing national context and responded to emerging needs and shocks, especially for the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups.	▪ Evidence that the UNCT / UN agencies were responsive in addressing emerging needs of the country.	Desk-based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF Review of the results framework and performance indicators Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders concerning the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans Common Country Analysis and CCA updates
	JC1.3.2. The extent to which UNCT / UN agencies adapted their support to changing priorities of vulnerable groups and underserved territories.	▪ Examples and opinions that the CF responded to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.		National development and sectoral strategies
	JC1.3.3. The extent to which the CF incorporated gender, child rights, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB considerations in responding to changing needs.	▪ Examples that the UNCT / UN agencies adapted support to provide timely assistance in line with changing priorities and emerging needs, including with due attention to gender equality, child rights, disability inclusion and LNOB.		EU accession documentation Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies and national partners
Relevant evaluation criteria: COHERENCE AND COORDINATION				

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
EQ2.1. Post-UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programmes and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the CF in both design and implementation?	JC2.1.1. The extent to which UN agency programmes and work plans were derived from the UNSDCF at the design stage.	Evidence and examples that UN agencies and their programmes and work plans reflected UNSDCF priorities at the design stage and during implementation.	Desk-based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans
	JC2.1.2. The extent to which agency implementation remained aligned with UNSDCF priorities and outcomes.	Examples of implementation choices, outputs or work planning anchored in the CF.	Review of agency programming instruments, work plans and coordination documentation Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders	Agency country programme documents and work plans Governance and coordination documents, including ToRs and meeting minutes of Results and thematic groups
	JC2.1.3. The extent to which derivation from the CF supported greater coherence of agency action and reduced fragmentation.	Stakeholder views on the extent to which agencies used the CF as the central strategic reference point.	Results from online surveys, where applicable	RCO documentation and relevant management records Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, and partners
EQ2.2. How coherent is the UNCT's support across agencies and outcomes, including clarity of roles, avoidance of duplication, use of joint programming, and the leveraging of normative mandates?	JC2.2.1. The extent to which UNCT support across agencies and outcomes is complementary and strategically aligned.	Examples of complementarity and synergy across agencies and outcomes.	Desk-based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans
	JC2.2.2. The extent to which roles and responsibilities across agencies are sufficiently clear to reduce duplication.	Examples of joint programming or joint initiatives and their perceived effectiveness.	Review of agency programming instruments, work plans and coordination documentation Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders	Agency country programme documents and work plans Governance and coordination documents, including ToRs and meeting minutes of Results and thematic groups
	JC2.2.3. The extent to which joint programming and collective action strengthened coherence and improved results.	Evidence of duplication avoided or, conversely, remaining overlap.	Online surveys, where applicable	

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC2.2.4. The extent to which the CF leveraged agency normative mandates in a complementary way.	Stakeholder perceptions of role clarity and coherence across the UNCT.		RCO documentation and relevant management records Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and other relevant institutions
	JC2.2.5. The extent to which oversight and coordination arrangements supported more effective problem-solving and collective delivery.	Internal UN stakeholder perceptions of the functionality and effectiveness of Results Groups and thematic groups		
EQ2.3. To what extent did the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT joint convening power and better coherence of the country team?	JC2.3.1. The extent to which the post-reform RCO contributed to stronger coherence across the country team.	Examples and opinions on the contribution of the RCO to coherence and collective positioning.	Desk-based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans
	JC2.3.2. The extent to which the RCO strengthened the UNCT's joint convening power and strategic positioning.	Evidence that coordination mechanisms supported planning, adaptation and implementation.	Review of agency programming instruments, work plans and coordination documentation	Agency country programme documents and work plans
	JC2.3.3. The extent to which coordination mechanisms contributed to planning, adaptation and implementation of the CF.	Evidence of decisions that addressed implementation bottlenecks or enabled more effective delivery.	Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders Online surveys, where applicable	Governance and coordination documents, including ToRs and meeting minutes of Results and thematic groups RCO documentation and relevant management records Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and other relevant institutions
Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFECTIVENESS				

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
EQ3.1. Have the outputs envisaged in the CF been achieved, and to what extent have they contributed to progress under the CF outcomes?	JC3.1.1. The extent to which UN agencies and national partners were effective in delivering outputs / results and progressing towards outcomes.	Examples of the main achievements during CF implementation, including delivery of outputs and progress towards outcomes.	Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and annual Country Results Reports
	JC3.1.2. The extent to which progress under CF outcomes has been achieved and targets met or plausibly advanced.	Evidence and figures showing progress under outcome and output indicators and advancement toward targets.	Analysis of the UNSDCF results chain / intervention logic Review of available data sets evidencing progress toward the targets	Strategic plans / country programme documents of UN agencies
	JC3.1.3. The extent to which the CF contributed to institutional, behavioural and legislative changes under the outcomes.	Examples and opinions that the CF contributed to key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes under the outcomes.	Interviews with key informants and group interviews with institutional beneficiaries and experts	Agency evaluations and thematic / project-level reviews
	JC3.1.4. Evidence of identifiable enabling factors and bottlenecks explaining progress and shortfalls, including institutional capacity constraints, enforcement gaps, weaknesses in data, cross-sector coordination, governance, implementation, monitoring, participation and financing.	Examples and stakeholder views on enabling factors and bottlenecks that affected results.	Focus groups / field visits where appropriate Online survey / questionnaires for UN staff, where applicable	National statistics, administrative data and sector reports
	JC3.1.5. Evidence of unintended positive or negative effects associated with CF implementation.	Examples and stakeholder views on unintended effects, positive or negative.		Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and beneficiaries where feasible
EQ3.2. To what extent has the CF contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural and	JC3.2.1. The extent to which the CF contributed to strengthening national capacities and driving systemic changes in key thematic areas.	Evidence that the CF contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering institutional, behavioural and legislative change.	Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and annual Country Results Reports

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
legislative changes necessary for advancing its intended results?	JC3.2.2. Evidence of institutional, behavioural and legislative changes occurring in the core sectors of intervention.	Examples of institutional, behavioural and legislative changes that the CF contributed to in the core areas of intervention.	Analysis of the UNSDCF results chain / intervention logic Review of available data sets evidencing progress toward the targets	Strategic plans / country programme documents of UN agencies Agency evaluations and thematic / project-level reviews
	JC3.2.3. Evidence of key changes in areas such as gender equality and women's empowerment, child rights, human rights, Roma inclusion, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability.	Examples of progress related to gender equality, child rights, human rights, Roma inclusion, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability.	Interviews with key informants and group interviews with institutional beneficiaries and experts Focus groups / field visits where appropriate	National statistics, administrative data and sector reports Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and beneficiaries where feasible
	JC3.2.4. Evidence of the remaining system-level changes hardest to achieve and their implications for potential course correction.	Stakeholder assessments of what systemic shifts occurred and what remains hardest to achieve.	Online survey / questionnaires for UN staff, where applicable	
EQ3.3. What have been the benefits for the people targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?	JC3.3.1. The extent to which CF results contributed to tangible improvements for vulnerable and marginalized groups.	Opinions of key stakeholders about the degree to which the CF considered and addressed the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.	Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports Analysis of the UNSDCF results chain / intervention logic	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and annual Country Results Reports Strategic plans / country programme documents of UN agencies
	JC3.3.2. Evidence of specific measures defined to address inequalities and cross-cutting issues.	Examples of specific measures that were defined to address inequalities and cross-cutting issues.		

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC3.3.3. Evidence of the extent to which benefits from the interventions were distributed unevenly across groups, territories or institutions, including which groups may have benefited more or less than others.	Examples of benefits for target groups in terms of service access, capabilities, protection, participation or rights realization.	Review of available data sets evidencing progress toward the targets Interviews with key informants and group interviews with institutional beneficiaries and experts Focus groups / field visits where appropriate Online survey / questionnaires for UN staff, where applicable	Agency evaluations and thematic / project-level reviews National statistics, administrative data and sector reports Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and beneficiaries where feasible
Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFICIENCY				
EQ4.1. To what extent did the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund achieve its intended purpose in relation to attracting additional financing for strategic, catalytic and innovative UN interventions, value for money, and advancement of UN reform in Montenegro?	JC4.1.1. The extent to which the Fund supported strategic, catalytic and innovative interventions aligned with the CF.	Evidence of MAF-supported interventions aligned with CF priorities.	Desk-based research, with focus on annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans, budget and expenditure data, MAF portfolio and governance records, and other financing and management documents Review of MAF portfolio, governance, budget and delivery data	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and Country Results Reports MAF TOR, governance documentation, portfolio records and financing agreements Agency financial and implementation reports
	JC4.1.2. The extent to which the Fund contributed to attracting or leveraging additional financing.	Amount and type of additional financing leveraged or catalysed.		
	JC4.1.3. The extent to which the Fund generated value for money and improved collective UN delivery.	Stakeholder perceptions and examples of value for money and catalytic effect.		

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC4.1.4. The extent to which the Fund supported UN reform objectives in the country, including stronger coherence and joint action.	Evidence that the Fund supported joint UN action and reform-related improvements.	Analysis of management, advisory and coordination mechanisms and related decisions Interviews with key informants from the RCO, UN agencies, donors and implementing partners Online survey with UN programme and operations staff, where applicable	Available meeting minutes and relevant management records Stakeholders from the implementing partners, UN agencies, Government and development partners
EQ4.2. To what extent did the CF monitoring, evaluation and learning system effectively inform decision-making and enable adaptive management through data analysis, monitoring and learning?	JC4.2.1. The extent to which the CF MEL / M&E system informed decision-making and adaptive management.	Examples of monitoring, evaluation and learning informing decisions and adaptation.	Desk-based research, with focus on annual results reports, financing and management documents	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and Country Results Reports
	JC4.2.2. The extent to which monitoring and reporting arrangements were adequate to support course correction and learning.	Evidence on the adequacy of monitoring, reporting and learning arrangements.	Review of MAF portfolio, governance, budget and delivery data Analysis of management, advisory and coordination mechanisms and related decisions	MAF strategy, governance documentation, portfolio records and financing agreements Agency financial and implementation reports
	JC4.2.3. The extent to which the UNCT used results-based management to maintain a logical chain of results and strengthen evidence-based management.	Examples of course correction or adaptive management linked to MEL evidence.	Interviews with key informants from the RCO, UN agencies, donors and implementing partners Online survey with UN programme and operations staff, where applicable	Available meeting minutes and relevant management records Stakeholders from the implementing partners, UN agencies, Government and development partners

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
EQ4.3. To what extent has the CF collectively prioritized and reallocated resources according to collective priorities and changing needs and, to what extent, have inputs such as funds, expertise, time and other resources been converted into outputs and outcomes efficiently and with due care?	JC4.3.1. The extent to which resources were prioritized and, where necessary, reallocated according to collective priorities and changing needs.	Examples of resource prioritization or reallocation linked to collective priorities and changing needs.	Desk-based research, with focus on annual results reports, financing and management documents	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and Country Results Reports
	JC4.3.2. The extent to which financial, technical and human inputs were converted into outputs and outcomes efficiently and with due care.	Stakeholder views on whether funds, expertise, time and other resources were used efficiently.	Review of MAF portfolio, governance, budget and delivery data Analysis of management, advisory and coordination mechanisms and related decisions	MAF strategy, governance documentation, portfolio records and financing agreements Agency financial and implementation reports
	JC4.3.3. The extent to which resource mobilization, including joint fundraising beyond the MAF, allocation and delivery were broadly aligned with planned needs and priorities.	Evidence on alignment between planned and delivered resources, including any relevant joint resource-mobilization strategy, planning and monitoring arrangements beyond the MAF.	Interviews with key informants from the RCO, UN agencies, donors and implementing partners Online survey with UN programme and operations staff, where applicable	Available meeting minutes and relevant management records Stakeholders from the implementing partners, UN agencies, Government and development partners
Relevant evaluation criteria: SUSTAINABILITY				
EQ5.1. What are the main results achieved by the CF that are likely to last and/or can be sustained without further interventions or UN support?	JC5.1.1. The likelihood that progress under selected CF priority areas will be sustained.	Evidence that national partners have ensured or are likely to ensure financial and technical / human resources to maintain achievements.	Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports	UNSDCF documents and related deliverables
	JC5.1.2. The extent to which national stakeholders demonstrate ownership and intent to sustain interventions.	Opinions of national stakeholders about ownership over the results achieved during CF implementation.	Review of policy, institutional and financing arrangements related to continuation of results	National strategies, budgets and institutional plans Agency reports and evaluations Stakeholders from Government, municipalities, CSOs,

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC5.1.3. The extent to which financial, technical and human resources are available or likely to be available to maintain achievements.	• Examples of results already embedded in national systems, procedures, strategies or institutions.	Interviews with key informants and group interviews Case examples where useful	development partners and other implementing actors
	JC5.1.4. Evidence of specific risks that may facilitate or impede sustainability.	• Risks and constraints identified by stakeholders.		
EQ5.2. Has the CF enabled innovative approaches embedded in institutional learning for national capacity development, including government, civil society and NGOs, so that these actors can continue achieving positive results without UN or development partner support?	JC5.2.1. The extent to which the CF enabled innovative approaches relevant to national development challenges.	• Examples of innovative approaches introduced under the CF.	Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports Review of policy, institutional and financing arrangements related to continuation of results Interviews with key informants and group interviews Case examples where useful	UNSDCF documents and related deliverables National strategies, budgets and institutional plans Agency reports and evaluations Stakeholders from Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and other implementing actors
	JC5.2.2. The extent to which these approaches were embedded in institutional learning or practice.	• Evidence of institutional learning, adoption or replication.		
	JC5.2.3. The extent to which government institutions, civil society and NGOs gained capacities to continue or replicate results.	• Stakeholder assessments of capacities to continue or scale up interventions without further UN support.		
	JC5.2.4. Evidence of mechanisms for scaling up or replication being created or strengthened.	• Examples of mechanisms supporting scaling, replication or wider institutional uptake.		
Relevant evaluation criteria: ORIENTATION TOWARDS IMPACT				
EQ6.1. What evidence is there of the UN's contribution to higher-level change, including systems	JC6.1.1. The extent to which UN interventions contributed to higher-level changes beyond immediate outputs.	• Examples of higher-level changes to which UN support plausibly contributed.	Desk-based research	All relevant programming and reporting documents

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
strengthening, normative alignment as a precondition to system-level change, resilience and equity gains, and what are the most plausible contribution pathways in Montenegro's accession and post-accession trajectory?	JC6.1.2. The extent to which UN support strengthened systems, institutions or policy environments.	Evidence of systems strengthening, normative alignment, resilience or equity gains.	Contribution analysis and ToC testing	National indicators, reform documents and partner assessments
	JC6.1.3. Evidence of the most plausible contribution pathways.	Stakeholder views on the most plausible contribution pathways.	Interviews with key informants and focus groups where relevant	Stakeholders from the implementing partners, UN agencies, Government, development partners and beneficiaries where feasible
	JC6.1.4. The extent to which the CF contributed to resilience and equity gains relevant to Montenegro's accession and post-accession environment.	Examples of UN contribution to broader national progress under relevant reform areas.	Case examples and beneficiary perspectives where feasible Online survey where useful	
EQ6.2. To what extent have UN activities stemming from the CF made a difference for beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their well-being and their human rights overall?	JC6.2.1. The extent to which CF-related activities generated meaningful changes for beneficiaries.	Examples and stakeholder views showing that UN activities made a difference for beneficiaries.	Desk-based research Contribution analysis and ToC testing	All relevant programming and reporting documents
	JC6.2.2. Evidence of beneficiary-level effects in well-being, access, empowerment or rights realization.	Evidence of improvements in well-being, access to services, participation, protection or human rights.	Interviews with key informants and focus groups where relevant	National indicators, reform documents and partner assessments
	JC6.2.3. Evidence that changes were more significant for some groups or regions than for others.	Examples of differential effects across groups, genders, ages, disability status or territories.	Case examples and beneficiary perspectives where feasible Online survey where useful	Stakeholders from the implementing partners, UN agencies, Government, development partners and beneficiaries where feasible

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC6.2.4. The extent to which the CF contributed to reducing vulnerability, strengthening resilience and improving the evidence base on beneficiary well-being and rights.	Evidence or perceptions of increased resilience or reduced vulnerability, including UN contributions to data, monitoring or evidence generation that help show changes in beneficiary well-being and rights.		

6 THEORY OF CHANGE

Recognizing the interconnected nature of Montenegro's development challenges, the UNSDCF 2023–2027 addresses economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions in an integrated manner, while embedding the principles of sustainability, inclusion, resilience, gender equality and Leaving No One Behind across the full results chain. The overall theory of change, as presented in the approved UNSDCF, posits that if Montenegro advances inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability, human capital development, reducing vulnerability and social inclusion, and social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights, then the country will reduce multidimensional and income poverty and accelerate progress towards a sustainable, resource-efficient and innovation-based economy, with an improved state of the environment and increased respect for human rights, social justice and inclusion of the most vulnerable by 2027. The UNSDCF graphically represents this overall logic on page 14, alongside the cross-cutting themes of LNOB, GE&WE, EU accession, disaggregated data and digital transformation.

The Theory of Change is rooted in the CCA and in the consultation process that shaped the Cooperation Framework. The UNSDCF states that it was developed through the internally prepared Common Country Analysis and consultations with government, civil society, development partners, member states, and targeted consultations with women and youth. Technical consultations culminated in the Strategic Prioritisation Retreat and a high-level Strategic Prioritisation Workshop, which endorsed the strategic priorities. The earlier MAPS exercise also played an important role by demonstrating strong synergies between the 2030 Agenda and EU accession, particularly through Chapters 27, 23 and 19. This means that the ToC was not framed only as a UN programming device, but as a strategic articulation of how SDG progress, human rights obligations and accession-related reforms could reinforce one another.

The ToC is built around the understanding that Montenegro has already made substantial development progress, but that a number of structural bottlenecks continue to slow progress and reproduce exclusion. The UNSDCF identifies these bottlenecks as being typical of an upper-middle-income, EU-candidate country, and particularly linked to the cross-cutting issue of governance and institutions. Weak implementation capacity, incomplete policy execution, gaps in data use, insufficient coordination, uneven institutional performance and weaknesses in accountability affect all three strategic priorities. The Theory of Change therefore assumes that progress in Montenegro does not depend only on sector interventions, but on whether governance and institutional constraints can be addressed in ways that support the economy, environment, social sectors, and the realization of rights.

The UNSDCF identifies three broad **areas of opportunity** that anchor this logic:

- (i) promoting economic transformation and environmental sustainability;
- (ii) investing in human and social capital; and
- (iii) enhancing governance and institutional capacities.

These opportunity areas are clearly articulated in the country context and ToC narrative and together explain why the UNSDCF is organized around the three strategic priorities. The underlying premise is that vulnerability and poverty can only be reduced in a durable way if these three dimensions progress simultaneously and in a mutually reinforcing manner.

Figure 2: UNSDCF Theory of Change

6.1.1 Theory of Change analysis

The inception phase included a preliminary analysis of the soundness, relevance and evaluability of the UNSDCF Theory of Change and the broader results chain. This preliminary review focused on whether the original theoretical ToC was conceptually robust, whether it remained relevant in light of evolving country conditions, and whether it required major reconstruction for the purposes of the final evaluation. The assessment also drew on the guidance requirement that the ToC serves as the key reference framework for the evaluation and that the evaluation team should determine whether it is sufficiently articulated for selecting and analysing outcomes.

The analytical basis for the design of the ToC

The preliminary assessment is that the original theoretical ToC is **sound, relevant and strategically coherent**. First, it is clearly aligned with Montenegro's national development priorities, SDG commitments, international human rights obligations and the EU accession process. The UNSDCF explicitly links its priorities to the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the 2030 Agenda, EU accession requirements and a wide set of national reform strategies. This gives the ToC a strong policy anchor and ensures that it is not detached from the country's actual reform trajectory.

Second, the ToC is strong because it is based on an explicit diagnosis of **root causes**, not just sector outputs. The central theory is that Montenegro's remaining gaps and vulnerabilities are sustained by weak institutional performance, uneven governance quality, exclusion of vulnerable groups, a narrow and environmentally unsustainable growth pattern, and insufficiently inclusive and resilient social systems. The ToC therefore does not treat economic transformation, social inclusion, service quality, environmental sustainability and governance as separate agendas. Rather, it presents them as interdependent pathways that must advance together if Montenegro is to reduce multidimensional poverty, accelerate SDG progress and strengthen readiness for EU membership.

Third, the ToC is strong because it identifies **clear strategic pathways** under each priority area. Under **Strategic Priority 1**, the theory focuses on economic transformation, greener and more inclusive growth, labour-market reform, climate adaptation and mitigation, sustainable natural resource management and disaster risk reduction. Under **Strategic Priority 2**, the framework articulates two complementary pathways: one around social and child protection, labour activation, school-to-work transition, migration and vulnerability reduction; and another around health, education and early childhood development as drivers of stronger human capital. Under **Strategic Priority 3**, the framework links rule of law, public administration reform, civic participation, gender equality, social cohesion and the fight against violence, hate speech, corruption and organized crime to stronger accountability and greater realization of rights. These pathways are elaborated both in the visual ToC and in the narrative explanations for Outcomes 1–4.

Fourth, the ToC is strengthened by a set of **cross-cutting acceleration strategies**. The UNSDCF identifies synergy with EU accession, production and use of quality disaggregated data, digital transformation and innovation, SDG financing, partnerships with IFIs and the private sector, youth participation, and a prevention approach as key accelerators. This is important because it clarifies not only what the UN wants to contribute to, but how those contributions are expected to gain traction in practice. These strategies also increase the realism of the ToC by acknowledging that outcome-level progress depends on financing, information, partnerships and systemic coordination, not only on programme delivery.

Fifth, the ToC embeds a clear **UN comparative advantage** logic. The UNSDCF states that the UN's main comparative advantages in Montenegro lie in its rights-based mandate, neutrality, advocacy role, convening power, access to international and regional expertise, ability to create linkages across sectors, and capacity to support sensitive reforms such as gender equality, human rights and LNOB. The ToC is therefore not simply about doing more activities; it is about using the UN's distinctive role to enable reforms, partnerships, learning and institutional change in areas where this added value matters.

That said, the ToC is also **highly ambitious and interconnected**, and this has implications for evaluability. Because the strategic priorities are mutually reinforcing and because many outcomes depend on policy and institutional changes influenced by multiple actors, the causal pathways between UN-supported outputs and broader national outcomes are not always sufficiently explicit for evaluative purposes. The outcome-level results framework is useful as a strategic direction-setting instrument, but for the final evaluation it will be necessary to reconstruct more clearly the **output-to-outcome contribution pathways** and test the

assumptions behind them. In that sense, the ToC is strategically sound, but it still requires analytical unpacking during the evaluation.

Real-time relevance and responsiveness to emerging issues

The preliminary conclusion is that the original ToC was flexible enough to accommodate emerging issues without requiring a fundamental redesign. The UNSDCF was formulated in the aftermath of the COVID-19 shock and explicitly notes that short-term policies would be guided by the principles of “building back better” and by a proactive response to regional and global developments. The CCA and UNSDCF narrative already recognized that Montenegro faced macroeconomic vulnerability, climate risk, demographic challenges, social exclusion, and institutional bottlenecks, and that future implementation would take place in a volatile environment.

The approved UNSDCF also includes an explicit set of assumptions and risks. These include continued political commitment to EU accession and human rights implementation, manageable macroeconomic and fiscal conditions, availability and use of disaggregated data, political stability and continuity of the development vision, absence of severe regional spillovers, no major escalation of COVID-19 or other health crises, and continued commitment to low-carbon development. The risk section further highlights political and administrative transition, social cohesion risks, infrastructure and service-access risks, displacement and migration pressures, public health crises, environmental and climate risks, and economic and financial instability. Because these risks were already identified ex ante, the ToC appears to have been designed with a substantial degree of strategic flexibility.

At the same time, the evaluation will still need to examine whether implementation practice remained faithful to the theory and whether adaptive management operated mainly at activity level or also altered the practical logic of contribution under some outcomes. In Montenegro’s case, important contextual developments after UNSDCF adoption included continued fiscal and policy reforms, growing attention to climate and disaster-risk frameworks, expansion of digitalization in social sectors and public administration, deepening accession-linked reform pressures, and persistent territorial and demographic disparities. These developments do not appear to invalidate the theoretical ToC, but they may have altered the relative importance of some pathways or the feasibility of some assumptions.

For that reason, the evaluation does not need to replace the original ToC with a new theory, **but it does need to produce an evaluative reconstruction of how the framework was actually implemented.** This means clarifying which output pathways were most active, which assumptions held or did not hold, and where external factors, coordination dynamics, funding constraints or institutional bottlenecks changed the practical route from outputs to outcomes. In particular, the evaluation will need to pay close attention to the four outcome pathways, the role of cross-cutting strategies, and the extent to which governance and institutional reform functioned in practice as the intended cross-cutting enabler of change.

Overall preliminary conclusion on the ToC

On the basis of the preliminary documentary review, the Evaluation Team concludes that the original UNSDCF Theory of Change remains a valid strategic framework for the final evaluation. It is aligned with national priorities, SDG commitments, human rights obligations and the EU accession trajectory; it identifies the key structural bottlenecks and enabling conditions; and it already incorporates a degree of adaptability through its cross-cutting strategies, assumptions and risks. At the same time, because the ToC is highly interconnected and ambitious, the evaluation will need to clarify and test the more specific contribution pathways from UN-supported outputs to outcome-level changes, rather than rely only on the broad strategic logic. In that sense, the ToC does not require wholesale reconstruction, but it does require evaluative refinement so that the final report can assess what held, what changed, what enabled progress, and where the theory proved more ambitious than implementation conditions allowed.

7 EVALUATION WORK PLAN AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

In line with the Terms of Reference and the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines, the section below translates the agreed Montenegro evaluation architecture into an operational work plan, a deliverables schedule, and a clear governance and reporting structure. The sequencing follows the five phases set out in the ToR—Preparation, Design/Inception, Fieldwork, Reporting/Validation, and Use/Management Response—and strengthens them with a more explicit visual calendar, milestone logic, and quality-assurance checkpoints. The management arrangements are designed to balance three requirements: evaluator independence, rigorous quality assurance, and practical utility of findings for the next programming cycle.

7.1 OVERALL WORK PLAN

The work plan is structured so that governance, recruitment and documentary preparation are completed before methodological design begins; the inception products are cleared before fieldwork starts; and reporting, validation and management response are staged in a way that allows findings to feed into the next CCA / Cooperation Framework design process. The calendar below therefore preserves the ToR milestones, while making explicit the critical dependencies between tasks, deliverables and review points.

Table 3: Work plan

TASK / DELIVERABLE	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Governance set-up, roadmap and recruitment									
Desk review and inception consultations									
Theory of Change analysis and EDM development									
Drafting, QA and approval of the Inception Report									
Fieldwork: KIIs, FGDs, site visits and survey									
Data coding, triangulation and synthesis									
Preliminary findings presentation									
Draft Evaluation Report									
Validation workshop and feedback integration									
Final Evaluation Report									
Management Response and dissemination									

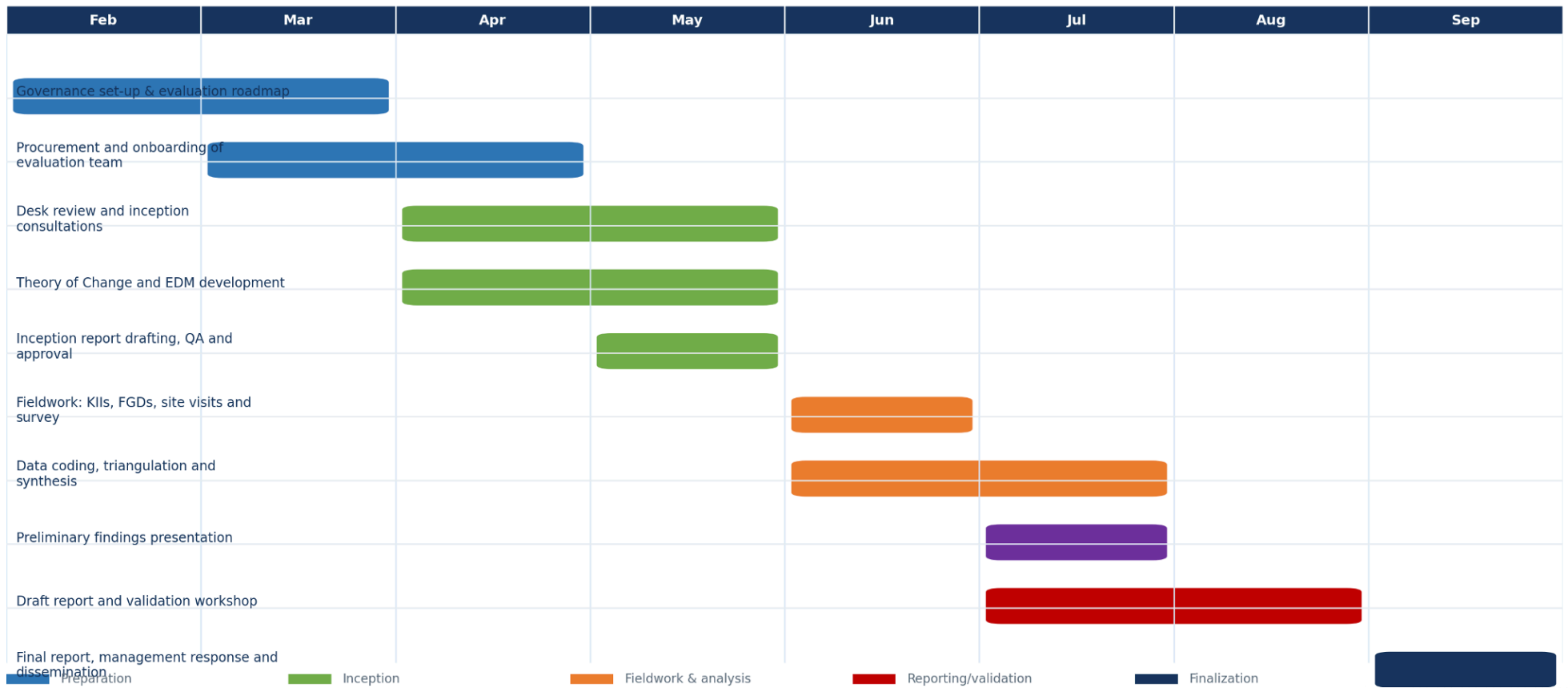
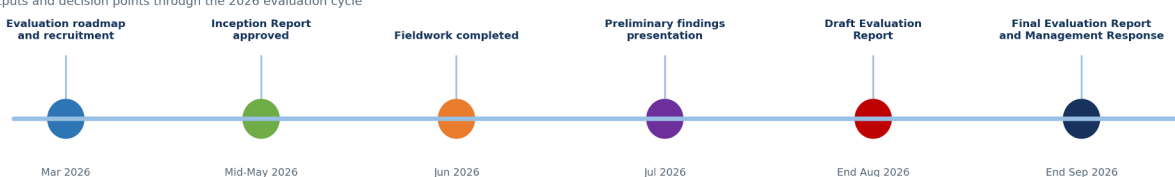
Figure 3: Overall Evaluation Work Plan

Table 4: Key Deliverables and Indicative Deadlines

NO.	DELIVERABLE	DATE
1.	Evaluation roadmap and recruitment completed	31 March 2026
2.	Approved Inception Report	End-May 2026
3.	Fieldwork and primary data collection completed	June 2026
4.	Preliminary Findings Presentation	July 2026
5.	Draft Evaluation Report	End August 2026
6.	Final Evaluation Report	End September 2026
7.	Management Response finalized and disseminated	End September/October 2026

Figure 4: Key Deliverables and Milestones

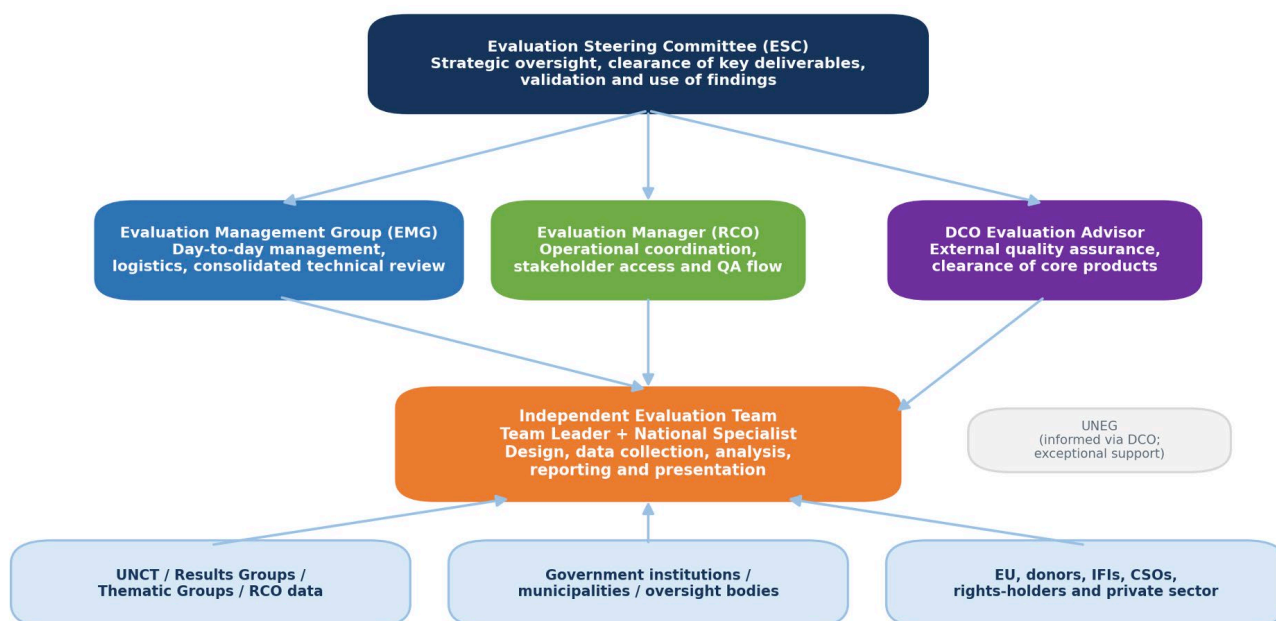
Critical outputs and decision points through the 2026 evaluation cycle



7.2 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The evaluation will be managed through a three-tier governance structure that combines strategic oversight, day-to-day technical management and fully independent implementation. This arrangement is designed to safeguard evaluator independence while ensuring timely access to evidence, structured quality assurance, and practical use of findings by the Government of Montenegro, the UNCT and the wider stakeholder group. It follows the governance architecture described in the ToR and the expectations in the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines that work plans should clarify reporting lines, division of labour, quality assurance arrangements and the process for obtaining and incorporating stakeholder comments on draft deliverables.

Figure 5: Evaluation Governance and Management Structure



Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC). The ESC is the highest oversight body for the evaluation. It provides strategic direction, endorses the evaluation process and reviews / clears the main deliverables. In line with the ToR, the existing UNSDCF Steering Committee assumes this role. It is co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN Resident Coordinator and includes participating ministries and Heads of UN Agencies, with the possibility of inviting selected development partners, private sector or civil society representatives where relevant. The ESC also ensures that evaluation findings are linked to national planning processes and to the design of the next Cooperation Framework or equivalent programming arrangement.

For clarity, the Montenegro evaluation architecture does not envisage a separate Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) as an additional formal governance layer. Functions that might elsewhere be associated with an ERG are covered here through the ESC for strategic oversight and validation, and through the EMG for day-to-day technical consolidation and feedback.

Evaluation Management Group (EMG) and Evaluation Manager. The EMG is responsible for the routine management of the evaluation and serves as the main interface between the independent Evaluation Team and the UNCT system. In Montenegro, the existing MEL Group performs this role and is expanded to include Results Group co-chairs to ensure programmatic coverage across the three strategic priorities. The Evaluation Manager, housed in the RCO, coordinates day-to-day process

management, procurement support, stakeholder access, consolidated comments, and the internal quality assurance flow before products move to ESC review and DCO quality clearance.

Independent Evaluation Team. The Evaluation Team is composed of an international Team Leader and a national Evaluation Specialist, as foreseen in the ToR. The Team works in full independence from the RCO, the UNCT and implementing entities. It is responsible for detailed evaluation design, data collection, evidence synthesis, drafting of the inception, draft and final reports, and presentation of preliminary and final findings. The Team reports operationally to the EMG / Evaluation Manager for process purposes, while preserving full analytical independence over methods, judgments, findings and recommendations.

DCO Evaluation Advisor and UNEG. The DCO Evaluation Advisor provides external quality assurance across all key products and reviews the TOR, inception report, draft and final report, in line with the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines and EQAS requirements. UNEG is informed through DCO and may be engaged in exceptional circumstances. This arrangement introduces an external assurance layer that strengthens credibility and protects the integrity of the process.

Division of labour and reporting lines. The Team Leader is responsible for the conceptual leadership of the exercise, detailed methodology, work planning, oversight of evidence synthesis, overall report drafting and presentation of results. The national specialist supports contextual analysis, stakeholder outreach, fieldwork, interviews, evidence consolidation and drafting of assigned sections. The Evaluation Manager coordinates process management and consolidates institutional feedback, but does not direct the content of findings. The EMG provides technical support and quality review; the ESC provides strategic endorsement and validation; and DCO provides external quality assurance and clearance.

Quality assurance. Quality assurance is embedded throughout the process. It includes routine process checks by the Evaluation Manager and EMG, formal review of the inception, draft and final reports, external quality review by DCO, validation of preliminary findings with UNCT and national counterparts, and a final management response prepared in parallel with report endorsement. This sequencing ensures that comments are incorporated transparently while preserving evaluator independence.

Table 5: Key Actors and Principal Responsibilities

ACTOR	PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES
ESC	Strategic oversight, endorsement of process, review/clearance of key deliverables, validation and use of findings
EMG	Routine technical support, consolidated comments, logistics, scheduling, alignment with Results Groups and thematic groups
Evaluation Manager	Day-to-day coordination, procurement and administration support, stakeholder access, QA flow, liaison with DCO
Evaluation Team	Independent design, data collection, analysis, reporting, presentations and recommendations
DCO Evaluation Advisor	External quality assurance and clearance of core products; liaison with UNEG as needed
UNEG	Informed through DCO; exceptional technical engagement if required

8

EVALUABILITY, RISKS AND LIMITATIONS**8.1 EVALUABILITY**

The Evaluation Team undertook a preliminary evaluability assessment during the inception phase, drawing on the UNEG and UNSDCF guidance and the macro-requirements commonly used for Cooperation Framework evaluations. Overall, the assessment indicates that the Montenegro UNSDCF is sufficiently evaluable to support a credible and useful final evaluation. The framework has been implemented for more than 24 months, the evaluation is taking place in the penultimate year of the cycle, and the Terms of Reference, scope and intended use of the exercise are clearly defined. This provides an adequate basis for a theory-based final evaluation focused on contribution, performance, learning and accountability.

Evaluability is strengthened, first, by the existence of a clear strategic architecture. The UNSDCF includes an explicit theory of change, an articulated results framework, defined strategic priorities, outcome and output statements, and a set of assumptions, risks and cross-cutting strategies. The framework is firmly anchored in the Common Country Analysis, national development and reform priorities, the SDGs, international human rights obligations and the EU accession agenda. This gives the evaluation a sufficiently strong conceptual foundation against which relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and orientation towards impact can be assessed.

Second, the evaluability of the UNSDCF is supported by the breadth of the available evidence base. The Terms of Reference identify annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans, CCA updates, agency-level evaluations, national statistics, including census and MICS data, and thematic assessments as key sources of evidence. The Cooperation Framework itself also provides outcome and output indicators, assumptions and partner mappings, while the methodology foresees systematic use of government and ministry reports, agency and joint evaluations, national oversight reports and EU assessments. Taken together, these sources provide a sufficiently broad foundation for contribution analysis and triangulation across strategic priorities and stakeholder groups.

Third, the institutional and managerial conditions for evaluability are broadly in place. The Terms of Reference establish a clear governance structure for the evaluation, including the Evaluation Steering Committee, Evaluation Management Group, Evaluation Manager, independent Evaluation Team and DCO quality assurance role. The UNSDCF implementation architecture also includes Results Groups, thematic groups, MEL-related structures and annual review processes, all of which support access to evidence, validation of findings and the practical use of results. From an evaluability perspective, these arrangements increase the likelihood that the evaluation will be able to access information, engage relevant stakeholders and produce findings that can realistically feed into the next programming cycle.

At the same time, evaluability is not uniform across all parts of the framework. A first limitation concerns the level at which some results are framed and measured. A number of outcome indicators are high-level national indicators or depend on the influence of multiple actors and wider contextual factors. They are therefore useful for assessing strategic direction and progress, but less suited on their own for isolating the specific contribution of the UN system. This is a common feature of Cooperation Framework evaluations and reinforces the need for a contribution-oriented approach supported by reconstruction of output-to-outcome pathways and systematic triangulation.

A second limitation concerns the quality and disaggregation of data, especially from an HRBA and LNOB perspective. The Terms of Reference require disaggregation by sex, age, disability status, migration status, ethnicity, geography and other relevant equity markers to the extent possible. In practice, however, disaggregation is likely to remain uneven across indicators and sectors, particularly for smaller, stigmatized or less systematically measured groups. This does not invalidate the evaluation, but it means that quantitative analysis will need to be complemented with purposive qualitative evidence to assess differential results, exclusion patterns and the extent to which the UNCT reached those furthest behind.

A third evaluability challenge relates to the assessment of institutional, behavioural and legislative change, which is central to the Montenegro Terms of Reference. These changes are often only partially captured by

the formal results framework and are better evidenced through a combination of documentary review, stakeholder testimony, case examples and process evidence. For this reason, the evaluation will not rely only on the status of indicators, but will also examine policy uptake, institutionalization, use in practice, quality of implementation and the durability of supported reforms.

A fourth challenge concerns the evaluation of UN coherence, coordination and financing for development, including the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund. These dimensions are evaluable, but require evidence that goes beyond standard programme reporting. Their assessment depends on access to governance documents, financial and management records, meeting minutes, stakeholder views and comparative perceptions of added value vis-à-vis bilateral and agency-specific approaches. The Terms of Reference and methodology provide for such evidence, but this dimension will require deliberate attention during data collection.

Overall, the Evaluation Team considers the Montenegro UNSDCF to be sufficiently evaluable, but with clear methodological caveats. The evaluation is strongest where results chains, documentary evidence and stakeholder access are more robust. It is more challenging where results depend on diffuse contribution pathways, uneven data disaggregation, system-level change or evolving institutional arrangements. These limitations are manageable, provided the evaluation continues to use a theory-based approach, applies purposive sampling with triple representativeness, draws systematically on existing evaluative evidence, and uses the Evaluation Design Matrix as the core tool for linking questions, judgement criteria, indicators, methods and sources.

8.2 RISKS AND LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Table 6: Risks and limitations and mitigation measures overview

#	RISK / LIMITATION	MITIGATION MEASURE
1	Breadth of the intervention portfolio vs. finite resources. The evaluation covers all three Strategic Priorities, multiple resident and non-resident entities, cross-cutting commitments, pooled financing and a changing national context. Reliance on a purposive sample creates a risk that the sample may not fully capture the diversity of implementation experiences or may over-represent better-documented or more visible interventions.	Sampling is designed around triple representativeness - programmatic, geographic and stakeholder - in order to reduce bias from over-reliance on a single set of actors, sectors or locations.
2	Timely availability of data and evidence. Some data may not yet be available for the full implementation period, may be published with delay, or may not exist at the disaggregation level required for a robust LNOB analysis - particularly for some vulnerable groups, territorial comparisons and outcome-level changes that depend on official statistics or periodic surveys.	Systematic disaggregation analysis combined with targeted qualitative enquiry wherever quantitative disaggregation is limited, and increased reliance on administrative data, qualitative evidence and triangulation across sources to fill data gaps.
3	Accessibility and availability of key informants, and social desirability bias. High-level interlocutors may face scheduling constraints; some rights-holder groups and local stakeholders may be harder to reach because of time, distance, safeguarding requirements or the need for mediated access. Respondents	Methodological triangulation - systematically combining documentary review, secondary data, interviews, group discussions, focus groups, field visits and online surveys - so that findings rest on more than one source or method wherever possible.

	may also be cautious about sharing critical views on politically sensitive issues.	
4	Positive review bias. Stakeholders closely involved in the design, implementation or oversight of the UNSDCF may be more inclined to emphasize achievements than bottlenecks, or may interpret progress through the lens of institutional ownership rather than independent assessment.	Drawing on a wide range of independent and pre-existing evidence, including agency evaluations, national oversight reports, EU assessments and other third-party materials, to reduce overdependence on internally generated UN evidence.
5	Assessment of contribution in a multi-actor environment. Many of the changes targeted by the UNSDCF - accession reforms, public administration, social sector reform, green transition, human rights - are shaped by multiple national and international actors operating simultaneously, so the evaluation will often be able to assess plausible contribution rather than direct attribution.	Transparency in the report about the strength and limits of the available evidence, particularly where conclusions rely on plausible contribution rather than direct measurement of change, making the evaluability limitations explicit and reflecting them in the level of confidence attached to specific evaluative claims.
6	Ethical and practical constraints around engaging directly with vulnerable or at-risk groups (e.g., women affected by GBV, children, persons at risk of stigma or reprisal, specific migrant or stateless groups), where direct focus groups would not be the most ethically appropriate consultation modality.	Application of human rights-based, gender-responsive and child-rights-based consultation modalities, including mediated consultation through service providers, CSOs or representative organizations where direct engagement would raise concerns about safety, voluntariness or dignity. Where any evidence activity directly involving children or adolescents becomes necessary, informed consent and assent procedures and additional safeguarding measures will apply.

9 ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

UNSDCF core and coordination documents

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. Interagency groups functioning: Update (Internal working document).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. Outcome indicators (Data set).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UN Cooperation Framework coordination and management arrangements.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UNCT Montenegro disability inclusion employment statement.
- United Nations & Government of Montenegro. (2022). United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UNSDCF governance and management arrangements (Internal working document).

Joint programme evaluation reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026, January). Final evaluation report: EmpowHER joint programme.
- United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2024, August). Final evaluation report: UNPRPD joint programme - Montenegro.

Agency programme documents

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2023). Country Programming Framework for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- International Labour Organization. (2023). Decent Work Country Programme for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2022). Country Programme Document for Montenegro (2023–2027).
- United Nations Children’s Fund. (2022). UNICEF Country Programme Document for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). Strategic partnership framework.

Business Operations Strategy

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026). Business Operations Strategy review 2026.

Common Country Analysis (CCA) and SDG policy briefs

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2021). Common Country Analysis: Montenegro.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2022). Common Country Analysis: 2022 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). Common Country Analysis: 2023 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). Common Country Analysis: 2024 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). Common Country Analysis: 2025 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. SDG policy brief 1: SDG financing.

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. SDG policy brief 2: Is Montenegro's North at risk of being left behind?
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. SDG policy brief 3: Poverty and child poverty in Montenegro.

European Union progress reports

- European Commission. (2023). Montenegro 2023 report.
- European Commission. (2024). Montenegro 2024 report.
- European Commission. (2025). Montenegro 2025 report.

Flagship analyses and thematic studies (preliminary, non-exhaustive list)²¹

- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Fourth environmental performance review of Montenegro.
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. (2024). Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Montenegro. United Nations.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2023). Digital development country profile: Montenegro.
- DigitAll Montenegro. Assessment of e-government and e-services in local self-government units in Montenegro.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026). EU accession and SDGs convergence analysis.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Montenegro.
- International Labour Organisation. Gender pay gap analysis.
- UN Women. Gender-responsive budgeting in Montenegro.
- Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. (2024). GREVIO baseline evaluation report on Montenegro. Council of Europe.
- Committee on Enforced Disappearances. (2025). Review of Montenegro (Working document). United Nations.
- Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers. (2024). Country visit report: Montenegro. United Nations Human Rights Council.
- Human Rights Council. (2023). Summary of the Universal Periodic Review: Montenegro. United Nations.
- United Nations Human Rights Committee. (2025, May 7). *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Montenegro (CCPR/C/MNE/CO/2)*. United Nations.
- *Montenegro: Media Freedom Rapid Response Mission Report*. (2024). SafeJournalists Network and partners. Available at: <https://srfreedex.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/MNE-1-2024.pdf>
- *United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures Communication AL MNE 1/2024 (gId=30354)*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2024. <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30354>
- *United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures Communication AL MNE 2/2024 (gId=30330)*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2024. <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30330>
- United Nations Human Rights Committee. (2025, May 7). *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Montenegro (CCPR/C/MNE/CO/2)*. United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025). Gender equality profile: Montenegro.
- United Nations Office for Project Services. Analysis of digital flows in Montenegro.

²¹ For any missing sectoral flagship analysis, it can be added to the shared folder and in parallel listed in this section

Joint Country Steering Committee

- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2022). JCSC 2022 minutes (Internal meeting minutes).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2024). JCSC 2024 minutes (Internal meeting minutes).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (n.d.). JCSC members (Internal working document).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2025). JCSC 2025 minutes (Internal working document).

Joint Work Plans

- Joint Work Plan 2023/2024
- Joint Work Plan 2025
- Joint Work Plan 2026/2027

Montenegro Acceleration Fund

- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. (2025). 2025 MAF report.
- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. (2024). MAF progress report 2024.
- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. MAF terms of reference.

Results Groups

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025, February). Članovi i ko-sazivači rezultatskih grupa (Members and co-conveners of Results Groups, internal document in Montenegrin).

UN SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2023.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2024.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2025.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UNCT Montenegro UN-SWAP report with action plan (final).

Annual Results Reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). UN country results report 2023 (English web edition).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). UN Montenegro annual results report 2024.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). UN Montenegro annual results report 2025.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2023). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2023.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2024). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2024.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2025.
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2023). UNICEF annual report - Montenegro 2023.
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2024). UNICEF Montenegro annual report 2024 (final, English).
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2025). UNICEF Montenegro annual report summary 2025.

Other

UNICEF Executive Board. (2023). *Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF* (E/ICEF/2023/27). United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

ANNEX 2. COMPREHENSIVE STAKEHOLDER MAP

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Interview w (F2F)	Group interview ws/ FGDs (F2F)	Individua l interview ws (remote)	Group interview ws/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
UN AGENCIES										
1	Office of the UN Resident Coordinator		Resident Coordinator / Head of RCO / Evaluation Manager	Overall	1,2,3	√				
2	UNDP		Resident Representative / senior programme lead	UNDP	1,2,3	√				
3	UNICEF		Representative / senior programme lead	UNICEF	2,3	√				
4	IOM		Chief of Mission / senior programme lead	IOM	2,3	√				
5	WHO		Representative / technical lead	WHO	2	√				
6	UNHCR		Representative / protection lead	UNHCR	2,3	√				
7	ILO		National Coordinator / programme lead	UNICEF	1,2	√				
8	OHCHR		Human rights adviser	OHCHR	3			√		
9	UNESCO		Head / programme specialist	UNESCO	2,3	√				
10	FAO		Representative / programme lead	FAO	1,2	√				
11	UNOPS		Head of Office / programme lead	UNOPS	1,2,3	√				
12	UNECE		Programme officer / focal point	UNECE	1,3			√		
13	UN Women		Head of Office / programme lead	UN Women	2,3	√				
14	UNODC		Head of Office / Officer in Charge	UNODC	3	√				
15	UNDRR		Programme focal point	UNDRR	1			√		
16	UNEP		Programme / project focal point	UNEP	1			√		
17	UNIDO		Programme focal point	UNIDO	1			√		
18	IFAD		Programme focal point	IFAD	1			√		
19	ITU		Programme specialist / focal point	FAO	1,3			√		

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Intervie w (F2F)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (F2F)	Individua l intervie ws (remote)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
20	UNCTAD		Programme focal point	UNCTAD	1			√		
UN COORDINATION STRUCTURES										
21	UNCT (all 19 agencies)		Heads of Agencies / UNCT members	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
22	UNCT MEL Group		MEL Group representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
23	Results Groups		Results Group co-chairs / representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
24	Gender Theme Group		Theme Group chair/representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
25	Human Rights and LNOB group		Theme group chair/representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
26	Communications Group		Communications Group representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
27	OMT		Operations Management Team representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY										
28	EU Delegation		Head of Cooperation / programme lead	EU / MAF	1,2,3	√				
29	Swiss Confederation		Head of Cooperation / programme manager	MAF contributor	1,2,3			√		
30	Republic of Austria		Programme / development cooperation lead	MAF contributor	1,2,3			√		
31	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg		Programme / development cooperation lead	MAF contributor	1,2,3			√		
32	Ireland		Programme / development cooperation lead	MAF contributor	1,2,3			√		
33	United Kingdom		Programme / political / rule of law lead	Bilateral donor	3			√		
34	Government of Slovenia		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral donor	1,2,3			√		
35	Republic of Korea		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral donor	1,2,3			√		

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Intervie w (F2F)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (F2F)	Individua l intervie ws (remote)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
36	Germany (GIZ/KfW)		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral/IFI	1,2,3			✓		
37	Sweden, Norway, Denmark		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral donors	2,3			✓		
38	United States of America		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral donor	1,2,3			✓		
39	Slovakia		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral donor	1,2,3			✓		
40	World Bank		Country office / sector lead	IFI	1,3	✓				
41	EBRD		Country office / sector lead	IFI	1	✓				
42	European Investment Bank (EIB)		Country office / sector lead	IFI	2			✓		
43	KfW (German Development Bank)		Programme / country office lead	IFI	1,2,3			✓		
44	AFD (French Agency for Development)		Programme / country office lead	IFI	1,2,3			✓		
45	OSCE Mission to Montenegro		Programme / rule of law lead	External partner	3	✓				
46	Council of Europe		Programme / human rights lead	External partner	3	✓				
47	OECD		Policy / programme expert	External partner	1,2,3			✓		
48	Regional organizations (Western Balkans)		Regional programme representative	Regional actors	1,3			✓		
MAF-SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDERS										
49	MAF Joint Steering Committee		Co-chairs / governance members	MAF	1,2,3		✓		✓	
50	MAF Advisory Board		Board members / independent advisers	MAF	1,2,3		✓		✓	
51	MPTF Office		Administrative agent / fund management focal point	MAF	1,2,3			✓		

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Intervie w (F2F)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (F2F)	Individua l intervie ws (remote)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
5 2	9 joint programme implementing agencies		Agency representatives / joint programme leads	UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, ILO, UNESCO, UNOPS, ITU, UN Women, OHCHR, UNECE	1,2,3	√			√	
GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS										
5 3	Ministry of Foreign Affairs		State Secretary / Directorate Director	IOM, UNDP, UN Women	3	√				
5 4	Ministry of European Affairs		State Secretary / Director General	UNDP, UNDP, UN Women, UNECE, UNICEF	1,2,3	√				
5 5	Ministry of Finance		Director General / budget lead	UNDP, UNDP, UN Women	1,3	√				
5 6	Ministry of Economic Development		Director General / sector lead	UNDP, ITU, UNECE	1	√				
5 7	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue		Minister / Director General / labour lead	ILO, IOM, UNDP, UN Women	1,2	√				
5 8	Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography		State Secretary / Director General / Department Head	UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF	2	√				
5 9	Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation		State Secretary / Department Head / sector lead	UN Women, UNECE, UNICEF, UNODC, UNDP	2	√				
6 0	Ministry of Health		Director General / Department Head / Advisor	UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC	2	√				
6 1	Ministry of Interior		Director General / Directorate Head / Department Head	IOM, UNECE, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP	2,3	√				
6 2	Ministry of Justice		State Secretary / Director General / Directorate Head	OHCHR, UN Women, UNDP, UNECE	3	√				
6 3	Ministry of Human and Minority Rights		Director General / Department Head / Office Lead	UN Women, UNDP, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF	3	√				
6 4	Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development		Director General / Department Head	UNECE, UNDP	1	√				

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individual Interview w (F2F)	Group interviews/ FGDs (F2F)	Individual interviews (remote)	Group interviews/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
65	Ministry of Energy and Mining		Council / department lead	UNDP, UNECE	1	√				
66	Ministry of Public Administration		Director General / digital transformation lead	UNDP, UN Women, UNOPS	3	√				
67	Office for Sustainable Development		Office head / SDG coordination lead	UNECE, UNDP	1,2,3	√				
68	MONSTAT		Deputy Director / SDG statistics lead	UN Women, UNDP, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF	1,2,3	√				
69	Human Resource Management Authority		Director / reform lead	UNDP, UN Women	3	√				
70	Institute for Public Health		Director / department head	UNECE, UNICEF	2	√				
71	Employment Agency of Montenegro		Director / programme lead	UNDP	1,2	√				
72	Ombudsperson		Ombudsperson / rights protection representative	OHCHR, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP	3	√				
73	Council on the Rights of the Child		Council / secretariat representative	UNICEF	2,3		√			
74	Independent Monitoring Mechanism on Rights of Persons with Disabilities		Monitoring Mechanism / OPD representatives	UNICEF, UNDP	3		√			
75	Supreme Court of Montenegro		Judicial leadership / focal point	UNICEF	3	√				
76	Supreme State Prosecutor's Office		Senior prosecutor / department lead	OHCHR	3	√				
77	Special Prosecutor's Office		Senior prosecutor / department lead	UNODC	3	√				
78	Agency for Prevention of Corruption		Director / integrity lead	UNODC, UNDP	3	√				
79	Police Directorate / Border Police		Directorate / border management lead	UN Women, UNHCR	2,3	√				
80	Central Bank of Montenegro		Sector lead / expert	UNDP	1	√				

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individual Interview w (F2F)	Group interviews/ FGDs (F2F)	Individual interviews (remote)	Group interviews/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
81	Revenue and Customs Administration		Director / customs lead	UNODC	1,3	√				
82	Institute for Unified Disability Assessment		Director / assessment lead	UNICEF, UNDP	2,3	√				
83	Institute for Social and Child Protection		Director / sector lead	UNDP, UNICEF	2	√				
84	National Ozone Unit		Coordinator / technical focal point	UNDP	1	√				
85	Parliament		Committee member / parliamentary service lead	FAO, OHCHR, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF	1,2,3	√				
LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS / COMMUNITIES										
86	Podgorica		Mayor / local administration / service providers	IOM, UNDP	1,2,3	√	√			
87	Berane		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNICEF, UNDP	1,2,3	√	√			
88	Bijelo Polje		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNDP, UN Women	1,2,3	√	√			
89	Pljevlja		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS, UNDP	1,2,3	√	√			
90	Ulcinj		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS, UNDP	1,2,3	√	√			
91	Bar		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNDP, UN Women	1,2,3	√	√			
92	Mojkovac		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS	2,3	√	√			
93	Petnjica		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS	1	√	√			
94	Tuzi		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS, UNDP	1	√	√			
95	Zeta		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS, UNDP	1	√	√			
96	All 25 municipalities		Mayors / local administration representatives	UNICEF, UNDP	1,2,3	√	√			
NON-GOVERNMENTAL / CIVIL SOCIETY										

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Interview w (F2F)	Group interviews/ FGDs (F2F)	Individual interviews (remote)	Group interviews/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
97	NGO Civic Alliance		Executive Director / programme lead	OHCHR, UNHCR, UNDP	3	√				
98	NGO Juventas		Executive Director / programme lead	UNICEF, UNDP	2,3	√				
99	NGO Montenegrin Association Against AIDS (CAZAS)		Executive Director / programme lead	UNODC, UNDP	2	√				
100	NGO Montenegrin Foundation for HIV and Viral Hepatitis		Executive Director / programme lead	WHO, UNDP	2	√				
101	NGO Parents Association of Montenegro		Executive Director / programme lead	OHCHR, UNICEF	2,3	√				
	NGO Centre for Child Rights and		Executive Director / programme lead	UNICEF						
	NGO Junior Achievement.		Executive Director / programme lead	UNICEF						
102	NGO Red Cross Montenegro		Secretary General / programme lead	UNHCR, UNICEF	2,3	√				
103	NGO Scout Association of Montenegro		Programme lead / coordinator	UNICEF	2,3	√				
104	NGO Ukrainian Association Dobro Djelo		Chairperson / programme lead	IOM, UNICEF	2,3	√				
105	NGO Association for Democratic Prosperity ZID		Executive Director / programme lead	UNDP, UNICEF	3	√				
106	NGO Association of Youth with Disabilities Montenegro		Executive Director / rights advocate	OHCHR, UNICEF	2,3	√				
107	NGO Young Reporters MNE		Programme lead / coordinator	UNICEF	3	√				

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Interview w (F2F)	Group interviews/ FGDs (F2F)	Individual interviews (remote)	Group interviews/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
108	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (11 OPDs)		OPD representatives / chairs	UNDP, UNICEF	2,3		√			
109	Women's Parliamentary Club		Parliamentary representatives	FAO, OHCHR, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF	3	√				
110	Women's Leadership Network		Network representatives	UNDP	3		√			
111	Women in Diplomacy Network		Network representatives	UNDP	3	√				
112	Trade unions (CTUM / UFTUM)		Union leadership / social dialogue representatives	ILO	1,2		√			
113	Media self-regulatory bodies		Media / self-regulatory representatives	UNDP	3		√			
114	International Women's Club / HEMIIAS Foundation		Foundation / philanthropic representatives	UNICEF	2	√				
115	TUI Care Foundation		Programme representatives	UNICEF	1,2	√				
116	Network for Rural Development of Montenegro		Network representatives	FAO	1,2	√				
PRIVATE SECTOR										
117	Montenegro Employers Federation		Federation leadership / employer representative	ILO	1	√		√		
118	Chamber of Economy of Montenegro		Chamber leadership / sector representative	FAO, UNDP	1	√		√		
ACADEMIA / THINK TANKS										
119	University of Montenegro		Professor / researcher / policy expert	UNICEF, UNDP	1,2,3			√		
120	University of Donja Gorica		Professor / researcher / policy expert	UNHCR	1,2,3			√		
121	Academic and research experts		Professor / researcher / policy expert	UNDP	1,2,3			√		

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Intervie w (F2F)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (F2F)	Individua l intervie ws (remote)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
FINAL BENEFICIARIES / RIGHTS-HOLDER GROUPS										
12 2	Roma and Egyptian communities		Community representatives / rights-holders	UNDP, UNICEF	2,3		√			
12 3	Persons with disabilities		Rights-holders / community representatives	UNDP, UNICEF	2,3		√			
12 4	Children and youth		Young participants / youth representatives	UNICEF	2,3		√			
12 5	Women experiencing GBV		Women's support service users / representatives	UNDP	3		√			
12 6	Migrants, asylum seekers, refugees		Rights-holders / community representatives	IOM	2,3		√			
12 7	Stateless persons / persons at risk of statelessness		Rights-holders / community representatives	UNHCR	2,3		√			
12 8	Older persons		Older persons / community representatives	UNHCR	2		√			
12 9	Informal workers / seasonal workers		Workers / community representatives	UNDP, IOM	1,2		√			
13 0	LGBTI persons		Community representatives / rights-holders	OHCHR	3		√			
13 1	Children without parental care		Care-experienced children / youth representatives	UNICEF	2,3		√			
13 2	Youth in northern municipalities		Youth representatives / local participants	UNDP, UNICEF	1,2,3		√			

For operational purposes, the detailed sampling frame maintained by the Evaluation Manager and the Evaluation Team will also cover additional stakeholders proposed during review, including the Centre for Child Rights, Junior Achievement, SOS Nikšić, Women's Safe House, Women's Rights Centre, relevant Roma NGOs and Slovakia as a bilateral development partner. These actors are considered part of the wider CSO and donor universe reflected in the stakeholder map and sampling approach.

ANNEX 2.1 JUSTIFICATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE STAKEHOLDER MAP

The table below consolidates the principal stakeholder clusters for the evaluation and their relevance to the inquiry. It is a summary version for use in the report. A fuller operational contact list should be maintained separately by the Evaluation Manager and ET.

Stakeholder category	Illustrative actors	Role in evaluation	Why they matter
Governance and oversight	MoFA; RC/RCO; UNCT; DCO Evaluation Advisor; MEL Group	Oversight, management, QA, validation	They govern the evaluation process and ensure use of findings
Government primary users	Ministries of European Affairs, Finance, Education, Labour, Social Welfare, Health, Interior, Justice, Human and Minority Rights, Ecology, Public Administration; MONSTAT; Office for Sustainable Development	Primary users; duty-bearers; key data sources	They are central to policy uptake, systems change, financing and sustainability
UNCT agencies	UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, WHO, UNHCR, ILO, OHCHR, UNESCO, FAO, UNOPS, UNECE, UN Women, UNODC, UNDRR, UNEP, UNIDO, IFAD, ITU, UNCTAD	Primary data sources, validation partners, users	They are collectively accountable for UNSDCF delivery and results
Development partners and IFIs	EU Delegation; Switzerland; Austria; Luxembourg; Ireland; UK; Slovakia, Germany; World Bank; EBRD; EIB; KfW; AFD	KIIs; validation partners; external coherence sources	They inform complementarity, financing, pooled fund governance and sustainability
Justice and oversight institutions	Supreme Court; Supreme State Prosecutor's Office; Special Prosecutor's Office; Agency for Prevention of Corruption;	KIIs; specialized evidence sources	They are essential for SP3, accountability and human rights analysis

Stakeholder category	Illustrative actors	Role in evaluation	Why they matter
	Ombudsperson; Council on the Rights of the Child		
Municipalities and local governments	Podgorica; Berane; Bijelo Polje; Pljevlja; Bar; Ulcinj; selected others	Fieldwork respondents; local validation	They surface territorial disparities and local implementation conditions
Civil society and representative organizations	Civic Alliance; Juventas; CAZAS; Red Cross; Centre for Child Rights Parents Association; Association of Youth with Disabilities; OPDs; women's and youth networks; trade unions; employers' federation	KIIs; FGDs; independent validation	They provide implementation experience, advocacy perspectives and HRBA evidence
Rights-holder groups	Roma and Egyptian communities; persons with disabilities; children and youth; women affected by GBV; migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; stateless persons; older persons; children without parental care	FGDs / mediated consultations	They are needed to assess LNOB, accessibility, benefit patterns and barriers
MAF-specific actors	MAF JSC; Advisory Board; MPTF Office; Ministry of European Affairs; EU Delegation; bilateral contributors; implementing agencies	Dedicated KIIs	They are central to assessing the pooled fund's governance and performance

ANNEX 2.2. STAKEHOLDER PRIORITISATION SUMMARY

Priority	Stakeholder category	Rationale	Indicative modalities
Critical	MoFA; Ministry of European Affairs; EU Delegation; RC/RCO; UNCT agencies with largest delivery footprint; MAF Joint Steering Committee	Core governance, financing and accountability actors	KIIs; validation meetings

Priority	Stakeholder category	Rationale	Indicative modalities
High	Ministries with strongest multi-agency engagement; MONSTAT; Ombudsperson; justice and oversight institutions	Highest programmatic exposure and strongest contribution-analysis value	KIIs; group discussions
High	Roma and Egyptian communities; persons with disabilities; children and youth in northern municipalities; women affected by GBV; migrants/stateless persons	Most important for LNOB and HRBA evidence	FGDs; mediated consultations
High	Podgorica; Berane/Bijelo Polje/Pljevlja; Bar/Ulcinj	Territorial disparity and implementation lens	Field visits; local KIIs
Medium	IFIs; bilateral donors with smaller portfolios; trade unions; employers; OPDs not directly implementing	Needed for external coherence and sustainability assessment	KIIs
Secondary	Academia; media self-regulatory bodies; private sector entities not directly engaged	Useful for learning, contextual triangulation and communications dimensions	Selective KIIs

ANNEX 2.3. INDICATIVE STAKEHOLDER SAMPLING SUMMARY

Stakeholder category	Estimated pool	Indicative representative sample	Main data-collection methods
UNCT agencies and RCO	19 agencies + RCO	15-18 interviews / discussions	KIIs; group discussions; online survey
Government ministries and central institutions	~17 core institutions	12-14 institutions; 18–22 interviews/discussions	KIIs; structured group discussions
Justice and oversight / specialized bodies	~10–12	8–10 interviews	KIIs
Municipalities / local self-governments	5–6 priority sites	4–5 municipalities; 6–8 interviews/discussions	KIIs; local discussions

Stakeholder category	Estimated pool	Indicative representative sample	Main data-collection methods
Development partners and IFIs	~15–18	8–10 interviews	KIIs
Civil society and representative organizations	~20–25	10–12 interviews / small-group discussions	KIIs; small-group discussions
Rights-holder / beneficiary groups	10+ priority group types	5–7 FGDs / mediated consultations	FGDs; representative consultations
MAF-specific actors	7 key categories	6–8 interviews	KIIs

ANNEX 2.4. GEOGRAPHIC SAMPLING NOTE

The geographic sample combines a national perspective with targeted sub-national inquiry. The final selection should remain flexible, but it should preserve the logic of covering the capital, at least one northern location and at least one coastal location. In addition to territorial disparities, the sub-national inquiry will pay attention, where evidence allows, to gendered economic disparities, including women's labour-force participation, unpaid care burdens and pay-gap related constraints. To the extent possible, the evaluation will also draw on evidence already generated through the JP PBF/social cohesion evaluation in Podgorica, Bar, Ulcinj, Bijelo Polje and Pljevlja, together with additional stakeholder inputs.

Location	Why it matters	Likely stakeholder clusters
Podgorica	National policy, governance, pooled fund governance, justice institutions, largest concentration of UN and partner actors	Central ministries, RCO/UNCT, IFIs, oversight bodies, selected CSOs
Berane / Bijelo Polje / Pljevlja (north)	Territorial disparity, youth employment, social cohesion, social and child protection, ageing, rural service gaps	Municipal authorities, service providers, youth, older persons, CSOs
Bar / Ulcinj (coast)	Social cohesion, migration, youth employment, coastal inequalities and environmental pressure	Municipal authorities, migrant- and youth-related actors, local CSOs
Optional: Petnjica / Tuzi / Zeta / Mojkovac	Useful where rural competitiveness, local governance or social inclusion evidence needs strengthening	Selected local authorities and implementing partners

RIGHTS-HOLDER CONSULTATION NOTE (HRBA AND SAFEGUARDS)

The evaluation will approach rights-holder consultation as a structured HRBA exercise. The purpose is to understand barriers, access, participation, protection, perceived benefits and differential outcomes, while avoiding harm and respecting confidentiality.

Rights-holder group	Why priority	Preferred modality	Safeguards / conditions
Roma and Egyptian communities	Persistent education and social inclusion gaps, especially among girls who are in higher risk of early drop out, early marriages etc.	FGD or mediated community discussion	Use trusted mediators; ensure accessible language and safe venue
Persons with disabilities	Disability assessment reform; deinstitutionalization; access and inclusion	FGD with OPDs / representative consultations	Accessibility, accommodation and communication support
Children and youth	Education, NEET, participation, territorial inequality	FGD through schools / youth councils / CSOs	Use trusted mediators; ensure accessible language and safe venue
Women affected by GBV	Protection, justice and service response	Mediated consultation through specialist service providers	No direct outreach without safeguards; confidentiality and do-no-harm approach
Migrants, asylum seekers, refugees	Protection, legal status, access to services	FGD or small-group consultation through service NGOs/UNHCR/IOM partners	Confidentiality, voluntary participation, interpretation if needed
Stateless persons / persons at risk of statelessness	Documentation, access to rights and services	Small-group or representative consultations	Confidentiality and legal-sensitivity safeguards
Older persons	Ageing, service access, daycare and care systems	Small-group discussion	Accessible venue and pace
Children without parental care	Deinstitutionalization, foster care	Mediated consultation through professionals or representative bodies	Child protection standards; no direct consultation without safeguards

STAKEHOLDER-METHOD MATRIX

Stakeholder category	Primary methods	Most relevant evaluation dimensions	Examples
Governance and oversight actors	KIIs; validation meetings	Coordination; efficiency; use of findings; accountability	MoFA; RC/RCO; MEL Group; DCO Evaluation Advisor
Government institutions	KIIs; group discussions	Relevance; effectiveness; sustainability; impact orientation	European Affairs; Finance; Education; Labour; Health; Justice; MONSTAT
UNCT agencies	KIIs; group discussions; survey	All criteria, especially coherence, coordination, effectiveness and efficiency	UNDP; UNICEF; IOM; WHO; UNHCR; ILO; OHCHR
Development partners / IFIs	KIIs	External coherence; comparative advantage; efficiency; sustainability	EU Delegation; Switzerland; Austria; World Bank; EBRD; EIB
Municipal / local actors	KIIs; local discussions	Effectiveness; territorial disparities; sustainability	Podgorica; Berane; Bijelo Polje; Pljevlja; Bar; Ulcinj
Civil society / OPDs / representative groups	KIIs; small-group discussions	HRBA; LNOB; accessibility; perceived benefit patterns	Civic Alliance; Juventas; OPDs; women's and youth networks
Rights-holders / beneficiaries	FGDs; mediated consultations	Effectiveness; unintended effects; accessibility; well-being and rights realization	Roma and Egyptians; PWDs; youth; migrants; older persons
MAF-specific actors	KIIs	Efficiency; pooled financing; coordination; sustainability	MAF JSC; Advisory Board; MPTF Office; contributors; implementing agencies

SUPPORTING STAKEHOLDER MAPPING FILES REVIEWED

The following agency-specific stakeholder mapping files and consolidated stakeholder materials were available and reviewed to inform the sampling strategy and annexes.

FAO - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

ILO - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

IOM - Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

ITU - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

OHCHR - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UN WOMEN - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNDP - Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNECE - Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNCT - Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNHCR - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNICEF - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNODC - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNOPS - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

ANNEX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDES

During the field phase, the Evaluation Team will use semi-structured interviews guided by the question sets below. The interviews will allow the Evaluation Team to ask additional, more specific questions in line with the Evaluation Matrix and the Terms of Reference. The object of inquiry is the Cooperation Framework as a collective instrument; accordingly, agency-specific examples will be used only insofar as they help assess CF-level relevance, implementation, coordination and contribution to results.

Also, the Evaluation Team will prioritise in-person interviews, with the intention of ensuring a representative sample during the field phase. Other options, like online surveys, will be explored and discussed as needs arise.

Interview Guide: UN Resident Coordinator – RCO / UN Agencies and UN Results Groups

RELEVANCE AND ADAPTABILITY

EQ1.1: To what extent has the UNSDCF integrated the key development issues and challenges identified by the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and other strategic diagnostics for Montenegro?

SQ1.1.1: To what extent has the UNSDCF reflected the key development issues and challenges identified by the CCA (2021) and the CCA Updates (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025), including territorial disparities, demographic decline, the persistent implementation gap and EU accession-related reform needs?

SQ1.1.2: How were the UNSDCF outcomes and outputs across the three Strategic Priorities logically connected to the problems identified? Can you provide examples?

SQ1.1.3: Were the performance indicators (with baselines and targets) in the Results Matrix relevant, measurable and realistic for tracking progress?

SQ1.1.4: To what extent does the UNSDCF design reflect regional inequality (notably the situation in the north), service-delivery gaps, governance weaknesses and groups at risk of being left behind (children, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, single-parent households, migrants, victims of violence)?

EQ1.2: To what extent are the UNSDCF objectives aligned and consistent with the needs, priorities and policies of Montenegro, including national development goals, international human rights obligations, the SDGs and the EU accession agenda?

SQ1.2.1: How did the UNSDCF align with Montenegro's national development priorities and country needs?

SQ1.2.2: How did the UNSDCF respond to national policies, plans and reform agendas (e.g., Europe Now 2, National Adaptation Plan, social and child protection reforms, education reform, deinstitutionalization, public administration reform)?

SQ1.2.3: In what ways did the UNSDCF respond to international commitments – Agenda 2030, LNOB, human rights, disability inclusion, gender equality – and EU accession-related obligations?

SQ1.2.4: In which areas does the UN system hold a distinctive comparative advantage in Montenegro, particularly in harder-to-address reform domains?

EQ1.3: To what extent are the UNSDCF objectives responsive to emerging needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

SQ1.3.1: How did the UNCT/UN Agencies adapt their support to changing national contexts and emerging needs (e.g., fiscal pressures, climate and disaster shocks, EU accession milestones, demographic shifts)?

SQ1.3.2: How effectively were the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups – and underserved territories such as the north – addressed during these adaptations?

SQ1.3.3: How were gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB considerations incorporated when responding to changing needs?

COHERENCE AND COORDINATION

EQ2.1: Post-UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programmes and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the UNSDCF in both design and implementation?

SQ2.1.1: How were UN agency country programme documents and joint work plans linked to the UNSDCF at the design stage?

SQ2.1.2: To what extent have agency programmes and work plans remained aligned with UNSDCF priorities and outcomes during implementation?

SQ2.1.3: How has derivation from the UNSDCF supported greater coherence of agency action and reduced fragmentation?

EQ2.2: How coherent is the UNCT's support across agencies and outcomes, including clarity of roles, avoidance of duplication, use of joint programming, and the leveraging of normative mandates?

SQ2.2.1: In what ways are UNCT support and outcomes complementary and strategically aligned across resident and non-resident agencies?

SQ2.2.2: How clear are roles and responsibilities across agencies in reducing duplication? Can you provide examples of overlap that remain?

SQ2.2.3: Which joint programming initiatives or joint actions have been most effective in strengthening coherence and improving results?

SQ2.2.4: How well has the UNSDCF leveraged agency normative mandates in a complementary way (e.g., human rights, gender, child rights, labour, environment)?

SQ2.3.4: How effective were oversight and coordination arrangements in problem-solving and collective delivery?

EQ2.3: To what extent did the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT joint convening power and better coherence of the country team?

SQ2.3.1: How has the post-reform RCO contributed to stronger coherence across the country team?

SQ2.3.2: How has the RCO strengthened the UNCT's joint convening power and strategic positioning vis-à-vis Government, the EU Delegation, donors and partners?

SQ2.3.3: How well have coordination mechanisms – the Joint Steering Committee, Results Groups, MEL Group, Gender Theme Group, Human Rights and LNOB groups, inter-agency task teams – contributed to planning, adaptation and implementation of the UNSDCF?

EFFECTIVENESS

EQ3.1: Have the outputs envisaged in the UNSDCF been achieved, and to what extent have they contributed to progress under the UNSDCF outcomes?

SQ3.1.1: What have been the main achievements during UNSDCF implementation – delivery of outputs and progress towards outcomes under each Strategic Priority?

SQ3.1.2: How has progress under outcomes been tracked, and to what extent have targets been met or plausibly advanced?

SQ3.1.3: To what extent did the UNSDCF contribute to key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes under the outcomes?

SQ3.1.4: What were the main enabling factors and bottlenecks affecting results (e.g., institutional capacity, enforcement gaps, data weaknesses, cross-sector coordination, governance, financing)?

SQ3.1.5: Have there been any unintended positive or negative effects linked to UNSDCF implementation?

EQ3.2: To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes necessary for advancing its intended results?

SQ3.2.1: Can you describe examples of UNSDCF contribution to strengthening national capacities and driving systemic change in core thematic areas (climate and DRR, social and child protection, education, health, digital transformation, justice and rule of law, public administration)?

SQ3.2.2: What institutional, behavioural and legislative changes have occurred in the core sectors of intervention?

SQ3.2.3: What progress has been made in gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability?

SQ3.2.4: Which system-level changes have been hardest to achieve, and what are the implications for potential course correction?

EQ3.3: What have been the benefits for the people targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

SQ3.3.1: To what extent did UNSDCF results contribute to tangible improvements for vulnerable and marginalized groups (children, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, women survivors of violence, migrants, populations in the north)?

SQ3.3.2: What specific measures targeting inequalities and cross-cutting issues have been implemented, and with what impact?

SQ3.3.3: To what extent were benefits distributed unevenly across groups, territories or institutions? Which groups may have benefited more or less than others?

EFFICIENCY

EQ4.1: To what extent did the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) achieve its intended purpose – attracting additional financing for strategic, catalytic and innovative UN interventions, ensuring value for money, and advancing UN reform in Montenegro?

SQ4.1.1: To what extent has the MAF supported strategic, catalytic and innovative interventions aligned with the UNSDCF?

SQ4.1.2: How much additional financing has the MAF leveraged or catalysed (e.g., from the EU, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Ireland, the Government's EUR 1 million contribution)?

SQ4.1.3: Has the MAF generated value for money and improved collective UN delivery? Examples?

SQ4.1.4: How has the MAF supported UN reform objectives in Montenegro, including stronger coherence and joint action?

EQ4.2: To what extent did the UNSDCF monitoring, evaluation and learning system effectively inform decision-making and enable adaptive management through data analysis, monitoring and learning?

SQ4.2.1: How has the UNSDCF MEL/M&E system informed decision-making and adaptive management?

SQ4.2.2: Were monitoring and reporting arrangements (annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans, UNINFO) adequate to support course correction and learning?

SQ4.2.3: How has the UNCT applied results-based management to maintain a logical chain of results and strengthen evidence-based management?

EQ4.3: To what extent has the UNSDCF collectively prioritized and reallocated resources according to collective priorities and changing needs, and to what extent have inputs (funds, expertise, time and other resources) been converted into outputs and outcomes efficiently and with due care?

SQ4.3.1: Can you provide examples of resource prioritization or reallocation linked to collective priorities and changing needs?

SQ4.3.2: Were financial, technical and human inputs converted into outputs and outcomes efficiently and with due care?

SQ4.3.3: Were resource mobilization, allocation and delivery broadly aligned with planned needs and priorities?

SUSTAINABILITY

EQ5.1: What are the main results achieved by the UNSDCF that are likely to last and/or be sustained without further UN interventions or support?

SQ5.1.1: Which results under selected UNSDCF priority areas are most likely to be sustained, and why?

SQ5.1.2: To what extent do national stakeholders (Government, municipalities, civil society) demonstrate ownership and intent to sustain interventions?

SQ5.1.3: Are financial, technical and human resources available or likely to be available to maintain achievements – especially in a post-accession environment with shifting financing modalities?

SQ5.1.4: What specific risks may facilitate or impede sustainability (political turnover, fiscal pressures, climate shocks, demographic decline)?

EQ5.2: Has the UNSDCF enabled innovative approaches embedded in institutional learning for national capacity development – Government, civil society, NGOs – so that these actors can continue achieving positive results without UN or development partner support?

SQ5.2.1: What innovative approaches has the UNSDCF introduced (e.g., MAF financing, digital service delivery, climate risk integration, deinstitutionalization)?

SQ5.2.2: To what extent have these approaches been embedded in institutional learning or practice?

SQ5.2.3: Have Government, civil society and NGOs gained capacities to continue or replicate these results?

SQ5.2.4: What mechanisms for scaling up or replication have been created or strengthened?

ORIENTATION TOWARDS IMPACT

EQ6.1: What evidence is there of the UN's contribution to higher-level change – systems strengthening, normative alignment, resilience and equity gains – and what are the most plausible contribution pathways in Montenegro's accession and post-accession trajectory?

SQ6.1.1: Can you provide examples of higher-level changes (beyond immediate outputs) to which UN support has plausibly contributed?

SQ6.1.2: In what ways has UN support strengthened systems, institutions or policy environments?

SQ6.1.3: What are the most plausible contribution pathways the UN has followed in Montenegro?

SQ6.1.4: What has been the UN contribution to resilience and equity gains relevant to Montenegro's accession and post-accession environment?

EQ6.2: To what extent have UN activities stemming from the UNSDCF made a difference for beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their well-being and their human rights overall?

SQ6.2.1: Can you provide examples and views on how UN activities made a difference for beneficiaries?

SQ6.2.2: What evidence is there of improvements in well-being, access to services, participation, protection or rights realization?

SQ6.2.3: Were changes more significant for some groups, genders, ages, disability status or territories than for others?

SQ6.2.4: To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to reducing vulnerability and strengthening resilience?

Interview Guide: UN MEL Group

Could you please introduce yourself, including the UN Agency you are representing?

General questions

- Could you describe your involvement in the preparation and/or implementation of UNSDCF 2023–2027?
- In your opinion, what are Montenegro's key national development priorities? Has the UNSDCF been well-targeted and effective in addressing these priorities, including EU accession-related reforms?
- Are there any important areas that should be considered for the next UNSDCF cycle?

MEL-specific questions

- How appropriate and realistic have the UNSDCF outcomes and established targets been? How adequate have the outputs been in achieving these targets?
- To what extent has the Logic Matrix and hierarchy of objectives ensured internal coherence?
- Have the indicators been well-defined to measure progress under outcomes and outputs?
- To what extent have Results-Based Management principles and tools been reflected in the UNSDCF Results Matrix?
- To what extent have the indicators and targets reflected gender equality, disability inclusion, human rights and "leave no one behind"?
- Have indicators (benchmarks, targets, baselines) been revised and updated to reflect external developments, the CCA Updates, the 2023 Census, MICS and progress achieved?
- How do you assess the level of data availability for the established indicators (including disaggregated data)? What challenges exist – especially in territorial disaggregation – and how can they be addressed?
- What is the data management capacity of national partners (MONSTAT, line ministries, municipalities)? What would you recommend to strengthen national data availability and management practices, particularly in light of EU accession data requirements?
- To what degree did the UNSDCF contribute to SDG targets? Can you provide examples of how UNSDCF outcomes correspond with SDG indicators and VNR findings?
- Have UN Agencies used these indicators to report results and progress through UNINFO and the Country Results Reports? What is your opinion of the work of the UNSDCF MEL Group?
- Has the UNSDCF effectively strengthened data collection and analysis capacities to ensure disaggregated data, including by region (north/centre/south), sex, age and disability?

Interview Guide: Chair of the UN Communication Group

Could you please introduce yourself, including the UN Agency you are representing?

General questions

- Have you been involved in the preparation and/or implementation of UNSDCF 2023–2027?
- In your opinion, what are Montenegro's key national development priorities? Has the UNSDCF been well-targeted and effective in addressing them?
- Are there any important areas that should be considered for the next UNSDCF cycle?

Communication-specific questions

- Has a UN Joint Communication Strategy been developed and implemented? Is the joint communication approach satisfactory?
- Do you think the principle of "One UN voice" is an important element for UN coherence and the effectiveness of results in Montenegro, particularly during the EU accession process?
- How effective has the UNCT been in communicating UNSDCF results in Montenegro? Could you provide examples of the most important communication activities implemented in the context of the UNSDCF (e.g., SDG advocacy, EU-UN joint communication, LNOB visibility)?
- How coherent are UN agencies in delivering core UN advocacy messages (especially those related to UNSDCF implementation, human rights, gender equality, LNOB and EU accession)?
- Has communication among UN Agencies been satisfactory?
- What suggestions would you offer for improving and strengthening internal communication and facilitating access to and sharing of information among UN Agencies and staff in Montenegro?

Interview Guide: Government and Institutional Partners

Could you please introduce yourself, your institution and your role in this institution?

Are you familiar with the work of the United Nations Agencies in Montenegro? If yes, how is your work related to the areas of intervention of the United Nations Agencies in Montenegro?

Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE AND ADAPTABILITY

- What have been Montenegro's priority development needs in the period 2023–2026, particularly in the context of EU accession?
- Which specific development priorities of the country and needs of the population (especially vulnerable groups – children, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, populations in the north) is your institution addressing?
- Do you think the UN Agencies have been sufficiently focused on the priority areas and the needs of citizens, including LNOB groups?
- Have any external factors (fiscal pressures, climate shocks, demographic decline, geopolitical context, accession milestones) affected the country's development needs? Did new needs emerge? Did any previously recognized needs lose priority?

Relevant evaluation criteria: COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS, IMPACT and SUSTAINABILITY

- Which UNSDCF-related initiatives have you supported or implemented in Montenegro? What are your priority sectors? What has been the degree of cooperation with UN Agencies?
- How has your institution coordinated and cooperated with UN Agencies? Were there policy dialogues, joint working groups or joint interventions in place to coordinate efforts? If not, what other mechanisms were in place?
- Are there examples of successful cooperation (e.g., joint forces for implementing activities in priority sectors) between UN Agencies and your institution, or other partners? What factors contributed to the effectiveness of these joint actions?
- From your experience, did any UN Agencies take a leadership role in delivering support in specific sectors? How effective was UN Agency leadership in those sectors or sub-sectors in contributing to the results?
- How effective has the post-reform Resident Coordinator's Office been in convening, coordinating and ensuring coherence of UN support to Montenegro?
- Have national partners created a policy environment conducive to sustaining the accomplished results? Are there sufficient financial, technical and human resources to maintain results, especially in a post-accession context?
- In your opinion, what are the most relevant country priorities and needs for the upcoming five-year period, including those linked to Montenegro's potential EU member status?

Interview Guide: International Development Partners – Bilateral and Multilateral Donors

Could you please introduce yourself, your organisation and your role in this organisation?

Are you familiar with the work of the United Nations Agencies in Montenegro? How is your work related to their intervention areas?

Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE AND ADAPTABILITY

- From your perspective, what have been Montenegro's priority development needs in the period 2023–2026? Which specific development priorities and needs of the population (especially vulnerable groups) is your organisation addressing, including through UN Agencies?
- Who are your main UN partners? Do you think the UN Agencies you partner with have a relevant and adequate approach to addressing priorities, including EU accession-related reforms?
- Have any external factors (fiscal pressures, accession milestones, climate shocks, regional political dynamics) affected the country's development needs?
- Which areas should be prioritised in the future, particularly in light of Montenegro's accession trajectory?

Relevant evaluation criteria: COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS, IMPACT and SUSTAINABILITY

- What have been the main results that you have achieved in partner initiatives or UNSDCF-aligned activities supported or implemented by your organisation in Montenegro? What are your priority sectors?
- What has been the degree of cooperation and communication with UN Agencies?
- Was there an effective government-led mechanism for donor coordination in place (e.g., EU coordination structures, sector working groups)? If not, what other mechanisms were in place?
- Are there examples of successful cooperation – including through the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) – between UN Agencies and your organisation or other donors? What factors contributed to the effectiveness of these joint actions?
- Has your organisation contributed to or considered contributing to the MAF? How do you view the catalytic and value-for-money role of the MAF in Montenegro?
- From your experience, did any UN Agencies take a leadership role in delivering support in specific sectors? How effective was UN Agency leadership in those sectors or sub-sectors in contributing to the results?
- Have the national partners (the Government of Montenegro and other stakeholders) created a policy environment conducive to sustaining the accomplished results?
- In your opinion, what are the most relevant country priorities and needs for the upcoming five-year period? What role should the UN play once Montenegro accedes to the EU?

Interview Guide: EU Delegation

Could you please introduce yourself, your role at the EU Delegation, and your engagement with the UN system in Montenegro?

EU–UN strategic alignment

- How well has the UNSDCF 2023–2027 been aligned with the EU accession agenda and the priorities outlined in the EU's annual progress reports for Montenegro?
- In which clusters or chapters (Fundamentals, Internal Market, Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, Green Agenda, External Relations) has UN support added the most value?
- In which areas does the UN system hold a distinctive comparative advantage that complements EU action?

Coordination, joint action and financing

- How effective have the joint EU–UN initiatives been in Montenegro? Can you provide examples of successful collaboration?
- How do you view the role of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF), to which the EU contributes? Has it delivered catalytic, strategic and innovative results?
- How effective have coordination mechanisms been between the EU Delegation, the RCO and UN Agencies?
- Were there areas of duplication or unclear division of labour between the EU and the UN?

Effectiveness, sustainability and future role

- What have been the most significant UN contributions to Montenegro's reform agenda – particularly in human rights, rule of law, social inclusion, gender equality, climate and DRR, and public administration reform?
- How sustainable are these contributions? Are national partners taking sufficient ownership?
- What role should the UN play in Montenegro's post-accession context, particularly on normative functions, LNOB and persistent disparities?

Interview Guide: Municipalities and Local Authorities

Could you please introduce yourself, your municipality and your role?

Are you familiar with the work of the United Nations Agencies in Montenegro? In which areas has your municipality cooperated with the UN?

Relevance and adaptation to local needs

- What are the most pressing development challenges in your municipality (demographic decline, service-delivery gaps, climate risks, housing affordability, social cohesion)?
- To what extent has UN support responded to these local realities, including territorial disparities between the north, centre and south?
- How well has UN support reached groups at risk of being left behind in your municipality (children, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, women survivors of violence, single-parent families)?

Effectiveness and partnerships

- What concrete results of UN support are visible in your municipality?
- How was cooperation organized between UN Agencies and your municipality? Were there joint initiatives or local platforms in place?
- Did UN support contribute to strengthening local institutional capacities, planning systems and service delivery?

Sustainability and future priorities

- Are the results of UN-supported activities likely to be sustained by the municipality after UN support ends?
- What support would your municipality need from the UN in the next cycle, particularly in light of EU accession?

Interview Guide: Civil Society Organizations, OPDs and Rights-Holder Groups

Could you please introduce yourself, your organisation and the rights-holder groups you represent or work with?

Relevance and inclusion

- To what extent has the UNSDCF reflected the priorities and needs of the groups you represent (e.g., children, women, persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian communities, LGBTI+ persons, migrants, survivors of violence)?
- Was your organisation consulted in the design of the UNSDCF or its joint work plans? How meaningful was that consultation?
- How well does the UNSDCF integrate gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB considerations?

Effectiveness and partnership

- What concrete benefits have your organisation's constituencies seen from UN-supported activities?
- How effective and inclusive has the partnership between UN Agencies and CSOs been? Were there opportunities for joint advocacy, monitoring and implementation?
- How would you describe the level of UN responsiveness to emerging needs of vulnerable groups?

Voice, participation and future role

- Have UN-supported processes created mechanisms for the meaningful participation of rights-holders and CSOs in policy dialogue?
- What changes in laws, policies, services or attitudes do you attribute (at least in part) to UN engagement?
- What should the UN prioritise in Montenegro going forward, particularly to ensure no one is left behind during and after EU accession?

Interview Guide: Beneficiaries (if appropriate)

Note: No dedicated focus groups with children are currently not planned, because the evaluation assesses CF-level progress under outcomes and strategic priorities rather than individual agency interventions. Where youth perspectives are sought, consultations will be conducted primarily through youth representatives, institutions and civil society organizations. If direct evidence activities involving children or adolescents become necessary at a later stage, separate tools and informed consent / child assent procedures will be developed and applied.

Could you please introduce yourself,

- How did you become involved in the activities of UN Agencies?
- How did you benefit from the support of UN Agencies? Please provide specific examples.
- Are you aware of other results of UN support?
- What were your needs, and did the UN support address these needs? Did UN Agencies' work and results help improve the situation in your community or in Montenegro?
- Do you have any suggestions for improving the support that UN Agencies provide?
- What are the priority areas of your community (or the country) that you recommend for future development assistance?

ANNEX 3.2. ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UN MANAGEMENT AND PROGRAMME / PROJECT STAFF

Which Outcome does your work primarily relate to?

(Please select the closest match.)

Outcome 1: All people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved management and state of natural resources and increasingly innovative, competitive, gender-responsive and inclusive economic development that is climate resilient and low-carbon.

Outcome 2: All people, especially the vulnerable, increasingly benefit from equitable, gender-responsive and universally accessible social and child protection system and quality services, including labour market activation and capabilities.

Outcome 3: All people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from strengthened human capital including early childhood development, and more resilient, gender-responsive, and quality healthcare and education.

Outcome 4: All people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved social cohesion, increased realization of human rights and rule of law and accountable, gender-responsive institutions.

1. To what extent has the UNSDCF 2023–2027 addressed Montenegro's national development needs and priorities?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

2. How well did the UNSDCF integrate the key development issues identified in the UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) and CCA Updates – including territorial disparities, demographic decline and EU accession-related reform needs?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

3. To what extent did the UNSDCF respond to emerging needs, especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups during the implementation period (e.g., children, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, populations in the north, single-parent families)?

- Completely
- Sufficiently

- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

4. How effectively were human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability integrated into the design and implementation of UNSDCF activities?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

5. To what extent did the UNSDCF align with Montenegro's EU accession agenda and reform process?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

6. To what extent were UN Agency work plans and programmes derived from and aligned with the UNSDCF 2023–2027?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

7. To what extent have the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities contributed to coherence among UN Agencies in Montenegro?

- Completely
- To a large extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

8. How have the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities facilitated or hindered joint efforts among UN Agencies?

- Strongly facilitated
- Somewhat facilitated
- Neither facilitated nor hindered
- Somewhat hindered
- Strongly hindered

If you think it has been hindering or strongly hindering, can you please explain why?

9. Has the UNSDCF strengthened complementarity, harmonization and coordination among UN Agencies?

- Completely
- To a large extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

10. To what extent has the UNSDCF facilitated collaboration with external development partners (Government, EU Delegation, civil society, private sector, municipalities)?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

11. How effective have UN agencies been in achieving results under the UNSDCF?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

12. From your perspective, what have been the most important results achieved during UNSDCF implementation (at the level of laws, policies, institutions, services and beneficiaries)?

13. Would you say there were areas in which the UNSDCF has been underperforming?

- Yes
- No

- I don't know

If yes, which ones?

14. Would you say there were unplanned (unintended) results achieved during UNSDCF implementation?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If yes, which ones (positive or negative)?

15. Have you been cooperating with other UN Agencies during programming and planning of new initiatives?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide examples.

16. Have you been cooperating directly with other UN Agencies while implementing activities (projects and programmes), including through joint programming?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide examples.

17. In your opinion, have UN Agencies in Montenegro sufficiently used joint programming and the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) to address complex development challenges?

- Yes
- No

Please explain your answer.

18. From your experience, how would you rate the functionality and effectiveness of the UNSDCF joint coordination structures (Joint Steering Committee, Results Groups, MEL Group, Gender Theme Group, Human Rights and LNOB groups) in ensuring progress towards outcomes?

- Highly functional and effective
- Sufficiently functional and effective
- Insufficiently functional and effective
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficiently functional and effective, can you please explain why?

Additional questions for members of Results Groups and inter-agency thematic groups (if applicable):

19. Are you a member of any Results group or inter-agency thematic groups?

- Yes
- No

19a. If yes, which ones:

- Result group 1: Inclusive Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability
- Result group 2: Human capital development, reducing vulnerability, social inclusion
- Result group 3: Social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Group
- Human Rights and Leave No One Behind Thematic Group
- Gender Thematic Group
- Joint Communications Team
- PSEA Task Force
- SDG finance
- Digitalisation
- UN Network on Migration in Montenegro

19.b From your perspective as a member of a Results Group or inter-agency thematic group, how effectively has the group contributed to mainstreaming cross-cutting priorities into planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting under the UNSDCF?

- Very effectively
- Sufficiently effectively
- Insufficiently effectively
- Not at all effectively
- I don't have enough information

19c. What concrete examples can you provide of group-level influence on joint planning, course correction, data use, coordination or collective advocacy?

19d. What have been the main constraints affecting the effectiveness of these groups, and what improvements would you suggest?

20. To what extent did the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) achieve its intended purpose in attracting additional financing, ensuring value for money and advancing UN reform in Montenegro?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, please explain why.

21. How effectively has the UN system mobilized and utilized its resources (human, technical and financial), along with inter-agency synergies, to achieve the planned UNSDCF results?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, please explain why.

22. In your opinion, are the financial and human resources allocated by the UN Agencies appropriate to support the implementation of UNSDCF strategies and achievement of UNSDCF outcomes?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, please explain why.

23. To what extent did the UNSDCF MEL system (annual Country Results Reports, UNINFO, Joint Work Plans) effectively inform decision-making and enable adaptive management?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

Please provide examples or explain.

24. Have there been external factors that (negatively) affected efficiency in UNSDCF implementation (e.g., political turnover, fiscal pressures, climate shocks, EU accession dynamics)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't have enough information about it

If yes, please explain.

25. In your opinion, what would you improve to ensure more efficient (individual and joint) delivery of results?

26. From your perspective, has the UNCT's contribution led to measurable development changes in Montenegro during 2023–2026, including systems strengthening, normative alignment and equity gains?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If yes, please provide examples:

27. Do you believe that achievements under the UNSDCF are likely to be sustainable without UN support, particularly in a post-EU-accession environment?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

28. What factors could affect the sustainability of UNSDCF achievements (political, financial, institutional, demographic, climate-related)?

ANNEX 3.3. ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UN OPERATIONS STAFF

Please provide answers to the following questions primarily having in mind your priority area of work.

1. In your opinion, how well were the UNSDCF 2023–2027 and UN Agencies' activities aligned with Montenegro's national priorities, the needs of the people and the EU accession agenda?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

2. To what extent have the UNSDCF and UN Agencies been addressing the needs of the people in Montenegro since 2023?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

3. To what degree did the UNSDCF follow the "leaving no one behind" principle in Montenegro and contribute to the SDGs and other international commitments (including EU acquis alignment and international human rights instruments)?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

4. How appropriate have the financial and human resources allocated by UN Agencies been in supporting the implementation of strategies and achievement of UNSDCF outcomes?

- Extremely appropriate
- Very appropriate
- Moderately appropriate
- Somewhat appropriate
- Not appropriate at all

5. How effectively has the UNCT established and implemented procedures and resources to ensure contribution to achieving the defined outcomes?

- Extremely effectively
- Very effectively
- Moderately effectively
- Somewhat effectively
- Not effectively at all

6. How well do the mobilized and delivered resources compare to the planned resources for UNSDCF implementation, including resources channelled through the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF)?

- Completely aligned
- Mostly aligned
- Moderately aligned
- Slightly aligned
- Not aligned at all

7. In your opinion, how has the Delivering as One / Business Operations Strategy approach been implemented in Montenegro?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

8. In which operational areas has the Delivering as One approach advanced?

(Select all that apply and provide examples or explanation for each.)

- Joint procurement of goods

Example and explanation:

- Joint procurement of services

Example and explanation:

- Joint recruitment of experts / joint HR approach

Example and explanation:

- ICT and ICT support

Example and explanation:

- Establishment of One UN budget

Example and explanation:

-
- Financial management

Example and explanation:

-
- Joint communication

Example and explanation:

-
- Shared premises / common services / common utilities

Example and explanation:

-
- I don't have enough information about it

9. In your opinion, in which operational areas has the Delivering as One approach been underperforming?

(Select all that apply and provide examples or explanation for each.)

- Joint procurement of goods

Example and explanation:

-
- Joint procurement of services

Example and explanation:

-
- Joint recruitment of experts / joint HR approach

Example and explanation:

-
- ICT and ICT support

Example and explanation:

-
- Establishment of One UN budget

Example and explanation:

-
- Financial management

Example and explanation:

-
- Joint communication

Example and explanation:

-
- Shared premises / common services / common utilities

Example and explanation:

-
- I don't have enough information about it

10. Have you been cooperating directly with other UN Agencies while implementing activities (projects and programmes)?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide examples.

11. In your opinion, to what extent have the roles and responsibilities of the post-reform Resident Coordinator's Office facilitated UN Agencies in achieving better coherence in implementing the UNSDCF?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

12. From your experience, how would you rate the functionality and effectiveness of the UNSDCF joint coordination structures (Joint Steering Committee, Results Groups, MEL Group, Gender Theme Group, Human Rights and LNOB groups) in ensuring progress towards outcomes?

- Highly functional and effective
- Sufficiently functional and effective
- Insufficiently functional and effective
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficiently functional and effective, can you please explain why, and be specific about which structure you are referring to?

13. How would you assess cooperation and communication among UN Agencies in Montenegro?

- Highly functional and effective
- Sufficiently functional and effective
- Insufficiently functional and effective
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficiently functional and effective, can you please explain why?

14. How would you assess cooperation with other UN Operations staff and units (e.g., through the Operations Management Team)?

- Very satisfactory
- Satisfactory
- Fair
- Unsatisfactory
- Non-existent

If you think it was unsatisfactory, can you please explain why?

15. In your opinion, has the UN in Montenegro sufficiently used Delivering as One mechanisms to enhance and improve delivery of results?

- Yes
- No

Please explain.

16. Have there been external factors that (negatively) affected efficiency in UNSDCF implementation in Montenegro?

- Yes
- No
- I don't have enough information about it

If yes, please explain.

17. In your opinion, what would you improve to ensure more efficient (individual and joint) delivery of results in Montenegro?

ANNEX 3.4. ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NATIONAL PARTNERS

(translation to Montenegrin will be used)

Please answer the following questions, keeping primarily in mind the area in which you work and collaborate with the United Nations system.

1. In what capacity have you collaborated with United Nations agencies in Montenegro during the period 2023–2027?

- a. As an expert/consultant
- b. As a partner from a government institution (ministry, agency, institute, etc.)
- c. As a partner from a local self-government institution
- d. As a partner from the private sector
- e. As a partner from a non-governmental organization (NGO)
- f. Other, please specify: _____

2. In your opinion, to what extent were the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Montenegro 2023–2027 and the activities of UN agencies aligned with Montenegro’s national priorities, citizens’ needs, and the European Union accession process?

- Fully aligned
- Sufficiently aligned
- Insufficiently aligned
- Not aligned at all
- I do not have enough information

If you believe the alignment was insufficient, please explain why.

3. To what extent has the work of the United Nations since 2023 responded to the needs of the citizens of Montenegro?

- Fully
- To a sufficient extent
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I do not have enough information

If you believe the response to citizens’ needs was insufficient, please explain why.

4. To what extent has the work of the United Nations in Montenegro applied the “Leave No One Behind” principle and contributed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other international commitments (including alignment with the EU acquis and international human rights instruments)?

- Fully
- To a sufficient extent
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I do not have enough information

If you believe the contribution was insufficient, please explain why.

5. How adequate were the financial and human resources deployed by United Nations agencies in supporting the achievement of planned results?

- Extremely adequate
- Very adequate
- Moderately adequate
- Partially adequate
- Not adequate at all
- I do not have enough information

6. How would you assess cooperation and communication among individual United Nations agencies in Montenegro?

- Very functional and effective
- Sufficiently functional and effective
- Insufficiently functional and effective
- Not functional and effective at all
- I do not have enough information

If you believe cooperation and communication were not sufficiently functional and effective, please explain why.

7. Were there any external factors that negatively affected the efficiency of the implementation of United Nations activities in Montenegro?

- Yes
- No
- I do not have enough information

If yes, please specify which factors.

8. In your opinion, what should be improved to ensure more effective achievement of results in Montenegro, both through individual agency initiatives and joint United Nations activities?

9. Are you a member of a Results Group or an inter-sectoral/inter-agency thematic group?

- Yes → Please proceed to Questions 9a, 9b and 9c
- No → Please proceed to Question 10

9a. From your perspective as a member of a Results Group or inter-sectoral/inter-agency thematic group, how successful was the group in integrating cross-cutting priorities into the planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes under the United Nations Cooperation Framework?

- Very successful
- Sufficiently successful
- Insufficiently successful
- Not successful
- I do not have enough information

If you believe the group was not sufficiently successful, please explain why.

9b. Can you provide specific examples of the group's influence on joint planning, adaptation of activities, use of data, coordination, or joint advocacy efforts?

9c. What were the main constraints affecting the effectiveness of these groups, and what measures would you recommend to improve their performance?

10. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share regarding the work of the United Nations system in Montenegro?

ANNEX 4: TENTATIVE AGENDA OF IN-COUNTRY VISIT AND PROPOSED MEETINGS²²

The tentative agenda for the Evaluation Team's in-country mission, **8–19 June 2026**, is provided below. It reflects programmatic and stakeholder representativeness. Geographical representativeness will be ensured by additional visits as agreed– besides Podgorica, the capital – to **the north** (e.g., Bijelo Polje, Berane, Pljevlja, Rožaje) and **the coast / south** (e.g., Bar, Kotor, Ulcinj) – to interview local self-governments, local stakeholders, civil society and vulnerable groups, including Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities and women's organizations.

UNSDCF Montenegro Evaluation Mission – Field Data Collection

Draft agenda as of June 3 2026 (daily updates will be reflected in a separate file)

DAY	TIME	RESPONDENTS	VENUE	NOTES (PROGRAMMATIC / GEOGRAPHICAL / STAKEHOLDER)	ORGANIZATION
8 June, Monday	9:00 – 17:00	Brief with Evaluation Manager UNCT Resident Coordinator RCO team Evaluation management group Heads of Agencies: UNDP Heads of Agencies: UNICEF Heads of Agencies: ILO End of day briefing	UN Eco House, Podgorica	UN focus	RCO / EM

²² The final agenda will depend on the availability of the stakeholders.

DAY	TIME	RESPONDENTS	VENUE	NOTES (PROGRAMMATIC / GEOGRAPHICAL / STAKEHOLDER)	ORGANIZATION
9 June, Tuesday	9:00 – 17:00	Heads of Agencies: OHCHR Heads of Agencies: UNHCR Heads of Agencies: WHO Heads of Agencies: IOM EU Delegation EBRD End of day briefing	UN Eco House	UN focus first part of the day, international partners afternoon	RCO / EM
10 June, Wednesday	9:00 – 17:00	Results group 1: co-chairs meeting Civil society focus group Academia/specialized institutions Continuation End of day briefing	UN Eco House	UN / GoM / civil society / academia / experts	RCO / EM
11 June, Thursday	9:00 – 17:00	Results group 2: co-chairs meeting World Bank EIBD Ministry of Foreign Affairs Council of Europe End of day briefing	UN Eco House / WB, EIBD, MFA and CE premises	UN / GoM / international partners	RCO / EM
12 June, Friday	9:00 – 17:00	Results group 3: co-chairs meeting Government institutions and line ministries Debriefing with UNRC/O	UN Eco House	UN focus / Government of Montenegro	RCO / EM

DAY	TIME	RESPONDENTS	VENUE	NOTES (PROGRAMMATIC / GEOGRAPHICAL STAKEHOLDER)	ORGANIZATION
15 June, Monday	14:00 – 17:00	Heads of Agencies: UN Women, UNIDO	Online	UN focus	RCO / EM
16 June, Tuesday	9:00 – 17:00	Heads of Agencies: FAO; UNESCO, UNECE, UNCTAD, UNEP	Online	UN focus	RCO / EM
17 June, Wednesday	9:00 – 17:00	Heads of Agencies: UNDRR, ITU, IFAD, UNODC, UNOPS	Online	UN focus	RCO / EM
18 June, Thursday	9:00 – 17:00	International partners: ADA, SDC, Luxemburg, Ireland, Norway	Online	Donors focus – MAF contributors	RCO / EM
19 June, Friday	9:00 – 17:00	Individual GoM and local government meetings Final debriefing	Online	GoM	RCO / EM

ANNEXES

FINAL EVALUATION UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK (UNSDCF) FOR MONTENEGRO (2023-2027)

*Prepared by UNSDCF Final Evaluation Team:
Tomislav Novovic, Team Leader
Olivera Komar, Senior Evaluation Expert*

*September 2026
Podgorica, Montenegro*

1 ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of Documents Consulted	4
Annex 2: Theory Of Change	7
Annex 3: List of interviewed and consulted stakeholders	11
Annex 4: Interview Statistics	14
Annex 5: Anonymous survey	15
Annex 6: List of interviews by institution type	16
Annex 7: Agenda of In-Country Visit and Meetings	20
Annex 8: Final Evaluation Terms of Reference	22
Annex 9: Inception report	38

ANNEX 1: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

UNSDCF core and coordination documents

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. Interagency groups functioning: Update (Internal working document).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. Outcome indicators (Data set).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UN Cooperation Framework coordination and management arrangements.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UNCT Montenegro disability inclusion employment statement.
- United Nations & Government of Montenegro. (2022). United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (n.d.). UNSDCF governance and management arrangements (Internal working document).
- UN Country Team Montenegro. (2026). National Partners Survey Report: Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023–2027 (40 respondents; internal/confidential evaluation survey output).
- UN Country Team Montenegro. (2026). UN Management and Programme Survey Report: Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023–2027 (18 UN programme-management staff respondents; internal/confidential evaluation survey output).

Joint programme evaluation reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026, January). Final evaluation report: EmpowHER joint programme.
- United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2024, August). Final evaluation report: UNPRPD joint programme - Montenegro.

Agency programme documents

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2023). Country Programming Framework for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- International Labour Organization. (2023). Decent Work Country Programme for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2022). Country Programme Document for Montenegro (2023–2027).
- United Nations Children’s Fund. (2022). UNICEF Country Programme Document for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). Strategic partnership framework.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). UNODC October public version (v. 2.0).

Business Operations Strategy

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026). Business Operations Strategy review 2026.

Common Country Analysis (CCA) and SDG policy briefs

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2021). Common Country Analysis: Montenegro.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2022). Common Country Analysis: 2022 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). Common Country Analysis: 2023 update.

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). Common Country Analysis: 2024 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). Common Country Analysis: 2025 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (n.d.). SDG policy brief 1: SDG financing.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (n.d.). SDG policy brief 2: Is Montenegro's North at risk of being left behind?
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (n.d.). SDG policy brief 3: Poverty and child poverty in Montenegro.

European Union progress reports

- European Commission. (2023). Montenegro 2023 report.
- European Commission. (2024). Montenegro 2024 report.
- European Commission. (2025). Montenegro 2025 report.

Flagship analyses and thematic studies

- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Fourth environmental performance review of Montenegro.
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. (2024). Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Montenegro. United Nations.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2024). Compendium of broadband mapping practices.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2023). Digital development country profile: Montenegro.
- DigitAll Montenegro. . Assessment of e-government and e-services in local self-government units in Montenegro.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026). EU accession and SDGs convergence analysis.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (n.d.). Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Montenegro.
- International Labour Organisation. (n.d.). Gender pay gap analysis.
- UN Women. Gender-responsive budgeting in Montenegro.
- Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. (2024). GREVIO baseline evaluation report on Montenegro. Council of Europe.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2024). Montenegro national broadband plan.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2025). Public early warning systems in the Western Balkans.
- United Nations Institute for Training and Research & International Telecommunication Union. (2023). Regional e-waste monitor.
- Committee on Enforced Disappearances. (2025). Review of Montenegro (Working document). United Nations.
- Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers. (2024). Country visit report: Montenegro. United Nations Human Rights Council.
- Human Rights Council. (2023). Summary of the Universal Periodic Review: Montenegro. United Nations.
- United Nations Human Rights Committee. (2025, May 7). Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Montenegro (CCPR/C/MNE/CO/2). United Nations.
- Montenegro: Media Freedom Rapid Response Mission Report. (2024). SafeJournalists Network and partners. Available at: <https://srfreedex.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/MNE-1-2024.pdf>
- United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures Communication AL MNE 1/2024 (gId=30354).. <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30354>
- United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures Communication AL MNE 2/2024 (gId=30330). <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30330>
- United Nations Human Rights Committee. (2025, May 7). Concluding observations on the second

- periodic report of Montenegro (CCPR/C/MNE/CO/2). United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025). Gender equality profile: Montenegro.
- United Nations Office for Project Services. (n.d.). Analysis of digital flows in Montenegro.

Joint Country Steering Committee

- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2022). JCSC 2022 minutes (Internal meeting minutes).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2024). JCSC 2024 minutes (Internal meeting minutes).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (n.d.). JCSC members (Internal working document).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2025). JCSC 2025 minutes (Internal working document).

Joint Work Plans

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023/2024). Joint Work Plan 2023/2024.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). Joint Work Plan 2025.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026/2027). Joint Work Plan 2026/2027.

Montenegro Acceleration Fund

- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. (2025). 2025 MAF report.
- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. (2024). MAF progress report 2024.
- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. (n.d.). MAF terms of reference.

Results Groups

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025, February). Članovi i ko-sazivači rezultatskih grupa (Members and co-conveners of Results Groups, internal document in Montenegrin).

UN SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2023.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2024.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2025.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (n.d.). UNCT Montenegro UN-SWAP report with action plan (final).

Annual Results Reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). UN country results report 2023 (English web edition).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). UN Montenegro annual results report 2024.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). UN Montenegro annual results report 2025.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2023). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2023.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2024). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2024.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2025.
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2023). UNICEF annual report - Montenegro 2023.
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2024). UNICEF Montenegro annual report 2024 (final, English).
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2025). UNICEF Montenegro annual report summary 2025.

ANNEX 2: THEORY OF CHANGE

Recognising the interconnected nature of Montenegro’s development challenges, the UNSDCF 2023–2027 addresses economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions in an integrated manner, while embedding the principles of sustainability, inclusion, resilience, gender equality and Leaving No One Behind across the full results chain. The overall theory of change, as presented in the approved UNSDCF, posits that if Montenegro advances inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability, human capital development, reducing vulnerability and social inclusion, and social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights, then the country will reduce multidimensional and income poverty and accelerate progress towards a sustainable, resource-efficient and innovation-based economy, with an improved state of the environment and increased respect for human rights, social justice and inclusion of the most vulnerable by 2027. The UNSDCF graphically represents this overall logic on page 14, alongside the cross-cutting themes of LNOB, GE&WE, EU accession, disaggregated data and digital transformation.

The Theory of Change is rooted in the CCA and in the consultation process that shaped the Cooperation Framework. The UNSDCF states that it was developed through the internally prepared Common Country Analysis and consultations with government, civil society, development partners, member states, and targeted consultations with women and youth. Technical consultations culminated in the Strategic Prioritisation Retreat and a high-level Strategic Prioritisation Workshop, which endorsed the strategic priorities. The earlier MAPS exercise also played an important role by demonstrating strong synergies between the 2030 Agenda and EU accession, particularly through Chapters 27, 23 and 19. This means that the ToC was not framed only as a UN programming device, but as a strategic articulation of how SDG progress, human rights obligations and accession-related reforms could reinforce one another.

The ToC is built around the understanding that Montenegro has already made substantial development progress, but that a number of structural bottlenecks continue to slow progress and reproduce exclusion. The UNSDCF identifies these bottlenecks as being typical of an upper-middle-income, EU-candidate country, and particularly linked to the cross-cutting issue of governance and institutions. Weak implementation capacity, incomplete policy execution, gaps in data use, insufficient coordination, uneven institutional performance and weaknesses in accountability affect all three strategic priorities. The Theory of Change therefore assumes that progress in Montenegro does not depend only on sector interventions, but on whether governance and institutional constraints can be addressed in ways that support the economy, environment, social sectors, and the realization of rights.

The UNSDCF identifies three broad **areas of opportunity** that anchor this logic:

- (i) promoting economic transformation and environmental sustainability;
- (ii) investing in human and social capital; and
- (iii) enhancing governance and institutional capacities.

These opportunity areas are clearly articulated in the country context and ToC narrative and together explain why the UNSDCF is organized around the three strategic priorities. The underlying premise is that vulnerability and poverty can only be reduced in a durable way if these three dimensions progress simultaneously and in a mutually reinforcing manner.

For evaluative purposes, the original Cooperation Framework Theory of Change was reconstructed to show explicitly how entity Country Programme Document outputs, Joint Work Plan outputs and joint-programme or pooled-fund outputs are expected to generate institutional and behavioural changes and contribute to the four Cooperation Framework outcomes. The reconstruction also makes the principal assumptions and risks available for testing across the evaluation criteria.

RECONSTRUCTED EVALUATION-USE THEORY OF CHANGE

How entity and joint outputs contribute to Cooperation Framework outcomes

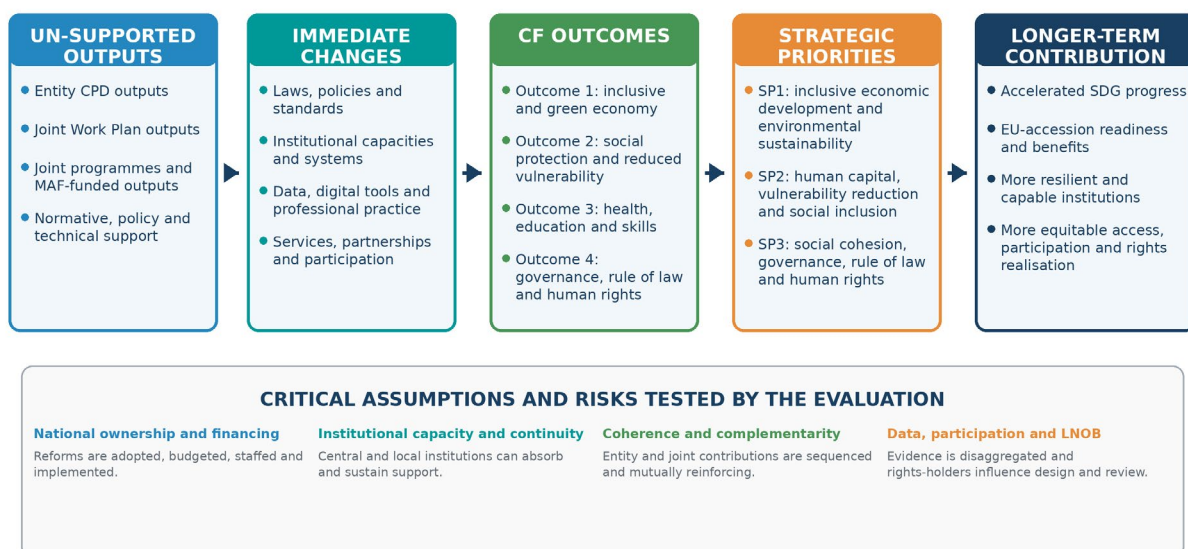


Figure 31. Reconstructed evaluation-use Theory of Change linking entity and joint outputs to Cooperation Framework outcomes.

The inception phase included a preliminary analysis of the soundness, relevance and evaluability of the UNSDCF Theory of Change and the broader results chain. This preliminary review focused on whether the original theoretical ToC was conceptually robust, whether it remained relevant in light of evolving country conditions, and whether it required major reconstruction for the purposes of the final evaluation. The assessment also drew on the guidance requirement that the ToC serves as the key reference framework for the evaluation and that the evaluation team should determine whether it is sufficiently articulated for selecting and analysing outcomes..

The analytical basis for the design of the ToC

The preliminary assessment is that the original theoretical ToC is **sound, relevant and strategically coherent**. First, it is clearly aligned with Montenegro's national development priorities, SDG commitments, international human rights obligations and the EU accession process. The UNSDCF explicitly links its priorities to the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the 2030 Agenda, EU accession requirements and a wide set of national reform strategies. This gives the ToC a strong policy anchor and ensures that it is not detached from the country's actual reform trajectory.

Second, the ToC is strong because it is based on an explicit diagnosis of **root causes**, not just sector outputs. The central theory is that Montenegro's remaining gaps and vulnerabilities are sustained by weak institutional performance, uneven governance quality, exclusion of vulnerable groups, a narrow and environmentally unsustainable growth pattern, and insufficiently inclusive and resilient social systems. The ToC therefore does not treat economic transformation, social inclusion, service quality, environmental sustainability and governance as separate agendas. Rather, it presents them as interdependent pathways that must advance together if Montenegro is to reduce multidimensional poverty, accelerate SDG progress and strengthen readiness for EU membership.

Third, the ToC is strong because it identifies **clear strategic pathways** under each priority area. Under **Strategic Priority 1**, the theory focuses on economic transformation, greener and more inclusive growth, labour-market reform, climate adaptation and mitigation, sustainable natural resource management and disaster risk reduction. Under **Strategic Priority 2**, the framework articulates two complementary pathways: one around social and child protection, labour activation, school-to-work transition, migration and vulnerability reduction; and another around health, education and early childhood development as drivers

of stronger human capital. Under **Strategic Priority 3**, the framework links rule of law, public administration reform, civic participation, gender equality, social cohesion and the fight against violence, hate speech, corruption and organized crime to stronger accountability and greater realization of rights. These pathways are elaborated both in the visual ToC and in the narrative explanations for Outcomes 1–4.

Fourth, the ToC is strengthened by a set of **cross-cutting acceleration strategies**. The UNSDCF identifies synergy with EU accession, production and use of quality disaggregated data, digital transformation and innovation, SDG financing, partnerships with IFIs and the private sector, youth participation, and a prevention approach as key accelerators. This is important because it clarifies not only what the UN wants to contribute to, but how those contributions are expected to gain traction in practice. These strategies also increase the realism of the ToC by acknowledging that outcome-level progress depends on financing, information, partnerships and systemic coordination, not only on programme delivery.

Fifth, the ToC embeds a clear **UN comparative advantage** logic. The UNSDCF states that the UN’s main comparative advantages in Montenegro lie in its rights-based mandate, neutrality, advocacy role, convening power, access to international and regional expertise, ability to create linkages across sectors, and capacity to support sensitive reforms such as gender equality, human rights and LNOB. The ToC is therefore not simply about doing more activities; it is about using the UN’s distinctive role to enable reforms, partnerships, learning and institutional change in areas where this added value matters.

That said, the ToC is also **highly ambitious and interconnected**, and this has implications for evaluability. Because the strategic priorities are mutually reinforcing and because many outcomes depend on policy and institutional changes influenced by multiple actors, the causal pathways between UN-supported outputs and broader national outcomes are not always sufficiently explicit for evaluative purposes. The outcome-level results framework is useful as a strategic direction-setting instrument, but for the final evaluation it will be necessary to reconstruct more clearly the **output-to-outcome contribution pathways** and test the assumptions behind them. In that sense, the ToC is strategically sound, but it still requires analytical unpacking during the evaluation

Real-time relevance and responsiveness to emerging issues

The preliminary conclusion is that the original ToC was flexible enough to accommodate emerging issues without requiring a fundamental redesign. The UNSDCF was formulated in the aftermath of the COVID-19 shock and explicitly notes that short-term policies would be guided by the principles of “building back better” and by a proactive response to regional and global developments. The CCA and UNSDCF narrative already recognized that Montenegro faced macroeconomic vulnerability, climate risk, demographic challenges, social exclusion, and institutional bottlenecks, and that future implementation would take place in a volatile environment.

The approved UNSDCF also includes an explicit set of assumptions and risks. These include continued political commitment to EU accession and human rights implementation, manageable macroeconomic and fiscal conditions, availability and use of disaggregated data, political stability and continuity of the development vision, absence of severe regional spillovers, no major escalation of COVID-19 or other health crises, and continued commitment to low-carbon development. The risk section further highlights political and administrative transition, social cohesion risks, infrastructure and service-access risks, displacement and migration pressures, public health crises, environmental and climate risks, and economic and financial instability. Because these risks were already identified ex ante, the ToC appears to have been designed with a substantial degree of strategic flexibility.

At the same time, the evaluation will still need to examine whether implementation practice remained faithful to the theory and whether adaptive management operated mainly at activity level or also altered the practical logic of contribution under some outcomes. In Montenegro’s case, important contextual developments after UNSDCF adoption included continued fiscal and policy reforms, growing attention to climate and disaster-risk frameworks, expansion of digitalization in social sectors and public administration, deepening accession-linked reform pressures, and persistent territorial and demographic disparities. These developments do not appear to invalidate the theoretical ToC, but they may have altered the relative importance of some pathways or the feasibility of some assumptions.

For that reason, the evaluation does not need to replace the original ToC with a new theory, **but it does need to produce an evaluative reconstruction of how the framework was actually implemented**. This

means clarifying which output pathways were most active, which assumptions held or did not hold, and where external factors, coordination dynamics, funding constraints or institutional bottlenecks changed the practical route from outputs to outcomes. In particular, the evaluation will need to pay close attention to the four outcome pathways, the role of cross-cutting strategies, and the extent to which governance and institutional reform functioned in practice as the intended cross-cutting enabler of change.

Overall preliminary conclusion on the ToC

On the basis of the preliminary documentary review, the Evaluation Team concludes that the original UNSDCF Theory of Change remains a valid strategic framework for the final evaluation. It is aligned with national priorities, SDG commitments, human rights obligations and the EU accession trajectory; it identifies the key structural bottlenecks and enabling conditions; and it already incorporates a degree of adaptability through its cross-cutting strategies, assumptions and risks. At the same time, because the ToC is highly interconnected and ambitious, the evaluation will need to clarify and test the more specific contribution pathways from UN-supported outputs to outcome-level changes, rather than rely only on the broad strategic logic. In that sense, the ToC does not require wholesale reconstruction, but it does require evaluative refinement so that the final report can assess what held, what changed, what enabled progress, and where the theory proved more ambitious than implementation conditions allowed.

ANNEX 3: LIST OF INTERVIEWED AND CONSULTED STAKEHOLDERS

List of Interviews / Consultations

No.	Name	Title	Mode	Type	Gender
1	Caroline Tissot	UNCT Resident Coordinator	IP, II	RCO	F
2	Miloš Popović	Member of RCO team	IP, GI	RCO	M
3	David Wright	Member of RCO team	IP, GI	RCO	M
4	Vanja Šćepović	Member of RCO team and EMG	IP, GI	RCO	F
5	Bojan Tenjović	EMG and UNDP	IP, GI	UN	M
6	Stevan Stanišić	EMG and UNDP	IP, GI	UN	M
7	Tijana Simić	EMG and IOM	Online GI, IP II	UN	F
8	Kamila Novak	EMG and FAO	Online GI	UN	F
9	Milijana Vukotić	EMG and UNOPS	Online GI	UN	F
10	Vlatko Otašević	Communication officer RCO	IP, II	RCO	M
11	Michele Servadei	UNICEF representative	IP, II	UN	M
12	Nina Krgović	EMG and ILO National project coordinator	IP, II	UN	F
13	Anjet Lanting	OHCHR and HR Adviser to the RC and UNCT, based in the RCO	IP, II	RCO	F
14	Mina Brajović	WHO representative	In writing	UN	F
15	Vladimir Gjorgjiev	IOM Chief of Mission	IP, II	UN	M
16	Sabina Žunić	RG 2 co-chair UNICEG	IP, II	UN	F
17	Remon Zakaria	Head of EBRD in Montenegro	IP, II	IP	M
18	Aleksandra Kiković	Co-chair RG 1 and UNDP	IP, GI	UN	F
19	Anđela Kiković	Co-Chair RG 1 and Ministry of Economic Development	IP, GI	GoM	F
20	Bernard Brunet	European Delegation to Montenegro	IP, GI	EUD	M
21	Brigitte Kuchner	European Delegation to Montenegro	IP, GI	EUD	F
22	Juliette Lequesne	European Delegation to Montenegro	IP, GI	EUD	F

23	Frieda Wunschmann	European Delegation to Montenegro	IP, GI	EUD	F
24	Mersida Aljićević	Co-chair RG 2 and Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography	IP, II	GoM	F
25	Sara Čabarkapa	Center for Civic education	IP, II	CS	F
26	Maja Simonović	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	IP, GI	GoM	F
27	Tamara Brajović	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	IP, GI	GoM	F
28	Aleksandra Đaković	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	IP, GI	GoM	F
29	Vesna Miranović	Academia	IP, GI	AC	F
30	Nikola Šaranović	Academia	IP, GI	AC	M
31	Mirko Knežević	Academia	IP, GI	AC	M
32	Ranko Andrijašević	Sustainable development office	IP, GI	GoM	M
33	Andrija Đukanović	Sustainable development office	IP, GI	GoM	M
34	Bojan Vujović	Ministry of European Affairs	IP, II	GoM	M
35	Majda Savićević	MONSTAT	IP, II	GoM	F
36	Snežana Remiković	MONSTAT	IP, II	GoM	F
37	Nabil Gangi	FAO	Zoom, GI	UN	M
38	Gordana Kozhuharova	FAO	Zoom, GI	UN	F
39	Jovana Šuković	FAO	Zoom, GI	UN	F
40	Siniša Šesum	UNESCO	Zoom, II	UN	M
41	Polina Tarshis	UNECE	Zoom, II	UN	F
42	Aleksandar Đorđević	UNODC	Zoom, II	UN	M
43	Michela Telatin	UNOPS	Zoom, II	UN	F
44	Jaroslav Ponder	ITU	Zoom, II	UN	M
45	Michele Ribotta	UN Women	Zoom, II	UN	M
46	Marija Ružić Stajović	Juventas	Zoom, GI	CS	F
47	Nataša Vukićević	Dostignuća mladih u CG	Zoom, GI	CS	F
48	Marija Pajović	Centar za prava djeteta	Zoom, GI	CS	F

49	Anđela Karadžić	Centar za prava djeteta	Zoom, GI	CS	F
50	Nichole Epting	UNHCR	Zoom, GI	UN	F
51	Mensur Bajramspahić	UNHCR	Zoom, GI	UN	M
52	Slobodan Raščanin	UNHCR	Zoom, GI	UN	M
53	Bojana Bošković	Ministry of European Affairs	Zoom, II	GoM	F
54	David Muckenhuber	ADA, Head of Office	Zoom, II	IP	M
55	Solomiya Omelyan	UNIDO	In writing	UN	F
56	Amela Orahovac	Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography	Zoom, II	GoM	F
57	Svetlana Dujović	Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography		GoM	F
58	Aleksandra Kuč	Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation		GoM	F
59	Milena Krsmanović Iković	Advisor to the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms		GoM	F
60	Dragana Pešić	Institute for child and social protection		GoM	F
61	Neda Vukotić	Public Institution “Komanski Most”		GoM	F
62	Sanela Žiga	NGO Zračak nade		CS	F
63	Sabra Dečević	NGO Children of Montenegro		CS	F
64	Savo Knežević	OPD Nardos		CS	M
65	Miroslava Mima Ivanović	I MI BOKE		CS	F
66	Tijana Mijušković	Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Montenegro		CS	F
67	Milisav Mimo Korać	OPD Naša inicijativa		CS	M

ANNEX 4: INTERVIEW STATISTICS

By institution type

Category	Count	%
RCO	6	9%
UN	24	36%
GoM	17	25%
EUD	4	6%
AC	3	4%
CSO	11	16%
International partner	2	3%
Total	67	100%

By gender

Category	Count	%
Female	43	64%
Male	24	36%
Total	67	100%

Gender breakdown by institution type

Institution type	Female	Male	Total
Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)	3	3	6
UN Agencies (UN)	13	11	24
Government of Montenegro (GoM)	14	3	17
European Union Delegation (EUD)	3	1	4
Academia (AC)	1	2	3
Civil Society (CS)	9	2	11
International Partners	0	2	2
Total	43	24	67

ANNEX 5: ANONYMOUS SURVEY

In addition to the interviews above, two anonymous online survey streams were administered, with a short supplementary operations questionnaire under the UN stream.

UN programme management survey - 18 of 77 respondents (23%); supplementary operations questionnaire - 3 of 6 respondents (50%)

Programme outcome	Respondents
Outcome 1	3
Outcome 2	3
Outcome 3	2
Outcome 4	10
Total	18

National partners survey — 40 of 113 respondents (35%)

Partner category	Respondents
Experts	6
State institution partners	28
Local self-government	3
Private sector	1
Trade unions	2
Total	40

ANNEX 6: LIST OF INTERVIEWS BY INSTITUTION TYPE

RESIDENT COORDINATOR'S OFFICE (RCO) — 6

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
1	Caroline Tissot	UNCT Resident Coordinator	F
2	Miloš Popović	Member of RCO team	M
3	David Wright	Member of RCO team	M
4	Vanja Šćepović	Member of RCO team and EMG	F
10	Vlatko Otašević	Communication officer RCO	M
13	Anjet Lanting	OHCHR and HR Advisor at RCO	F

UN AGENCIES (UN) — 24

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
5	Bojan Tenjović	EMG and UNDP	M
6	Stevan Stanišić	EMG and UNDP	M
7	Tijana Simić	EMG and IOM	F
8	Kamila Novak	EMG and FAO	F
9	Milijana Vukotić	EMG and UNOPS	F
11	Michele Servadei	UNICEF representative	M
12	Nina Krgović	EMG and ILO National project coordinator	F
14	Mina Brajovic	WHO representative	F
15	Vladimir Gjorgjiev	IOM Chief of Mission	M
16	Sabina Žunić	RG 2 co-chair UNICEG	F
18	Aleksandra Kiković	Co-chair RG 1 and UNDP	F
37	Nabil Gangi	FAO	M
38	Gordana Kozhuharova	FAO	F
39	Jovana Šuković	FAO	F
40	Siniša Šesum	UNESCO	M
41	Polina Tarshis	UNECE	F

42	Aleksandar Đorđević	UNODC	M
43	Michela Telatin	UNOPS	F
44	Jaroslav Ponder	ITU	M
45	Michele Ribotta	UN Women	M
50	Nichole Epting	UNHCR	F
51	Mensur Bajramspahić	UNHCR	M
52	Slobodan Raščanin	UNHCR	M
55	Solomiya Omelyan	UNIDO	F

GOVERNMENT OF MONTENEGRO (GOM) — 17

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
19	Anđela Kiković	Co-Chair RG 1 and Ministry of Economic Development	F
24	Mersida Aljićević	Co-chair RG 2 and Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography	F
26	Maja Simonović	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	F
27	Tamara Brajović	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	F
28	Aleksandra Đaković	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	F
32	Ranko Andrijašević	Sustainable development office	M
33	Andrija Đukanović	Sustainable development office	M
34	Bojan Vujović	Ministry of European Affairs	M
35	Majda Savićević	MONSTAT	F
36	Snežana Remiković	MONSTAT	F
53	Bojana Bošković	Ministry of European Affairs	F
56	Amela Orahovac	Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography	F
57	Svetlana Dujović	Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography	F
58	Aleksandra Kuč	Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation	F
59	Milena Krsmanović Iković	Advisor to the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms	F

60	Dragana Pešić	Institute for child and social protection	F
61	Neda Vukotić	Public Institution “Komanski Most”	F

EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION (EUD) — 4

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
20	Bernard Brunet	European Delegation to Montenegro	M
21	Brigitte Kuchner	European Delegation to Montenegro	F
22	Juliette Lequesne	European Delegation to Montenegro	F
23	Frieda Wunschmann	European Delegation to Montenegro	F

ACADEMIA (AC) — 3

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
29	Vesna Miranović	Academia	F
30	Nikola Šaranović	Academia	M
31	Mirko Knežević	Academia	M

CIVIL SOCIETY (CS) — 11

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
25	Sara Čabarkapa	Center for Civic education	F
46	Marija Ružić Stajović	Juventas	F
47	Nataša Vukićević	Dostignuća mladih u CG	F
48	Marija Pajović	Centar za prava djeteta	F
49	Anđela Karadžić	Centar za prava djeteta	F
62	Sanela Žiga	NGO Zračak nade	F
63	Sabra Decević	NGO Children of Montenegro	F
64	Savo Knežević	OPD Nardos	M
65	Miroslava Ivanović	Mima I MI BOKE	F
66	Tijana Mijušković	Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Montenegro	F

67 Milisav Mimo Korać OPD Naša inicijativa M

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS — 2

No.	Name	Title / Organisation	Gender
17	Remon Zakaria	Head of EBRD in Montenegro	M
54	David Muckenhuber	ADA, Head of Office	M

NOTES

- Institution codes: RCO (Resident Coordinator’s Office), UN (UN Agencies), GoM (Government of Montenegro), EUD (EU Delegation), AC (Academia), CS (Civil Society).
- Survey response rates and interview totals are independent; combined figures count each person once per method.
- Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

ANNEX 7: AGENDA OF IN-COUNTRY VISIT AND MEETINGS

The agenda for the Evaluation Team's in-country mission, **8–12 June 2026**, is provided below.

<i>DAY</i>	<i>Specific time</i>	<i>RESPONDENTS</i>	
<i>8 June, Monday</i>	9:00 - 9:30	Brief with Evaluation Manager	UN cafeteria
	9:30 - 10:00	UNCT Resident Coordinator	UN Eco House, PG
	10:00 - 11:00	RCO team	UN Eco House, PG
	11:00 - 12:00	Evaluation management group	UN Eco House, PG
	13:30 - 14:00	Communication officer	UN Eco House, PG
	14:00 - 15:00	Heads of Agencies: UNICEF	UN Eco House, PG
	15:00-16:00	Heads of Agencies: ILO	UN Eco House, PG
<i>9 June, Tuesday</i>	16:00 - 16:30	End of day briefing	UN Eco House, PG
	9:00-10:00	Heads of Agencies: OHCHR	UN Eco House, PG
	11:00-12:00	Heads of Agencies: WHO	UN Eco House, PG
	12:00-13:00	Heads of Agencies: IOM	UN Eco House, PG
	13:00-14:00	RG 2: co-chair	UN Eco House, PG
	14:00-15:00	Briefing	
	15:00-16:00	EBRD	EBRD
<i>10 June, Wednesday</i>	8:15	RG1: co-chairs	UN Eco House, PG
	10:30	EIB	UN Eco House, PG
	12	EU Delegation	EU Delegation

11 June, Thursday	14	RG 2: co-chair	Ministry of social care
	15	Civil society	UN Eco House, PG
	10:30	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	MFA
	12	Academia/specialized institutions FG	UN Eco House, PG
12 June, Friday	14	Sustainable Development Office	SD office
	9	Ministry Of European Affairs	MEA
	11:30	Co-chair RG3	IOM premises
	14:30	MONSTAT	Monstat
	15:30	Debriefing with UN RC	

ANNEX 8: FINAL EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

UNSDCF EVALUATION

Montenegro (2026)

1. Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in Montenegro (CF 2023-2027) represents the collective response of the UN development system to support Montenegro address national priorities and challenges in achieving the commitments from the key international human rights instruments and 2030 Agenda.

The Final Cooperation Framework 2023-2027 (hereinafter CF) Evaluation is an external, independent exercise aimed at generating an independent assessment of results, successes, challenges, and lessons learned to inform the main stakeholders and feed the next programming cycle. This evaluation will be conducted in 2026, the penultimate year of the CF implementation.

The evaluation will be guided by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016)¹ and the Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UNSDCF (September 2021, revised 2025)². It will ensure accountability, support learning, and inform decisions to guide the design of the potential next CF, or CF-corresponding document, depending on the nature of UN presence in Montenegro post 2028. The evaluation process will be transparent and inclusive (involving relevant stakeholders) with robust quality assurance. Evaluation results and recommendations will be derived from, and informed by, the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid evidence and data, including among others an assessment of gender resource allocation to evaluate the extent to which financial resources have been directed toward gender equality objectives.

The evaluation will be conducted by independent evaluators who exhibit professional and cultural competencies, and excellent understanding of the development context in Montenegro and the Western Balkans region. This Terms of Reference in its essential form repeats standards established by this Guidance. Through their work, the Evaluation Consultants will be guided by the afore mentioned Guidelines.

1. Background – Country Context and UNSDCF highlights

Montenegro is a small, **upper middle income Western Balkans country** undergoing intensive reforms in the EU accession process that shapes its policy priorities, legal alignment (Acquis Communautaire), and financing landscape. Its democratic and development trajectory features persistent structural challenges—narrow economic base, demographic pressures, and regional disparities—alongside opportunities linked to green transition, digitalization, and human capital development. These dynamics frame both the national reform agenda and the UN system's strategic response.

Evidence from the latest **CCA annual update** shows several emerging structural pressures: a **shrinking labour force**, accelerating **population ageing**, and ongoing **out-migration** from rural and northern municipalities—many of which now have an **average age above 43**. The 2023 census confirms substantial demographic shifts, including the presence of **over 40,000 foreign nationals** (primarily from Russia, Ukraine, and Türkiye), intensifying pressures on social services and local infrastructure. At the same time, around **44,000 Montenegrins live abroad**, particularly from the northern region, affecting labour supply and local development. This is the self-declared number, through census, while some estimates argue this is **only about 20%** of the actual diaspora.

The original UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) from 2021 identified key development gaps and root causes across inclusive growth and environmental sustainability, human capital and social inclusion, and governance, rule of law and human rights. It highlighted vulnerabilities exacerbated by external shocks and called for targeted institutional strengthening, policy coherence, and investments in resilience. These priorities continue to be relevant, due to continuous macro-fiscal pressures, a persistent implementation

gap, and the need to deepen capacity for acquis alignment, data systems, and front-line service delivery, all with a strong equity and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) lens.

The EU accession remains the central driver of Montenegro’s modernization, legal harmonization, and compliance with international standards. The UNSDCF 2023–2027 was explicitly designed to complement the EU agenda—prioritizing policy and institutional reforms that accelerate implementation of international human rights instruments, SDG and acquis alignment. The Framework, signed in July 2022 and effective from January 2023, anchors UN support in areas where multilateral normative functions, human rights commitments, and convening power can catalyze system level change.

The evaluation must assess how UN cooperation has adapted to evolving accession milestones and what **forward looking role** remains for the UN in a potential EU member environment. This evaluation will draw on Montenegro’s VNRs, HDI trends, and key national reform strategies and legislative changes that have shaped the country’s development trajectory.

The UNSDCF operationalizes **Montenegro’s SDG and human rights commitments** in close alignment with national plans and reform strategies that are, in turn, rooted in EU accession requirements. As a medium-term strategic planning instrument, the UNSDCF organizes the UN system’s collective response around three interdependent strategic priorities:

1. **Inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability**
2. **Human capital development, reducing vulnerability, and social inclusion**
3. **Social cohesion, people centred governance, rule of law and human rights³**

The **UN Country Results Reports** confirm that UN support has advanced reforms under these priorities—strengthening climate and disaster risk frameworks (including the National Adaptation Plan), supporting social sector reforms (development of the Law on Social and Child Protection, related Strategy, Strategy on Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence, Strategy on Deinstitutionalization, Strategy on Education system reform, Strategy on Early Childhood Development, National Social Cohesion Pledge etc.) enabling education modernization, expanding digital public services, and advancing rule of law and justice sector reforms—while maintaining a strong LNOB focus.

Recent **contextual developments** highlighted in the annual CCA Updates include fiscal and policy reforms (e.g., “Europe Now 2”), continued advancement of climate and DRR frameworks, expanding digitalization in health, social protection and administrative services, and ongoing reforms to strengthen public administration and data systems. Some of the key development indicators data show the following:

- **Poverty has declined to an estimated 7.5% in 2025** (upper-middle-income poverty threshold), driven primarily by wage growth.
- The **risk of poverty rate was 20% in 2024**, with **children (25.6%)** and **single parent families (34%)** particularly vulnerable.
- **Youth unemployment is 25.9%**, reflecting structural labour market challenges.
- Sub-national disparities remain wide, driven by demographic decline in the north, uneven consumption patterns, and rising **housing prices** (e.g., coastal municipalities reaching **€2,800/m²**) that place young households at a disadvantage.
- Health service pressures include **high out-of-pocket spending (37%)**, workforce shortages, and one of the lowest **MMR1 immunization coverages (32.3%) in Europe** among children born in 2023.
- Education performance continues to lag EU averages, with **60% of students scoring below basic proficiency in PISA mathematics**, and persistent disparities for Roma children (preschool enrolment at **22.7%**).

These shifts underscore the centrality of institutional capacity building, financing for development, and multi-stakeholder coordination to sustain progress and reduce regional and group-based disparities.

2. The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2023–2027)

Theory of Change (ToC) and intervention logic. The UNSDCF⁴ ToC suggests that, if the UN system, working with government and partners, strengthens policy, regulatory and financing frameworks; builds

institutional capacities and systems for inclusive, gender responsive, -human-rights based and -climate resilient services; and catalyzes -evidence based, participatory reforms and accountability, then Montenegro will accelerate SDG progress and be better prepared for EU membership benefits and obligations. The pathway highlights the UN's advocacy and normative role, convening power, capacity development and monitoring function, ensuring LNOB through targeted measures for children, Roma and other minorities, persons with disabilities, those exposed to poverty and adversity, migrants, children without parental care, victims of violence and exploitation and people in the least served- regions.

Results framework. The CF organizes outcome level results under the three strategic priorities, with outputs covering green and inclusive growth; climate action and risk reduction; sustainable management of natural and cultural assets; quality and equitable health and education services; social protection and child protection; decent work and skills; migration management; justice and rule of law; human rights, social cohesion, child centered governance, financing and participation, public administration reform, data and digitalization; civic participation; and combating violence against children, GBV and hate speech.

Participating UN entities and stakeholders. The UNCT brings together in-country entities (UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, IOM, UNHCR, ILO, OHCHR, FAO, UNESCO) and nonresident/regional agencies (UNECE, UN Women, UNIDO, UNODC, UNDRR, ITU, IFAD, UNEP), with **UNCTAD joining in 2025**. Key partners include national and local institutions, the EU Delegation, bilateral donors, municipalities, civil society actors, academia and the private sector.

Resources and financing modalities. The CF is supported through a mix of core and non-core resources and innovative financing tools. The national pooled financing mechanism—the **Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF)**—aggregates partner funds for UNSDCF-aligned priorities and is capitalized with a **EUR 1 million contribution from Government**, supplemented by the EU and bilateral partners (Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Ireland).

Cross-cutting issues and normative commitments. The CF mainstreams gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights and LNOB. These are to be reflected across all evaluation criteria - relevance & adaptability, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, coordination, sustainability and impact orientation.

Risks, assumptions, and emerging factors. The CF's intervention logic assumes steady political commitment, continued alignment with the acquis, and adequate fiscal space and development financing. Risks include political turnover, fiscal pressures, disaster and climate shocks, and potential shifts in development financing related to EU accession. Demographic decline, labour shortages, and territorial disparities further strain institutional capacities. The evaluation will assess how the CF adapted to these risks and implications for UN relevance post-accession.

Monitoring, evaluation and evidence base. The UNSDCF includes an outcome and output-level results frameworks, annual **UN Country Results Reports (2022–2025)**, Joint Work Plans, and **CCA updates** that together form the evaluative evidence base. Additional evidence includes agency-level evaluations, national statistics (including 2023 Census findings, MICS), and thematic assessments. Together, these sources will inform triangulation, analysis of contributions to outcomes, and forward-looking recommendations as Montenegro approaches a potential new CF cycle.

2. Purpose and Objectives

Purpose of the Evaluation. The **UNSCDF Evaluation for Montenegro (2023–2027)** serves two mutually reinforcing purposes, consistent with UN system-wide evaluation policy and tailored to Montenegro's current development trajectory and EU accession context:

I. Learning and operational improvement. The evaluation will generate forward-looking, actionable learning to inform programming and strategic positioning for the next UNSDCF cycle. This includes understanding the effectiveness and efficiency of UN coordination mechanisms, joint programming approaches, and financing modalities such as the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) in driving system-level results, supporting reforms (including country level UN reform), and accelerating SDG progress. The evaluation will help the UNCT and Government of Montenegro to identify good practices, areas requiring adaptation, and opportunities to strengthen coherence, particularly as Montenegro approaches EU accession.

II. Accountability to stakeholders. The evaluation will provide an objective and evidence based assessment of progress toward the expected results of the UNSDCF. It will offer a transparent account of the UN's collective contribution to national development priorities, international human rights commitments and SDGs, assessing the effectiveness of technical assistance, strategies, use of resources, partnerships, and coordination mechanisms. This will support accountability of the Government of Montenegro, the EU and other development partners, civil society, rights-holders, and the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO).

The timing of the evaluation is aligned with global UNSDCF cycles and the national planning calendar, ensuring that findings feed into the **next UNSDCF/ or UNSDCF corresponding document development process**, the **new fully-fledged Common Country Analysis (CCA)**, and UNCT repositioning as Montenegro advances toward EU accession.

Objectives of the Evaluation. The evaluation will pursue four interrelated objectives:

1. Assess the UN's contribution to national development results (Accountability)

The evaluation will examine the extent to which the UNSDCF has contributed to Montenegro's development outcomes across its three strategic priorities. It will apply internationally recognized evaluation criteria (relevance & adaptability, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coordination, and orientation toward impact) to provide evidence-based judgements on performance.

2. Identify factors explaining performance, including enabling conditions and bottlenecks (Learning)

The evaluation will analyse why progress has been achieved or constrained, paying particular attention to: policy and institutional factors influencing results; advocacy, coordination, partnership, UN in house technical assistance, leveraging for results and financing arrangements (including pooled funding through the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund); external dynamics related to EU accession, demographic shifts, regional inequality, and governance capacity; internal UNCT factors such as interagency coordination mechanisms, Results Groups, and operational coherence. This will highlight systemic enablers and obstacles shaping outcome-level progress.

3. Draw conclusions on the UN's overall contribution across the full scope of the UNSDCF

The evaluation will synthesize findings across outcomes, identify cross-cutting patterns (e.g., gender equality, human rights, LNOB), and articulate the UN's value added in Montenegro's evolving development and accession landscape.

4. Provide actionable recommendations for the future UN programming

Recommendations will be forward-looking, feasible, and directly linked to the evaluation's conclusions. They will help identify the critical reforms needed to ensure Montenegro's long-term sustainable development, democracy and rule of law and clarify the UN system's added value and comparative advantage in supporting these reforms. The recommendations will also outline the optimal model for future UN engagement with the country, inform future programming scenarios, and strengthen coordination, governance, financing and inter-agency mechanisms. In addition, they will support the differentiation of UN roles in a future EU-member context, enhance evaluability and data use, and improve adaptive management across programming. Recommendations will be aligned with the reforms stemming from the UN80 initiative and its Action Plan.

The evaluation will yield: a credible and impartial assessment of UNCT performance; evidence-informed insights for the next Cooperation Framework; strengthened mutual accountability between the UN and national partners; clearer strategic positioning of the UN development system in Montenegro as the country approaches EU accession.

3. Scope

The evaluation will cover the period **from January 2023 to June 2026**, corresponding to the first four years of implementation of **UNSDCF 2023–2027** in Montenegro. This period allows for assessment of progress toward planned outcomes, the effectiveness of UN coordination and financing arrangements, and the responsiveness of the UN system to emerging contextual changes, including EU accession milestones and national reform dynamics.

The evaluation will encompass **all three strategic priorities, outcomes and associated outputs** of the UNSDCF: Inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability; Human capital development, reducing vulnerability, and social inclusion; Social cohesion, people-centered governance, rule of law and human rights. Within this scope, the evaluation will assess UN contributions to:

- **Policy and Systems Change** (Contributions to policy development and system-level reforms; Alignment and coherence with national strategies, SDG commitments, and EU accession requirements; Efforts addressing persistent development challenges (regional inequality, demographic pressures, public administration capacity gaps, and gaps between policy adoption and implementation))
- **Institutional and Capacity Strengthening** (Institutional capacities to implement reforms and deliver inclusive, quality services; Strengthening of national institutions in areas such as governance, justice, rule of law and human rights, climate resilience, health, education, digital transformation, child and social protection, and territorial development)
- **Programme Effectiveness and Outcome-Level Progress** (Progress toward outcomes under each strategic priority; Effectiveness, relevance, and quality of interventions across all resident and non-resident agencies; Contributions to behavioural or structural change and improvements in service delivery)
- **UN Coherence, Collaboration, and Coordination** (Effectiveness and efficiency of joint programming, shared analytics, and inter-agency collaboration; Functioning and added value of UNCT coordination mechanisms: Results Groups, thematic groups—including Gender, Human Rights, and LNOB–MEL Group, inter-agency task teams, and RCO support)
- **Financing for Development** (Design, management, performance, efficiency, and catalytic role of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF); Broader resource-mobilisation efforts and the UN’s contribution to innovative financing solutions).
- **Adaptiveness and Responsiveness** (UN agility in responding to shifting political, economic, and social contexts; Ability to adjust programming and strategic focus as conditions evolve)

The evaluation will also examine “hard to shift” development challenges highlighted in the CCAs, including regional inequality, demographic pressures, capacity gaps in public administration and services, and gaps between policy adoption and implementation.

The evaluation will **systematically integrate** all UN programming principles and normative commitments across its analysis, conclusions, and recommendations, including Gender equality and the empowerment of women, Human rights and nondiscrimination, including the rights of persons with disabilities, Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), child centered and gender sensitive approaches. These crosscutting areas will be assessed both as standalone considerations where relevant and mainstreamed across evaluation criteria and questions.

As for **geographic scope**, evaluation will be sensitive of territorial disparities, and geographic disaggregation will align with LNOB principle and ensure that progress or bottlenecks are contextualised. While these can still be all captured through national-level coverage of evaluation, given that stakeholders and institutions are centralized, there is the flexibility to include sub-national level to a certain extent, should this be agreed with the Evaluation Team.

When it comes to institutional scope, the evaluation will examine: the collective functioning of the **UN Country Team**; the role of **resident and non-resident agencies** in delivering results; governance and management arrangements supporting UNSDCF implementation (internal and those including Government); the performance and added value of the **Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund**, including its governance model, contributions to coherence, and catalytic financing role. With respect to the country based pooled fund, the evaluation should also examine the effectiveness and efficiency in achieving results against the bilateral and agency-specific approaches.

The primary users of the evaluation are: **Government of Montenegro** (central and local levels); **UN Country Team (UNCT)**, including all resident and nonresident agencies; **UN Development Coordination Office (DCO)**; **development partners**, including the EU Delegation and bilateral donors; **Civil society organisations**, including organisations of persons with disabilities; **UNCT Results Groups (including**

Government and UN members). and coordination platforms. Secondary users include academia, private sector actors, and regional UN entities.

4. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

1. Evaluation criteria

The evaluation will assess the UNSDCF using the following criteria: Relevance & Adaptability, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence (internal and external) and Coordination (UN specific criterion reflecting the one UN nature of CFs), Sustainability and Orientation towards Impact. All analyses will be theory based, aligned to the UNSDCF theory of change and results framework, and will systematically integrate cross cutting commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights and non discrimination (including disability inclusion), and LNOB.

The final set of questions and the Evaluation Design Matrix (EDM)- linking questions to assumptions, indicators, methods, sources and triangulation–will be confirmed by the Evaluation Team in the Inception Report. Adaptation of criteria/questions may be proposed by the Evaluation Team and agreed with the Evaluation Manager.

4.2 Initial evaluation questions

The questions presented in the table below **are indicative suggestions to be finalized by the Evaluation Team** during the Initial Phase and presented in the Inception report upon agreement between the Team leader and Evaluation Management Group (EMG). While the TOR presents 15 indicative questions (some of them compound/with sub-questions included), the Evaluation Team will further prioritize and consolidate them in the Inception Report to ensure feasibility and alignment with available data and resources.

Criteria	Evaluation questions
Relevance and Adaptability The extent to which the objectives of the CF are consistent with the needs of the Montenegrin people, the needs and priorities of Montenegro and its international obligations, Montenegro's EU integration agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	1.To what extent have the UNSDCF priorities been shaped by the voices of marginalized groups (sub question: have rights-holders meaningfully participated in defining those priorities adaptations responded to their expressed needs)? 2.In which areas have the UN shown to have a unique comparative advantage vis-à-vis EU/IFIs/bilateral and multilateral actors and national institutions–especially in “hardest-to-achieve” domains? (accordingly, in which domains should the UN continue, scale or tailor its support?) 3. To what extent over the implementation have the objectives of the CF remained consistent and contributing to those needs and priorities coming from the international obligations such as CRC, CRPD, CEDAW, UPR, etc.?
Effectiveness: Assessment of the performance of CF support to Montenegro's development in terms of achievement of results.	4.To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to outcome level changes (policy, institutional, service delivery and/or behavioural), and what explains progress or shortfalls across different regions and groups (LNOB, gender, children, disability)? (Sub-question: Have there been some unintended effects and who may have benefited more or less from these outcomes?) 5.What bottlenecks limited results (e.g., what institutional capacity issues, enforcement, data, cross-sector coordination, governance, implementation, monitoring, participation, financing) and what course corrections are warranted? (Sub-question: What are the remaining challenges - or system level changes hardest to achieve?)
Efficiency:	6. To what extent did <i>Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund</i> (MAF) achieve its purpose in relation to attracting additional financing for strategic, catalytic, and innovative UN interventions, value-for-

The extent to which the CF established and implemented clear procedures to provide coordinated support and the relationship of inputs (financial and staff) to the achieved results.	money and advancement of UN reform in the UN System in Montenegro? 7. To what extent did the CF M&E system effectively inform decision-making and enable adaptive management through data analysis, monitoring, and learning? 8. To what extent has the CF collectively prioritized and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary, and to what extent have inputs (such as funds, expertise, time, and other resources) been converted into outputs, outcomes, and impacts efficiently and with due care?
Coherence and Coordination: To what extent has the CF strengthened the coherence and coordination of support by UNCT members	9. Post UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programs and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the CF both in design and implementation? For agencies with existing programming instruments, assess the type of derivation applied amongst the 3 Options for country programming instrument derivation. 10. How coherent is the UNCT's support across agencies and outcomes (clarity of roles, avoidance of duplication, use of joint programming), and how well does it leverage normative mandates? (Sub-question: To what extent have the coordination mechanisms contributed to coherence, planning and adapting the CF?) 11. 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: The evaluation will examine the sustainability of the CF results and benefits and explore whether CF outputs and activities develop/strengthen mechanisms to promote scaling up and replication of successful results.	12. What are the main results achieved by CF that are likely to last and/or can be sustained without further interventions or UN support? (Sub-question: What facilitates and impedes the sustainability of CF results, including the extent to which government institutions/ministries are committed to further support and sustain efforts in the field.) 13. Has CF enabled innovative approaches embedded in institutional learning for national capacity development (government, civil society and NGOs) to enable these actors to continue achieving positive results without the UN/development partners' support?
Orientation toward Impact: The progress to impact criteria will be used to assess of the overall CF stakeholder contributions to the well-being of vulnerable groups, individuals, households and communities that could be credited to the CF implementation.	14. What evidence is there of the UN's contribution to higher level change (e.g., systems strengthening, normative alignment as a precondition to system level change, resilience and equity gains), and what are the most plausible contribution pathways in Montenegro's accession and post accession trajectory? 15. To what extent have UN activities stemming from the CF made a difference for its beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their well-being and their human rights overall?

4.3 Cross-cutting integration

Each question will be examined through **gender responsive** and **human rights based** lenses, with explicit consideration of **disability inclusion** and **LNOB**. Disaggregation (by sex, age, disability and, where feasible, region and other relevant markers) will be pursued to the extent data allow.

4.4 Finalization of questions and evaluation matrix

The final question set and the Evaluation Design Matrix (template to be provided) will be finalized during inception. The Evaluation Team may propose refinements to ensure utility, feasibility and proportionality; such changes will be agreed with the Evaluation Manager and reflected in the Inception Report.

5. Evaluation Approach and Methodology

5.1 Overall Evaluation Approach. The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the **UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation** and the **UNEG Ethical Guidelines**, ensuring impartiality, credibility, transparency, and respect for human rights, inclusion and dignity throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation will follow a **theory based, utilization focused, and participatory** approach, promoting national ownership and the practical use of findings by the Government of Montenegro, UNCT, development partners, and civil society.

The evaluation will adopt a **mixed methods approach**, combining qualitative and quantitative evidence to assess UN contributions across the UNSDCF outcomes. Special emphasis will be placed on ensuring meaningful engagement with diverse national stakeholders - including government institutions at national and local levels, civil society, organizations of persons with disabilities, private sector, development partners (particularly the EU), and rights holders. The evaluation will also ensure **ethical and safe data collection**, especially when exploring sensitive issues such as work with adolescents, gender-based violence, discrimination, governance, or vulnerable populations' access to services.

5.2 Methodological Approach. The methodological design will be finalized during the **Inception Phase**, during which the Evaluation Team will prepare an Evaluation Design Matrix, sampling strategy, detailed data collection plan, analysis plan, and workplan. Key elements of the methodological approach include:

a) Reconstruction and analysis of the Theory of Change (ToC). If found necessary, the evaluation may reconstruct and analyse the UNSDCF's ToC to examine the plausibility of causal pathways between outputs (produced by individual agencies or joint programming mechanisms) and outcome level changes (the level at which the UNSDCF operates). The analysis will: test ToC assumptions, risks, and pathways to contribution; examine contextual factors influencing progress (e.g., EU accession requirements, demographic change, territorial disparities, implementation gaps); assess how well the UN adapted to shifting political, institutional, and economic conditions. The ToC reconstruction is limited to the outputs - outcomes sequence, in line with UNSDCF guidance.

b) Participatory and inclusive evaluation design. The evaluation will adopt a participatory approach to ensure that key stakeholders meaningfully shape the evaluation and its use. This includes: stakeholder mapping conducted during inception; interviews, focus groups, and validation workshops with government, UN agencies, civil society (including women's, children, youth and disability organizations), development partners (notably the EU), academia, private sector actors and final beneficiaries; end of mission debriefings; a final validation workshop involving primary users. This ensures use of the evaluation findings for decision-making, adaptation, and next UNSDCF design.

5.3 Data Collection Methods. The evaluation will use multiple, complementary data collection methods to triangulate findings and ensure robustness:

- **Document and evidence review;** Including but not limited to the UNSDCF, annual Country Results Reports, CCAs, JWPs, agency programme documents, joint programmes, MAF documentation, policy papers, national statistics, monitoring dashboards, and relevant evaluations.
- **Secondary quantitative data analysis;** Using existing national datasets (e.g., MONSTAT surveys, Gov. data and reports, administrative reports and datasets), agency data and evaluations, UN monitoring systems (UNINFO), EU progress reports, and other partner-generated data.
- **Key informant interviews (KIIs);** Semi-structured interviews with senior government counterparts, UN agency leadership and programme managers, results group co-chairs, MAF governance actors, the EU Delegation, bilateral donors, municipalities, civil society organizations, academia, and private sector representatives.

- **Focus group discussions (FGDs);** With rights-holders and groups relevant to LNOB considerations: youth, women, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, migrants, and other vulnerable populations.
- **Observation and, where relevant, field visits;** Particularly in areas with pronounced territorial disparities (e.g., northern municipalities) where bottlenecks to implementation are frequently observed.

5.4 Data Analysis and Validation. The evaluation will use **triangulation** across data sources, stakeholder perspectives, and analytical methods. Analyses will include: contribution analysis (assessing plausible UN contribution pathways); thematic analysis aligned to evaluation criteria; comparative analysis across regions and population groups; gender and human rights lens analysis; coherence analysis (UNCT internal coherence, complementarity with EU and donors); efficiency analysis (transaction costs, joint arrangements, pooled funds including the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund). Validation of evidence will occur through: cross-checking of data across multiple sources; regular consultations with the Evaluation Manager; validation meetings with UNCT and government; presentation of emerging findings for feedback before finalization.

5.5 Integration of Gender Equality, Human Rights and Disability Inclusion. The evaluation will be fully **gender-responsive and human rights-based**, applying the following principles:

- Data will be **systematically disaggregated** by sex, age, disability status, migration status, ethnicity (particularly Roma/Egyptian communities), geography, and other equity markers, to the extent possible.
- The evaluation will examine whether UNSDCF interventions addressed structural inequalities and discriminatory norms and strengthened duty-bearers' and rights-holders' capacities.
- Gender equality, LNOB, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability will be integrated **within each evaluation criterion** rather than treated separately.

The evaluation team will identify and address any limitations in the availability of disaggregated data and propose mitigation strategies (e.g., purposive sampling, qualitative evidence).

5.6 Evaluation Design Matrix. During the Inception Phase, the Evaluation Team will prepare a full **Evaluation Design Matrix (EDM)** to guide data collection and analysis. The matrix will: align evaluation questions (Section 4) with evaluation criteria; break down questions into assumptions and sub-questions; specify indicators and data sources; list data collection and triangulation methods; highlight cross-cutting elements to be systematically integrated; identify contributions pathways to be tested using ToC reconstruction. The EDM becomes the primary technical tool for ensuring methodological rigour and coherence.

5.7 Quality Assurance and Ethical Standards. Quality assurance will be undertaken at all stages of the evaluation, including: **Internal quality assurance** by the Evaluation Manager and the UNCT; **External quality assurance** by DCO where applicable; Assessment of deliverables against the **UNSDCF Evaluation Quality Assurance Checklist**; Compliance with **UNEG Ethical Guidelines**, including informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and safe data collection (especially concerning vulnerable or at-risk groups). All evaluation products (inception report, draft report, final report, annexes) will undergo systematic quality review.

5.8 Use of Existing Evaluative Evidence. The evaluation will systematically use existing evaluative evidence, including Gov and ministries annual reports, UN agency evaluations (project, programme, thematic); Joint programme evaluations; National oversight body reports (Ombudsperson, audit institutions); EU progress reports and evaluations; Previous UNSDCF/UNDAF evaluations in Montenegro. This helps assess contribution, identify patterns, and avoid duplication.

5.9 Utility and Use of Evaluation Findings. The methodology is designed to support high utilization, informing: future UN programming; UNCT coordination and strategic positioning; Government-UN dialogue on reform priorities; national planning and monitoring processes; improvement of pooled financing mechanisms (e.g., MAF); adaptive management and results based and participatory programming. A participatory final validation workshop will ensure all key users can interpret and use findings.

The Final CF evaluation methodology must meet the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System⁵ and demonstrate effective use of the UNEG Guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality during all phases of the evaluation using the norms of the United Nations System Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP 2.0).

6. Management Arrangements

6.1 Governance Structure and Reporting Lines. The UNSDCF evaluation will be overseen through a **three-tiered governance structure** to ensure independence, credibility, and utility of the evaluation:

1. Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC). The ESC is the highest oversight body for the evaluation. It will: provide strategic direction and oversight throughout the evaluation process; review and clear key deliverables (Inception Report, Draft Evaluation Report, Final Report); facilitate engagement with national authorities and ensure alignment with national processes; ensure evaluation use by linking findings to the next programming cycle and national planning cycles. The existing UNSDCF Steering Committee will assume this role. It is composed of the Government of Montenegro (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as JSC co-chair and other participating ministries); UN Resident Coordinator (co chair); Heads of UN Agencies (or delegated senior representatives). The ESC endorses the evaluation ToR, approves deliverables, and ensures final evaluation results are validated with national partners.

2. Evaluation Management Group (EMG). The EMG is responsible for the **day-to-day management** of the evaluation and serves as the primary interface between the Evaluation Team and the UNCT. **Roles include:** managing the recruitment and contracting of the Evaluation Team; providing logistical facilitation and access to documents and stakeholders; quality assuring deliverables before ESC review; monitoring progress against timelines; ensuring independence and adherence to UNEG Norms and Standards; Ethical standards, coordinating stakeholder and beneficiary engagement and availability. The existing UNCT Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Group will resume the function of Evaluation Management Group (EMG), and will be expanded to include Results Group co-chairs to ensure alignment with programmatic areas.

The RC and UNCT appointed the RCO Data Management & Results Monitoring Officer to serve as an **Evaluation Manager (EM)**, responsible for day to day management, quality assurance coordination, support to procurement, liaison with DCO, and facilitation of stakeholder engagement.

4. Evaluation Team (ET). The Evaluation Team will report **directly to the EMG**, ensuring independence and avoiding influence from implementers. The team will have unrestricted access to evidence and stakeholders necessary for conducting the evaluation, subject to ethical safeguards.

DCO Evaluation Advisor supports the evaluation manager, the RC and the UNCT in quality assurance of all key products. DCO is responsible for reviewing all evaluation products including the TOR, inception report, final report and other associated products. UNEG will be informed about the evaluation by the DCO, and may be engaged in exceptional circumstances.

6.2 Evaluation Team Composition and Required Qualifications. The evaluation team will consist of independent external consultants: Evaluation Team leader and one additional Team member – evaluation specialist.

The **Evaluation Team Leader** will conduct the evaluation process in a timely manner and communicate with the Evaluation Manager on a regular basis and highlight progress made/challenges encountered. The Evaluation Team Leader will be responsible for producing the inception report and the draft and final evaluation reports. In close collaboration with the Evaluation manager the Team Leader will take the lead role in conceptualization and design of the evaluation deliverables and shaping the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the report. The **Team member** will contribute to the evaluation process substantively through data collection and analysis. The Team member will share responsibilities for conducting desk review and interviews and conduct field visits identified and collect data. They will provide substantive input to the inception report, the presentation of preliminary findings as well as to the draft and final reports.

The Evaluation Team must collectively demonstrate: **(i)** strong expertise in evaluation methodology; **(ii)** thematic expertise aligned with the three UNSDCF priority areas; **(iii)** fluency in English (and working

proficiency in Montenegrin is an advantage); **(iv)** knowledge of UN programming principles and modalities; **(v)** ability to work fully independently from the UN agencies being evaluated.

A. Team Leader (external international) responsibilities:

- Develops an inception report and details the design, methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis criteria for selection of projects, required resources), and work plan of the evaluation team.
- Directs and conducts the research and analysis of all relevant documentation;
- Decides the division of labour within the evaluation team and coordinates team tasks within the framework of the TORs;
- Oversees and quality assures the preparation of the report and takes a lead in the analysis of the evaluative evidence;
- Oversees the administration, and analysis of the results of the data collection exercise;
- Drafts the inception and evaluation reports, and coordinates the inputs from team members;
- Prepares for meetings with ESC, UNCT and other stakeholder to review findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- Regularly briefs JSC, UNCT, EM and EMG on the evaluation progress through informal sessions and finalizes the report based on feedback from the quality assurance process;
- Delivers and presents the final evaluation report.

B. Evaluation team member - specialist (external national) responsibilities:

The Evaluation Specialist will provide the expertise in the local development issues with sound understanding of the Montenegrin social and economic environment and Agenda 2030 in the national context. The evaluation specialist is expected to:

- Review relevant documents
- Participate in the design of the evaluation methodology and provide inputs to the inception report
- Conduct an analysis of the outcomes, outputs, Join Work Plans
- Carry out fieldwork and data collection as per the Inception report and Terms of Reference
- Draft related parts of the inception and evaluation reports as agreed on the division of labor with the team leader
- Assist the Team Leader in finalizing the evaluation final report including incorporating suggestions received on draft related to assigned sections.

C. Required skills and experience for the evaluation team members:

Evaluation Team Leader

- At least a master's degree in a relevant field (international development, law, economics, political science, governance, social sciences or a related field);
- At least 10 years of working experience in evaluation of UN's or other international organization strategic documents; UN agency country programme experience would be an advantage.
- Experience with participatory approaches, organizational assessments, partnership strategies and capacity development;

- Strong understanding of human rights and the ability to identify related issues across political, ethnic, gender-equality, and socio-economic dimensions;
- Ability to facilitate, evaluate and integrate information from a variety of sources and assess the impact on human rights and gender equality. Ability to incorporate child rights/human rights, disability and gender perspectives in all aspects of the evaluation report;
- Regional expertise in the region of the Western Balkans; Specific experience in Montenegro's rule of law, development and economic context will be an asset;
- Proven experience as an evaluation team leader with ability to lead and work with other evaluation experts;
- Facilitation skills and ability to manage diversity of views in different development contexts;
- Ability to produce well-written reports demonstrating analytical ability and communication skills
- Excellent command of English. Knowledge of the local language will be considered a significant asset.

Team Member – Evaluation Specialist⁶

- At least a master's degree in a relevant field (international development, economics, political science, governance, social sciences or a related field);
- Minimum five years of relevant professional experience. Previous work with UN would be advantage;
- Strong data collection and analysis skills; Prior experience in working with multilateral agencies;
- Strong experience and knowledge in the UN programming principles including leaving no one behind LNOB, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusion; forced displacement and statelessness, environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability;
- In-depth knowledge and strong research record of country socio-economic development and environment context;
- Excellent timely delivery and time management;
- Process management skills such as facilitation skills and ability to negotiate with a wide range of stakeholders;
- Technical competence in undertaking complex evaluations which involve use of mixed methods;
- Knowledge of UN role, UN reform process and UN programming at the country level, particularly UNSDCF;
- Excellent command of English and Montenegrin language.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The selected consultants are required to clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches to the evaluation, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in their proposal.

7. Evaluation Process and Timeline

The UNSDCF Evaluation for Montenegro will follow five key phases. Preparatory work begins **February 2026**, and all deliverables–Inception Report, Draft Report, Final Report, Validation, and Management Response–are completed **by end-September 2026**. A detailed workplan will be finalized during the Inception Phase.

Phase	Timeline	Key Tasks	Lead and responsibility	Output
I. Preparation	Feb – Mar 2026	Constitution of the Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC) and Evaluation Management Group (EMG). Finalization and endorsement of the evaluation ToR. Preparation of the Evaluation Roadmap. Publication of the ToR and recruitment of the Evaluation Team. Compilation of core documentation: UNSDCF, CCAs, Results Reports, MAF documentation, agency programme documents, existing evaluations, national statistics, EU reports.	Evaluation Manager (EM), Evaluation Management Group (EMG)	Evaluation roadmap and completed recruitment
II. Design/Inception	Apr – Mid May 2026	Introductory consultations with UNCT, Government, EU and civil society. Reconstruction of the Theory of Change, focusing on output - outcome linkages. Development of the Evaluation Design Matrix (EDM), including final evaluation questions, indicators, assumptions, and data sources. Sampling strategy, fieldwork plan, stakeholder mapping and ethical risk mitigation. Submission, review, and approval of the Inception Report (ESC approval required).	Evaluation Team Leader (ETL), EMG, EM, ESC	Inception Report approved
III. Fieldwork (collection of qualitative and quantitative evidence)	June 2026	Key informant interviews with government, municipalities, UN agencies, EU Delegation, donors, civil society, private sector. Focus groups with rights-holders (women, youth, Roma/Egyptian communities, migrants, persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups).	Evaluation Team Leader (ETL), EMG	Primary data collection completed

		Field visits to regions demonstrating territorial disparities (north, coast, Podgorica). Extraction and review of quantitative and administrative data. Ongoing triangulation and validation with EMG.		
IV. Reporting (Analysis, reporting, quality assurance and validation)	July and August 2026	Data analysis and synthesis aligned to evaluation criteria. Drafting of key findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and actionable recommendations for the next UNSDCF. Submission of the Draft Evaluation Report to EMG for internal quality assurance. Feedback integration and preparation of the Final Evaluation Report. Validation workshop(s) with Government, UNCT, EU, civil society, and other partners. Final endorsement by the ESC.	Evaluation Team Leader (ETL), EM, UNCT, ESC	Final Evaluation Report
V. Use & Management Response (Management response is finalized in parallel with report endorsement)	Sep 2026	UNCT and Government jointly produce a Management Response with concrete commitments and timelines. Dissemination of findings to national partners, UNCT, development partners and rights-holders. Integration of findings into the updated CCA and the design of the next UNSDCF/ or UNSDCF corresponding document. Uploading the final report and management response to UN/DCO platforms.	EMG, UNCT	Management Response finalized and disseminated

8. Evaluation Deliverables

The Evaluation Team will be responsible for producing the following key deliverables. All deliverables must be prepared in **English**, using the **standard templates** provided in the **UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines (2021 revised)** and any formats agreed with the Evaluation Manager. All deliverables must adhere to **UNEG Norms and Standards**, the **UNEG Code of Conduct**, and the **UNSDCF Evaluation Quality Assurance System (EQAS)**. They must ensure gender responsive, disability inclusive, human rights based, environmentally aware evaluation practices; use clear and concise language, with evidence-based argumentation; apply triangulation of data sources; be free of conflict of interest; and reflect a transparent audit trail of evidence

used. A detailed schedule for deliverable submission will be finalized in the **Inception Report**, but indicative deadlines aligned with the agreed timeline (completion by September 2026) are provided below.

Deliverable	Timeline	Main Content	Format/Length	Quality Assurance
Inception Report	Mid-May 2026	Reconstructed ToC; Methodology; Sampling; Data plan; Ethics; GE/HR/Disability/LNOB; Workplan; Docs & interview list	Word template (provided), 20–30 pages	EMG review; ESC approval; QA Checklist
Preliminary Findings Presentation	July 2026	Emerging findings; Initial conclusions; Bottlenecks/enablers; <i>No recommendations unless agreed</i>	PowerPoint template (provided) Presentation in validation meeting	EMG review; ESC feedback
Draft Evaluation Report	End of August 2026	Exec summary; Context; Methodology; Findings; Cross-cutting; Coordination; Conclusions; Recs; Lessons; Annexes	Word template (provided) Approx. 40–60 pages (excl. annexes)	EMG review; ESC feedback; EQA if required
Final Evaluation Report	End of September 2026	Integrated feedback; Evidence-based narrative; Updated annexes; UN contribution & recommendations	Word + PDF (professionally formatted) 40–60 pages (excl. annexes)	QA Checklist; ESC approval; Upload to platforms

Follow-up and validation

The findings of the evaluation report will be reviewed jointly by Evaluation Steering Committee, (ESC). The UNCT will draft a management response outlining how the evaluation findings will be applied, including a timeframe and responsibilities for follow up.

Lessons learned from the evaluation will be extracted and disseminated by the UNCT in order to contribute to strategic planning, learning, advocacy and decision-making at all levels, including for the formulation of the CF successor document. The full evaluation report will be made public through the UN Montenegro website and shared in the form of electronic and hard copies to the key national stakeholders.

Evaluation deliverables and estimated number of working days

Deliverables	Estimated working days for the International expert	Estimated working days for the National expert
Inception phase (desk review; meetings with UNCT, EMG, etc)	7 days	3 days
Inception report	8 days	6 days
Field phase data collection (online and in person)	14 days	13 days
Data analysis and First draft	14 days	10 days

Final draft	6 days	4 days
Final presentation event	1 day	
Total	50 days	36 days

9. Evaluation budget and payment schedule

Funding for the UNSDCF 2023-27 evaluation will be provided by the Special Purpose Trust Fund (SPTF) allocation to the Office of the Resident Coordinator. Payments will be tied to deliverables as follows:

No.	Deliverables/Outputs	Target Due Dates	Payment
1	Satisfactory completion of the inception report	June 2026	30%
2	Submission of first draft report	July 2026	30%
3	Submission and approval of final report and PPT presentation	September 2026	40%

10. Administrative issues

The Team Leader and National Team Member will be responsible for their own travel arrangements. No additional costs outside of the scope of this TOR will be covered. The consultants will have to possess their own computer and other technical equipment to complete the assignment. The documents produced during the period of this consultancy will be treated strictly confidential and the rights of distribution and/or publication shall solely reside with the United Nations Country Team in Montenegro.

ANNEX 9: INCEPTION REPORT

INCEPTION REPORT

FINAL EVALUATION UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK (UNSDCF) FOR MONTENEGRO (2023-2027)

*Prepared by UNSDCF Final Evaluation Team:
Tomislav Novović, Team Leader
Olivera Komar, Senior Evaluation Expert*

*May 2026
Podgorica, Montenegro*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CAZAS	Montenegrin Association Against AIDS (NGO)
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CF	Cooperation Framework
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTUM	Confederation of Trade Unions of Montenegro
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
EIB	European Investment Bank
EM	Evaluation Manager
EMG	Evaluation Management Group
EQ	Evaluation Question
EQAS	Evaluation Quality Assurance System
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ERP	Economic Reform Programme
ESC	Evaluation Steering Committee
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
F2F	Face-to-Face
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FE	Final Evaluation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	Gender Equality

GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation)
HEMIAS	HEMIAS Foundation (philanthropic foundation, Montenegro)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JC	Judgement Criterion / Criteria
JSC	Joint Steering Committee (MAF)
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Development Bank)
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind
MAF	Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund
MAPS	Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMR₁	Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccine (first dose)
MNE	Montenegro
MONSTAT	Statistical Office of Montenegro
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
N.D.	Not dated
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMT	Operations Management Team

OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
QA	Quality Assurance
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
RG	Results Group (RG1, RG2, RG3)
RRF	Results and Resources Framework
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEPA	Single Euro Payments Area
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SP	Strategic Priority (SP1, SP2, SP3)
SQ	Sub-Question
SWD	Staff Working Document (European Commission)
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TUI	TUI Care Foundation
UFTUM	Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNINFO	UN information management platform
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WHO	World Health Organization
ZID	NGO Association for Democratic Prosperity (Montenegro)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	<i>Background – UNSDCF evaluation context 45</i>
2.1	Introduction 45
2.2	Country Context 45
2.3	UNSDCF Montenegro (2023–2027) – Main Characteristics 48
3	<i>Purpose, Scope and Users 50</i>
3.1	Purpose of the evaluation 50
3.2	The main objectives of the CF evaluation 50
3.3	The scope of the CF Evaluation 51
4	<i>Evaluation Criteria and Methodology 51</i>
4.1	The evaluation approach 51
4.2	Evaluation questions and criteria 52
4.3	The evaluation process and methodology 56
5	<i>UNSDCF Evaluation Matrix 64</i>
6	<i>Theory Of Change 77</i>
7	<i>Evaluation Work Plan and Management Arrangements 81</i>
7.1	Overall work plan 81
7.2	Management arrangements 84
8	<i>EVALUABILITY, RISKS AND LIMITATIONS 86</i>
8.1	Evaluability 86
8.2	Risks and Limitations and mitigation measures 87
9	<i>Annexes 89</i>
	Annex 1: List of Documents Consulted 89
	Annex 2. Comprehensive Stakeholder Map 92
	Annex 2.1 Justification of the Comprehensive stakeholder map 101
	Annex 2.2. Stakeholder prioritisation summary 102
	Annex 2.3. Indicative stakeholder sampling summary 103
	Annex 2.4. Geographic sampling note 104
	<i>Rights-holder consultation note (HRBA and safeguards) 105</i>
	<i>Stakeholder-method matrix 106</i>
	<i>Supporting stakeholder mapping files reviewed 107</i>
	Annex 3: Interview Guides 108
	Annex 3.2. ONLINE Questionnaire for UN Management and Programme / Project Staff 121
	Annex 3.3. ONLINE Questionnaire for UN Operations Staff 128

Annex 3.4. ONLINE Questionnaire for NATIONAL PARTNERS 133**Annex 4: Tentative Agenda of In-Country Visit And Proposed Meetings 136****TABLE OF FIGURES AND TABLES**

Table 1: Strategic priorities and outcomes of UNSDCF	49
Table 3: UNSDCF evaluation matrix	64
Table 4: Work plan	81
Table 5: Key Deliverables and Indicative Deadlines	83
Table 6: Key Actors and Principal Responsibilities	85
Table 7: Risks and limitations and mitigation measures overview	87
Figure 1: Phases of UNSDCF Montenegro Final Evaluation.....	57
Figure 2: UNSDCF Theory of Change.....	78
Figure 3: Overall Evaluation Work Plan.....	82
Figure 4: Key Deliverables and Milestones	83
Figure 5: Evaluation Governance and Management Structure	84

2 BACKGROUND – UNSDCF EVALUATION CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

General Assembly resolution A/RES/72/279 designated the United Nations Development Assistance Framework as the most important instrument for planning and implementing United Nations development activities at country level in support of the 2030 Agenda. Renamed the **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework** (hereinafter CF or UNSDCF), it represents the centerpiece of UN reform and the collective response of the UN development system to national priorities and development challenges.

In Montenegro, the **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (CF 2023-2027)** serves as the medium-term strategic framework through which the UN system supports the country's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the fulfilment of international human rights commitments, and the advancement of the EU accession agenda.

The **Final UNSDCF Evaluation** is an external and independent exercise aimed at generating an impartial assessment of progress, achievements, constraints and lessons learned under the current cycle in order to inform principal stakeholders and feed into the next programming cycle. In line with the Montenegro ToR, the evaluation is being conducted in **2026**, the penultimate year of implementation. It is guided by the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation and the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines, and is expected to serve both accountability and learning purposes by informing the design of the next Cooperation Framework, or a corresponding programming instrument, depending on the future nature of UN presence in Montenegro after 2028.

The primary goal of the Inception Phase was to reaffirm the nature, objectives and process of the Final Evaluation of UNSDCF as outlined in the ToR. During this phase, a comprehensive desk review of secondary data was conducted, including critical documents from the Evaluation Manager and UN Agencies, key national strategies and action plans, statistics, and reports from development partners in Montenegro. Initial discussions with the UN RCO, UNSDCF Evaluation Manager (EM), the Evaluation Management Group (EMG) focused on refining scope, evaluation approaches and methodology and identifying potential interviewees. The EMG compiled and delivered a selection of secondary data to the Evaluation Team (ET) and identified key stakeholders for the in-country mission, including representatives from UN agencies, Montenegrin government ministries, donors and other partners involved in UNSDCF preparation and implementation.

The Inception Report outlines the specific methodology for the final UNSDCF evaluation, detailing the approach the ET will take to analyze UNSDCF relevance, coherence, performance, and progress toward outcomes. Furthermore, the Inception Report provides an overview of the methodology, sampling, data collection and analysis methods aligned with the evaluation criteria. It includes the detailed evaluation matrix based on the ToR/guidance questions, which integrates all evaluation criteria, core questions and specific questions, indicators, source of verification and data collection method. Additionally, the Inception Report includes comprehensive stakeholder mapping, interview guides tailored to different stakeholders and an example of online survey questionnaires, work plan and deliverables as well as a draft of in-country visit agenda.

2.2 COUNTRY CONTEXT¹

Montenegro is a small upper-middle-income country in the Western Balkans, a NATO member and EU candidate country advancing toward the final stages of accession, whose development trajectory continues to be shaped by the accession process and by the interaction between economic vulnerability, demographic

¹ Data derived from the UNCT Montenegro Common Country Assessments (2023-2025).

change and governance reform². Like several countries in the region, Montenegro is facing increasingly adverse demographic trends, including population ageing, a shrinking labour force, and continued out-migration from rural and northern municipalities, many of which now have an average age above 43.³ The 2023 census also confirmed significant demographic shifts, including the presence of over 40,000 foreign nationals, mainly from Russia, Ukraine and Türkiye, while around 44,000 Montenegrins were recorded as living abroad, particularly from northern areas. These pressures affect labour supply, local development, social services and long-term demographic sustainability. In the decades preceding the current UNSDCF, Montenegro struggled with a narrow economic base, high dependence on tourism and imports, regional disparities, and recurrent exposure to external shocks. More recent reforms have improved disposable income and helped sustain growth and employment, but structural vulnerabilities remain pronounced⁴.

Montenegro's development priorities are aligned with the 2030 Agenda, international human rights commitments and the strategic goal of EU membership, with strong complementarities between these processes⁵. Accession negotiations were opened in 2012, all 33 chapters have been opened, and the country entered a more advanced phase after the setting of the closing benchmarks for Chapters 23 and 24 in June 2024. The 2025 European Commission report notes that Montenegro subsequently advanced with the provisional closure of additional chapters and maintained its focus on European integration despite domestic political tensions⁶. At the same time, the CCA update underlines that while the EU accession framework has provided the predominant anchor for legal harmonisation, governance reforms and economic modernisation, there remain important SDGs that are off-track and structural constraints that are likely to persist beyond accession unless implementation capacity and institutional effectiveness improve.

In the past four years, Montenegro has continued to implement reforms aimed at aligning its legal, political and economic systems with EU standards. The 2025 European Commission report points to progress in several areas, including aspects of judicial reform, anti-corruption legislation, digital transformation, selected internal market chapters, education reform, public financial management, and some parts of the green agenda. Progress has also been recorded in company law, intellectual property, financial services, public procurement and financial control, while further reforms remain necessary in statistics, social policy and employment, public administration, environment and climate change, and implementation of core rule-of-law commitments. The 2025 CCA update similarly identifies several consolidated gains and near-term enabling factors, including continued EU track credibility, SEPA integration, stronger climate ambition, adoption of the 2025–2035 Education Strategy, and continued poverty reduction.

At the same time, progress on gender equality has remained uneven. Recent analytical and treaty-body evidence points to persistent gender inequalities, including lower labour-market participation of women and a continuing gender pay gap, the underrepresentation of women in decision-making processes, and the unequal distribution of unpaid care responsibilities. Women and girls also continue to face gender-based violence and discriminatory social norms, particularly in rural areas and among those facing multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage.

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Montenegro embedded SDG implementation within its broader national development and accession architecture rather than through a single standalone mechanism. In practice, progress on the SDGs is advanced through the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016–2030, the Economic Reform Programme, the Reform Agenda under the EU Growth Plan, sectoral strategies, MONSTAT reporting, and the broader accession process. The CCA update stresses that stronger cross-sectoral coordination, more systematic use of disaggregated data and clearer institutional accountability remain essential if SDG commitments are to be translated into results, especially in areas where reforms are advanced on paper but weakly implemented in practice.⁷

While many challenges remain, Montenegro continues to make progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda in several areas. The latest iteration of the Sustainable Development Report places Montenegro as

² United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023–2027* and United Nations Country Team Montenegro, *Terms of Reference: UNSDCF Evaluation, Montenegro* (2026).

³ United Nations Montenegro, *Common Country Analysis Update 2025 and 2024*.

⁴ World Bank, *Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No. 29: Adjusting to Shocks, Mobilizing Untapped Potential*, Spring 2026.

⁵ United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023–2027* and United Nations Country Team Montenegro, *Terms of Reference: UNSDCF Evaluation, Montenegro* (2026).

⁶ European Commission, *Montenegro 2025 Report*, Commission Staff Working Document, SWD(2025) 754 final/2, Brussels, 11/2025.

⁷ Ibidem, CCA

55th out of 193 countries, yet the CCA update cautions that cross-country ranking alone risks obscuring important contextual vulnerabilities and implementation gaps. The same update identifies seven thematic areas that currently shape broader sustainable development in Montenegro: good governance and effective institutions, human rights and civic participation, employment, skills and demographic sustainability, quality and equity in human capital development, inequality and social inclusion, climate action and biodiversity preservation and gender equality. These areas were selected because they are highly relevant to Montenegro's current development trajectory, correspond to SDG targets where progress is uneven or lagging, and carry systemic implications across sectors⁸. At the same time, the UNSDCF was developed against a backdrop in which Montenegro was already classified as a very high human development country, yet still faced sizeable gaps in inclusion, service quality, and institutional performance.

The most recent evidence points to a mixed pattern of progress and continuing vulnerability. Poverty has declined to an estimated 7.5 per cent in 2025, yet the risk of poverty remained 20 per cent in 2024, with children and single-parent families particularly exposed. Youth unemployment stood at 25.9 per cent, reflecting persistent structural labour-market weaknesses. Sub-national disparities remain wide, driven by demographic decline in the north, uneven consumption patterns, and rising housing prices, particularly in coastal municipalities, which increasingly disadvantage younger households. Health service pressures also remain significant, including high out-of-pocket spending, workforce shortages, and one of the lowest MMR1 immunisation coverages in Europe among children born in 2023, while education outcomes continue to lag EU averages and show persistent disparities affecting Roma children and other vulnerable groups. These trends underscore that Montenegro's main development challenge is not only accelerating aggregate progress, but doing so in ways that reduce inequality and ensure that groups furthest behind benefit from reform and growth. The pattern of vulnerability is also gendered. Available evidence points to continued labour-market inequalities between women and men, gaps in access to economic opportunities and services for women in rural areas, and persistent risks related to violence and discrimination, reinforcing the need to assess progress through sex-disaggregated and equity-sensitive evidence wherever such data are available.

The 2025 European Commission report, read together with complementary UN and treaty-body assessments, points to a broadly positive but uneven reform trajectory. For the purposes of this evaluation, the most relevant issue is not simply the existence of legal and strategic frameworks, but the capacity of institutions to implement them consistently, coordinate across sectors, use evidence effectively, and deliver tangible results for people, especially vulnerable groups.

On rule of law and justice, both the European Commission and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers underline continuing institutional and practical constraints, including vacancies, backlogs, infrastructure and ICT weaknesses, and barriers affecting judicial independence, prosecutorial effectiveness and access to justice. These findings reinforce that implementation capacity and institutional performance remain central contextual factors for the evaluation.

On civic space and freedom of expression, the European Commission and the 2025 Human Rights Committee observations point to persistent implementation gaps, including attacks and intimidation against journalists, concerns related to media freedom safeguards, and weaknesses in broader human rights implementation mechanisms. These issues are relevant to the evaluation insofar as they shape the enabling environment for accountable governance, participation and rights realization.

The background evidence suggests that Montenegro's central challenge is now implementation: translating reforms, coordination mechanisms and strategic commitments into consistent delivery, stronger institutions and more equitable outcomes. This is the main contextual lens through which the evaluation will examine CF relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and contribution.

Montenegro's strategic planning framework increasingly integrates national development objectives, SDG commitments and EU accession requirements. This framework is articulated through the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016–2030, the Economic Reform Programme, the Reform Agenda under the

⁸ Ibidem, UN CCA

Growth Plan, and a wide range of sectoral strategies and action plans.⁹ The UNSDCF itself is explicitly anchored in Montenegro's priorities, including E

U accession, the 2030 Agenda and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, with a focus on recovery, economic growth, sustainable management and use of natural resources, quality and inclusive services, effective social and child protection, enhanced public sector performance, and stronger realisation of the rule of law and human rights.¹⁰

The **Economic Reform Programme (ERP)** forms a key part of Montenegro's strategic planning architecture. As reflected in the EC report, the ERP links macroeconomic stability, fiscal governance and structural reform, while also serving as a bridge between national economic planning and the EU accession framework.¹¹ It addresses fiscal sustainability, labour market reform, public administration improvement, SOE governance, business environment, digitalisation and competitiveness. At the same time, wider sectoral strategies address the specific areas most relevant to Montenegro's medium-term development path. These include the Public Administration Reform Strategy, Public Finance Management Reform Programme, the new Education Reform Strategy 2025–2035, Judicial Reform Strategy, Digital Transformation Strategy, National Gender Equality Strategy, strategies related to migration and reintegration, social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians, social and child protection reform, science and research, as well as the National Adaptation Plan and broader energy and climate planning instruments.¹²

Montenegro's strategic framework therefore reflects a multidimensional approach to development, centred on three mutually reinforcing imperatives: economic transformation and environmental sustainability; investment in human and social capital; and stronger governance, rule of law and institutional accountability.¹³ In effect, the country's future progress depends not only on sustaining the accession process, but on ensuring that the reforms introduced through that process are actually implemented, financed, monitored and translated into measurable results for all people, especially those who continue to face vulnerability, exclusion and unequal access to opportunity.¹⁴

2.3 UNSDCF MONTENEGRO (2023–2027) – MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

The Government of Montenegro and the United Nations Country Team jointly developed the UNSDCF for the period 2023–2027, which was signed in Podgorica on 20 July 2022 and became effective from January 2023. The Framework articulates the collective vision and response of the UN development system to national development priorities and is intended to support Montenegro in achieving the 2030 Agenda, implementing international human rights commitments, and advancing along the EU accession path. It was developed through the internally prepared Common Country Analysis and a broad consultative process involving government institutions, development partners, civil society, and specific consultations with women and youth.

The UNSDCF was explicitly designed to complement the EU agenda and prioritise policy and institutional reforms that can accelerate SDG progress, strengthen the implementation of international human rights obligations, and improve readiness for EU membership benefits and obligations. The MAPS exercise carried out earlier in Montenegro demonstrated strong synergies between SDG implementation and EU accession, indicating that achieving EU accession benchmarks could significantly advance SDG targets, especially through Chapters 27 on the environment and climate change, 23 on the judiciary and fundamental rights, and 19 on social policy and employment. In this sense, the UNSDCF is both a development framework and a strategic vehicle through which UN normative support, technical assistance, convening power and capacity development are aligned to the country's medium-term reform trajectory.

⁹ European Commission, *Montenegro 2025 Report* and United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023–2027*.

¹⁰ United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023–2027*

¹¹ European Commission, *Montenegro 2025 Report*

¹² United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023–2027*

¹³ European Commission, *Montenegro 2025 Report*

¹⁴ European Commission, *Montenegro 2025 Report*, United Nations Montenegro, *Common Country Analysis Update 2025* and United Nations Country Team Montenegro, *Terms of Reference: UNSDCF Evaluation, Montenegro (2026)*

The Framework is organised around three interdependent strategic priorities:

Table 1: Strategic priorities and outcomes of UNSDCF

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOME
Strategic Priority 1 – Inclusive Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability	By 2027, all people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved management and state of natural resources and increasingly innovative, competitive, gender-responsive and inclusive economic development that is climate resilient and low-carbon.
Strategic Priority 2 – Human Capital Development, Reducing Vulnerability and Social Inclusion	By 2027, all people, especially the vulnerable, increasingly benefit from equitable, gender-responsive and universally accessible social and child protection systems and quality services, including labour market activation and capabilities. By 2027, all people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from strengthened human capital including early childhood development, and more resilient, gender-responsive, and quality healthcare and education.
Strategic Priority 3 – Social Cohesion, People-Centred Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights	By 2027, all people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved social cohesion, increased realization of human rights and rule of law, and accountable, gender-responsive institutions.

The strategic priorities and outcomes reflect both Montenegro's development needs and the UN's comparative advantage in supporting the country's transition. The Framework is grounded in a theory of change that links economic transformation and environmental sustainability, strengthened human capital and social protection, and more effective, accountable institutions as mutually reinforcing pathways toward reduced multidimensional poverty, improved social justice and inclusion, and greater readiness for EU membership. Its cross-cutting emphasis on LNOB, gender equality, human rights, data and digitalisation is intended to ensure that progress is not judged only by aggregate outcomes, but also by the extent to which those furthest behind benefit from reform and development gains.

Specifically, the ToC posits that progress toward sustainable development in Montenegro depends on a combination of economic transformation, strengthened human capital and social protection, and stronger institutions, rule of law and rights realisation. The theory of change further emphasises several cross-cutting themes: leaving no one behind, gender equality and women's empowerment, EU accession, the use of disaggregated data, and digital transformation.

The implementation of the UNSDCF is operationalised through a joint governance structure. The Joint Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the UN Resident Coordinator, serves as the highest oversight body. For implementation, one Results Group is established for each strategic priority, bringing together UN entities and relevant government representatives. These Results Groups are responsible for Joint Work Plans, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning plans, progress monitoring, and identifying opportunities for joint programming and course correction. In support of the Results Groups, the UNSDCF also envisages thematic and programme support structures, including the Gender and Human Rights Working Group, the SDG Working Group, the Operations Management Team and the Joint UN Communications Team. Progress data and reporting are linked to UN Info and annual performance review processes.

The UNCT configuration for the Montenegro UNSDCF combines resident and non-resident capacities. According to the ToR, the in-country entities include UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, IOM, UNHCR, ILO, OHCHR, FAO and UNESCO, while non-resident or regional agencies include UNECE, UN Women, UNIDO, UNODC, UNDRR,

ITU, IFAD and UNEP, with UNCTAD joining in 2025. The Framework is financed through a mix of core and non-core resources and innovative financing arrangements, including the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund, which aggregates resources for UNSDCF-aligned priorities and includes a EUR 1 million contribution from the Government, complemented by EU and bilateral partner support.

3 PURPOSE, SCOPE AND USERS

Evaluation of the UNSDCF is a mandatory independent system-wide country evaluation and is distinct from annual review processes. Cooperation Framework evaluations serve accountability and learning functions and inform decisions on the design of subsequent programming cycles. They assess the contribution of the Cooperation Framework by examining achieved development results, as well as gaps, constraints and overlaps affecting progress towards the SDGs. Such evaluations are guided by the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation and by the Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UNSDCF. They are expected to be credible, impartial and methodologically rigorous. Within this context, the Final Evaluation of the UNSDCF in Montenegro is an external and independent exercise designed to generate an objective assessment of achievements, challenges, lessons learned and emerging implications for future UN engagement, in the penultimate year of implementation of the current Cooperation Framework.

3.1 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

Against this background, the **purpose of the Final Evaluation** of the UNSDCF is two-fold:

- *Promote greater learning and operational improvement.* The evaluation will generate forward-looking and actionable learning to inform future programming and the strategic positioning of the UN system. In particular, it will help assess the effectiveness and efficiency of coordination mechanisms, joint programming approaches and financing modalities in supporting system-level results, accelerating SDG progress, and strengthening coherence across the UN offer.
- *Support greater accountability of the UNCT to UNSDCF stakeholders.* By providing an objective and evidence-based assessment of progress towards expected results, the evaluation will support accountability to national institutions, development partners, civil society, rights-holders and the wider public. It will assess the UN's collective contribution to national development priorities, international human rights commitments and SDGs, including the effectiveness of strategies, technical assistance, partnerships, coordination arrangements and the use of resources.

3.2 THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE CF EVALUATION

The **main objectives** of the Final CF Evaluation are to:

- *Assess the contribution of the UNSDCF to national development results* through evidence-based judgments using the agreed evaluation criteria.
- *Identify the factors that have enabled or constrained performance*, including policy, institutional, financing, partnership and coordination factors, and explain why progress has occurred or where and why it has fallen short.
- *Reach conclusions on the UN's overall contribution* across the scope of the UNSDCF, including cross-cutting patterns related to gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and Leaving No One Behind.
- *Provide actionable, forward-looking and feasible recommendations for future UN programming.* These recommendations should be clearly grounded in the findings and conclusions of the evaluation and informed by the lessons emerging from implementation.

The evaluation will provide key information on achieved development results primarily to the Government of Montenegro, the UN Country Team, including resident and non-resident agencies, and the wider United Nations Development System. It will also serve as an important source of information for the Development Coordination Office, the EU Delegation, bilateral donors, civil society organisations, including organisations

of persons with disabilities, and other partners engaged in Montenegro's development and reform agenda. More broadly, it will support learning and accountability for academia, private sector actors, regional UN entities and other stakeholders with an interest in Montenegro's development trajectory and the role of the UN system within it.

3.3 THE SCOPE OF THE CF EVALUATION

The scope of the Final Evaluation has been determined as follows:

- **Programme scope:** The evaluation will cover the UNSDCF 2023–2027 in Montenegro as a whole and its implementation architecture across all three strategic priorities, outcomes and associated outputs. It will examine UN contributions to policy and systems change, institutional and capacity strengthening, programme effectiveness and outcome-level progress, UN coherence and coordination, financing for development, and the adaptability of the UN system to changing political, economic and social conditions. Particular attention will be paid to the integration and application of the core programming principles and normative commitments of the Cooperation Framework, including gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights and non-discrimination, disability inclusion, Leaving No One Behind, child-centred and gender-sensitive approaches, and environmental sustainability. In line with the evaluation guidelines, the evaluation team will also draw on existing evaluative evidence, including relevant agency-specific, joint and thematic evaluations, as part of the broader evidence base.
- **Time scope:** The evaluation will cover the implementation period from **January 2023 to June 2026**, corresponding to the first four years of implementation of the UNSDCF 2023–2027.
- **Geographic scope:** The evaluation will be national in scope, while remaining sensitive to territorial disparities and the LNOB principle. Given that many stakeholders and institutions are concentrated at central level, much of the evaluation can be conducted through national-level coverage. At the same time, the evaluation may include selected sub-national inquiry and field visits, to the extent agreed during inception, particularly in areas that help illustrate territorial disparities, implementation bottlenecks and service-delivery challenges. The indicative fieldwork framework foresees possible visits to **Podgorica**, the **coastal region** and the **north**.
- **Users:** Primary users of the evaluation will include institutions and stakeholders directly involved in the implementation and oversight of the UNSDCF, including the Government of Montenegro at central and local levels, the UN Country Team and participating UN entities, the Development Coordination Office, development partners, civil society organisations and relevant coordination platforms. Secondary users will include academia, private sector actors, regional UN entities and the wider public.

4 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 THE EVALUATION APPROACH

The proposed evaluation methodology is grounded in the Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks issued by the United Nations Development Coordination Office and the United Nations Evaluation Group. This approach aligns with evaluation standards established by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and conforms to the Norms and Standards for evaluations established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). The review will focus on six key evaluation criteria: relevance and adaptability, coherence and coordination, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and orientation towards impact. Additionally, the review will explicitly incorporate cross-cutting issues including gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), child rights, human rights and non-discrimination, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Because the object of the evaluation is the Cooperation Framework as a collective strategic instrument, the analysis will focus on CF-level results, available indicators, official reporting and collective coordination arrangements, while

drawing on Joint Work Plans and agency-level evidence only insofar as they help assess the CF's overall performance and contribution.

In its design and implementation, the Cooperation Framework evaluation will align with UN Women standards and with the principles of gender-responsive evaluation. It will also integrate child-rights considerations in line with relevant UN guidance, while keeping the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines as the principal methodological reference for the exercise. Accordingly, the evaluation criteria, questions, indicators, methods and analysis will systematically assess results from the perspective of gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEWE), child rights, and broader LNOB and human-rights commitments. At the same time, the evaluation process will promote the meaningful, safe and equitable participation and representation of women and men throughout all stages of the exercise.

The evaluation will adopt a participatory and consultative approach, ensuring that key stakeholders and national partners are engaged throughout the evaluation process and that their views and feedback are reflected in the analysis, validation of findings, and formulation of conclusions and recommendations. Early and sustained stakeholder engagement will strengthen national ownership and enhance the evaluation's utility for the remainder of the current UNSDCF cycle and for the design of the next programming cycle. The evaluation will include both internal and external consultative processes. The Evaluation Team will work closely with the Resident Coordinator, the Resident Coordinator's Office, the UN Country Team, Results Groups and thematic groups, as well as representatives of government institutions and other key stakeholders, including development partners, civil society organisations, the private sector and academia.

Ethical considerations. The evaluation will adhere to the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016) and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020) at every stage of the process. Ethical safeguards will cover, at a minimum, informed consent, voluntary participation, privacy, confidentiality, data protection and the avoidance of harm. The inception report will identify the ethical risks relevant to the evaluation and specify measures to mitigate them and ensure compliance with applicable standards throughout the process. Dedicated interviews or focus groups with children are not currently envisaged, because the evaluation assesses CF-level progress under outcomes and strategic priorities rather than the performance of individual agency interventions. Child-related evidence will therefore be drawn primarily from secondary data and from consultations with institutions, service providers, CSOs and youth representatives. If any evidence activity directly involving children or adolescents becomes necessary, it will be subject to additional child-rights-based and safeguarding protocols, including informed consent and assent procedures, in line with relevant UNICEF ethical guidance.

The Evaluation Team will uphold the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and accountability throughout the exercise. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to interviews, focus groups or any other form of consultation. Participants will be clearly informed about the purpose of the evaluation, the intended use of the information they provide, and their right to decline to answer specific questions or to withdraw from the process at any stage without consequence.

The privacy and confidentiality of respondents will be protected throughout the evaluation. Sensitive information will be handled with particular care, and data will be stored securely in a manner that prevents the identification of individual informants where confidentiality has been assured. The Evaluation Team will not disclose confidential information without appropriate authorisation and will ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced back to its source where this could expose respondents to risk or reprisal. Interview notes and other primary data will be retained in secure files for the duration of the evaluation process and used solely for evaluative purposes.

The Evaluation Team will remain alert to any actual or potential conflicts of interest and will ensure that the evaluation is conducted in a manner that safeguards the rights, dignity and safety of all participants. Throughout the process, the evaluation will be carried out with due professional care and in full respect of ethical standards, ensuring a rigorous, transparent and trustworthy assessment.

4.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND CRITERIA

The evaluation will assess the UNSDCF using the criteria established in the ToR and consistent with the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines: Relevance and Adaptability, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence and Coordination, Sustainability, and Orientation towards Impact.

Across all criteria, the analysis will be theory-based and aligned with the UNSDCF theory of change and results framework. Gender equality and the empowerment of women, human rights and non-discrimination, including disability inclusion, Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), child-centred and gender-sensitive approaches, and environmental sustainability will be integrated across the evaluation as cross-cutting analytical lenses.

4.2.1 Finalisation of the evaluation questions

The ToR presents an initial set of **indicative** evaluation questions and explicitly allows the Evaluation Team to refine them during the inception phase to ensure feasibility and alignment with available data and resources. The UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines further note that evaluation questions should be clear, specific, relevant, directly grounded in the theory of change, limited to a manageable number, and supported by an Evaluation Design Matrix that unpacks them by outlining assumptions, indicators, methods, and sources.

In this context, the questions have been lightly revised rather than fundamentally restructured. The purpose of the revision is to improve clarity, reduce overlap, and make the evaluation framework more operational. In particular, several embedded sub-questions in the ToR have been shifted out of the main question wording and will instead be treated through the judgment criteria / assumptions to be assessed in the Evaluation Design Matrix. This applies especially to issues such as unintended effects, which groups or territories benefited more or less, the bottlenecks that constrained results, and the remaining system-level changes that are hardest to achieve. The revised question set is therefore intended to assess not only the extent of progress, but also how results were pursued and why progress was or was not achieved, using concrete examples and evidence. The modifications concern formulation and evaluability, not a reduction of substantive scope. Montenegro-specific issues identified in the ToR remain fully retained, including the voices of marginalized groups, the UN's comparative advantage, the role of the post-reform Resident Coordinator system, the performance and value added of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund, and the question of the UN's contribution to Montenegro's accession and post-accession trajectory. Joint Work Plans and agency interventions will be examined as implementation instruments of the Cooperation Framework, but they are not treated as separate objects of evaluation.

4.2.2 Relevance and Adaptability

Focus on the design process, consistency with national priorities, Agenda 2030 and SDG commitments, international human rights obligations, and adaptability to a changing context.

Under this criterion, the evaluation will assess the relevance of the UNSDCF by determining the extent to which its strategic priorities have responded to Montenegro's development needs, national reform priorities, and international and regional commitments. This assessment will analyse how well the UNSDCF aligns with and supports key areas identified in the Common Country Analysis and wider strategic framework, including the EU accession agenda. In parallel, the evaluation will examine the relevance of the UNSDCF in responding to emerging needs, especially those of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, and the extent to which UN support adapted to evolving institutional, socio-economic, territorial and demographic pressures during implementation. It will also assess whether the UNSDCF outcomes, outputs and indicators were logically connected, grounded in a sound problem analysis, and informed by adequate attention to gender equality, child rights, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB. In doing so, the evaluation will take into account the way in which CF priorities were translated into Joint Work Plans and collective implementation choices, as well as the extent to which UN support adapted to shocks and emerging needs, including migration and displacement pressures associated with the war in Ukraine.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ1.1.** To what extent has the CF integrated the key development issues and challenges identified by the Common Country Analysis and other strategic diagnostics for Montenegro?
- **EQ1.2.** To what extent are the CF objectives aligned and consistent with the needs, priorities and policies of Montenegro, including national development goals and targets, international human rights obligations, the SDGs and the EU accession agenda?

- **EQ1.3.** To what extent are the CF objectives responsive to emerging needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

4.2.3 Effectiveness

Focus on the progress of UNSDCF implementation, real-time results, and the extent to which outputs and outcomes have been achieved and translated into meaningful change.

The evaluation will assess the achievement of outputs and their contribution to the UNSDCF outcomes, examining the extent to which the envisaged results have been realized and have progressed towards intended outcome-level changes. This includes assessing whether the targets set under the UNSDCF have been met and how effectively outputs have driven progress towards the strategic priorities defined in the framework. The evaluation will also examine the extent to which the UNSDCF has contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes necessary to advance intended results, with particular attention to gender equality and women's empowerment, child rights, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability. In addition, the evaluation will assess the benefits derived by the people targeted by the interventions, especially the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including whether there were unintended effects and whether some groups or territories benefited more or less from the outcomes achieved. It will also analyse what bottlenecks limited results - including institutional capacity constraints, enforcement gaps, weaknesses in data, cross-sector coordination, governance, implementation, monitoring, participation and financing - and what course corrections appear warranted, including in relation to the remaining challenges and system-level changes that continue to be hardest to achieve. These issues will be explicitly reflected in the judgment criteria and assumptions under the effectiveness questions in the Evaluation Design Matrix. The assessment of benefits for vulnerable groups will rely on available official indicators, country results reporting and other secondary evidence, triangulated with primary qualitative data collection; where disaggregated quantitative data are limited, the evaluation will make this explicit and use qualitative evidence to assess differential effects.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ2.1.** Have the outputs envisaged in the CF been achieved, and to what extent have they contributed to progress under the CF outcomes?
- **EQ2.2.** To what extent has the CF contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes necessary for advancing its intended results?
- **EQ2.3.** What have been the benefits for the people targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

4.2.4 Efficiency

Focus on the extent to which the Cooperation Framework established and implemented clear procedures to provide coordinated support and the relationship between inputs and achieved results.

The evaluation will assess the adequacy and efficiency of the oversight, coordination and implementation structures, including oversight from the Government, the functioning of Results Groups and thematic groups, and existing monitoring and reporting practices. It will also review resource mobilisation, including joint fundraising and any relevant resource-mobilisation planning and monitoring beyond the MAF, budget allocations and delivery, and the extent to which the UNCT used results-based management to ensure a logical chain of results and a monitoring and evaluation framework capable of supporting adaptive management. In line with the Montenegro ToR, the efficiency analysis will explicitly examine the role and performance of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund, including the extent to which it achieved its intended purpose in attracting additional financing for strategic, catalytic and innovative interventions, generated value for money, and contributed to UN reform and collective UN action in Montenegro. The evaluation will also consider whether the CF collectively prioritized and, where necessary, reallocated resources according to collective priorities and changing needs, and whether financial, technical and human inputs were converted into outputs and outcomes efficiently and with due care. To the extent possible, the analysis will also consider whether the balance between programme-focused and project-focused budgeting affected collective delivery under the CF.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ3.1.** To what extent did the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund achieve its intended purpose in relation to attracting additional financing for strategic, catalytic and innovative UN interventions, value for money, and advancement of UN reform in Montenegro?
- **EQ3.2.** To what extent did the CF monitoring, evaluation and learning system, together with broader management and coordination arrangements, support adaptive management and the efficient prioritization, mobilisation, allocation and use of resources?

4.2.5 Coherence and Coordination

Focus on the coherence of the UNSDCF, its oversight and implementation frameworks, and the UN's role in coordinating with other actors.

The evaluation will assess the UNSDCF's coherence and coordination by examining the extent to which UN agency programmes and work plans have been effectively and meaningfully derived from the CF in both design and implementation. It will consider how well the strategic priorities outlined in the UNSDCF were translated into actionable programmes and work plans by the participating UN agencies and how coherently the UNCT's support has been organized across agencies and outcomes, including clarity of roles, avoidance of duplication, and use of joint programming. In addition, the evaluation will analyse the role of the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office in enabling coherence in implementation and in strengthening the UNCT's joint convening power. It will further assess how the UNSDCF promoted complementarity, harmonization and coordination among UN agencies and with key development partners, including the adequacy and efficiency of oversight, coordination and implementation structures, the functioning of Results Groups and internal inter-agency thematic groups (including gender, human rights and LNOB), and the degree of actual synergies established among UN agencies in planning, prioritization and delivery.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ4.1.** Post-UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programmes and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the CF in both design and implementation?
- **EQ4.2.** How coherent is the UNCT's support across agencies and outcomes, including clarity of roles, avoidance of duplication, use of joint programming, and the leveraging of normative mandates?
- **EQ4.3.** To what extent did the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT joint convening power and better coherence of the country team?

4.2.6 Sustainability

Focus on the sustainability of the CF results and benefits, and the extent to which the CF has developed or strengthened mechanisms that promote continuity, scaling up and replication of successful results.

The evaluation will assess the likelihood that progress achieved under the UNSDCF will be sustained over time, taking into account institutional, financial, socio-political and environmental factors. It will examine what facilitates and impedes the sustainability of CF results, including the extent to which government institutions and other national actors are committed to supporting and sustaining efforts in the relevant fields. The evaluation will also analyse whether the CF enabled innovative approaches embedded in institutional learning and national capacity development, allowing government institutions, civil society organisations and other actors to continue achieving positive results without further UN or development partner support.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ5.1.** What are the main results achieved by the CF that are likely to last and/or can be sustained without further interventions or UN support?
- **EQ5.2.** Has the CF enabled innovative approaches embedded in institutional learning for national capacity development, including government, civil society and NGOs, so that these actors can continue achieving positive results without UN or development partner support?

4.2.7 Orientation towards Impact

Focus is on the extent to which the CF contributed to higher-level change and to the well-being, rights and resilience of vulnerable groups, individuals, households and communities, with explicit attention to LNOB.

Although a formal ex-post impact evaluation is not feasible at this stage, the evaluation will assess the anticipated impact and the most plausible contribution pathways through which the UNSDCF may have influenced higher-level change. This includes systems strengthening, normative alignment, resilience and equity gains, as well as the broader trajectory of Montenegro's accession and post-accession environment. The evaluation will also assess whether UN activities stemming from the CF made a meaningful difference for beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their well-being and the realization of their human rights. This will include considering the extent to which the UN system helped strengthen evidence generation, monitoring and data use relevant to tracking the situation of beneficiaries and changes in their rights and well-being.

The evaluation will address the following questions:

- **EQ6.1.** What evidence is there of the UN's contribution to higher-level change, including systems strengthening, normative alignment as a precondition to system-level change, resilience and equity gains, and what are the most plausible contribution pathways in Montenegro's accession and post-accession trajectory?
- **EQ6.2.** To what extent have UN activities stemming from the CF made a difference for beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their well-being and their human rights overall?

4.2.8 UN normative work, programming principles and cross-cutting issues

The analysis of UN normative work and core programming principles will be integrated throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation will examine the extent to which the UNCT prioritized the needs of the most vulnerable, the poor and the marginalized and whether these groups have benefited from assistance in terms of accessibility, quality and relevance. It will assess how the human rights-based approach, gender equality, disability inclusion, environmental sustainability, results-based management and capacity development have been considered and mainstreamed during both the preparation and implementation of the Cooperation Framework. These dimensions will be reflected across all criteria and questions and, where necessary, operationalized through specific assumptions, indicators and disaggregation requirements in the Evaluation Design Matrix.

4.2.9 Implications for the Evaluation Design Matrix

In line with the evaluation guidance, the Evaluation Design Matrix will be the primary analytical tool of the evaluation. It will link the evaluation questions above to the relevant criteria, assumptions or aspects to be examined, indicators, data sources, and data collection methods. The matrix will therefore carry the more detailed analytical unpacking of each question, including the treatment of unintended effects, differential benefits across groups and regions, bottlenecks and course-correction needs, and the specific contribution pathways to be tested. This structure is intended to ensure both analytical depth and operational feasibility in data collection and synthesis

4.3 THE EVALUATION PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Team (ET) followed a four-phase evaluation approach tailored to Montenegro's development, governance and accession context. This includes: an **inception phase** (refining methodology, finalising the evaluation matrix and producing the Inception Report); a **data collection phase** (desk review, key informant interviews, online partner survey and event-level feedback); an **analysis and synthesis phase** (triangulation across data sources and drafting of findings under each evaluation criterion); and a **reporting and validation phase** (preliminary findings, draft report, ERG validation and final report).

Figure 1: Phases of UNSDCF Montenegro Final Evaluation

The approach is grounded in the UNEG Norms and Standards¹⁵, the UNEG Ethical Guidelines¹⁶, and the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines¹⁷. It combines a theory-based approach with mixed methods and a strong emphasis on participation, inclusion and use.

The ET assesses the UN's collective contribution to the Cooperation Framework outcomes through the reconstruction and testing of contribution pathways, triangulation of quantitative and qualitative evidence, and systematic attention to cross-cutting dimensions such as gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion, LNOB and environmental sustainability.

Phase 1. Inception – desk review and document analysis

During the inception phase, the ET undertook a structured review of the key strategic, programmatic and evaluative documents that define the UNSDCF and its implementation environment. This phase enabled the ET to develop a comprehensive understanding of the theory of change, the results framework, the coordination architecture, financing modalities, and the broader national reform and development context within which the Cooperation Framework operates.

The desk review covered, at a minimum, the UNSDCF 2023–2027, its results framework, annual UN Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans, governance and coordination documents, the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund documentation, and available monitoring, evaluation and learning materials. These were analysed alongside key national and international reference documents, including the Common Country Analysis and its updates, relevant national strategies and legislation, national statistical and survey evidence, EU accession and progress documentation, and existing evaluative evidence produced by UN agencies, national institutions and development partners.

This review served four purposes. First, it allowed the ET to assess the conceptual soundness and operational relevance of the theory of change and identify areas requiring further clarification during fieldwork. Second, it helped the ET map major contextual developments, programme trajectories, cross-sector linkages, and key implementation bottlenecks. Third, it provided the analytical basis for the Evaluation Design Matrix, including the refinement of indicators, assumptions, evidence needs and data-collection tools. Fourth, it supported the preparation of a stakeholder mapping and sampling strategy grounded in the actual intervention footprint of the UNSDCF and in the distribution of responsibility and influence across different actors.

¹⁵ https://www.unevaluation.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/UNEGNormsStandardsforEvaluation_English-2017_1914_11512579289962.pdf

¹⁶ https://www.unevaluation.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/2020EthicalGuidelinesforEvaluation_2866_11603124552541.pdf

¹⁷ [https://www.unevaluation.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/UNSDCF%20Evaluation%20Guidelines-Engl-Revised-2025%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.unevaluation.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/UNSDCF%20Evaluation%20Guidelines-Engl-Revised-2025%20(1).pdf)

To ensure completeness and internal consistency of the Theory of Change review, the ET also used a synoptic table for the analysis of the ToC, mapping the main strategic priorities, outcomes, causal pathways, assumptions, risks, external factors and cross-cutting considerations that required further testing during the evaluation.

During the inception phase, special attention was made by the evaluation team to:

- Ensure the completeness of the sampling frame, including the inclusion of all major programme components and all relevant stakeholder groups;
- Ensure the triple representativeness of the sample of stakeholders to be consulted, namely programmatic representativeness, geographic representativeness, and stakeholder representativeness;
- Ensure a thorough analysis of the Theory of Change and, if needed, its reconstruction to reflect the actual implementation logic of the programme;
- Ensure the soundness of the evaluation questions under each criterion and the completeness of the Evaluation Design Matrix.

Sampling strategy

A purposive and stratified sampling approach will be used. The current stakeholder mapping will serve as the sampling frame, and the sample will be selected to **ensure triple representativeness: programmatic, geographic, and stakeholder**.

Programmatic representativeness means that the sample will cover all three strategic priorities and their outcomes, as well as the main cross-cutting commitments of the UNSDCF. It will deliberately include actors linked to policy and systems change, institutional capacity strengthening, social inclusion, justice and human rights, climate and environmental governance, pooled financing, digital transformation, migration, and local service delivery. Particular attention will be paid to institutions with the highest degree of programmatic exposure, including the ministries responsible for education, labour and social welfare, justice, interior, health, ecology and finance, as well as MONSTAT, the Ombudsperson and other high-exposure institutions identified through the stakeholder mapping.

Geographic representativeness means that the sample will include both national-level actors in Podgorica and selected local actors in the north and on the coast, in order to capture territorial disparities, different implementation environments and LNOB-related bottlenecks. In line with the ToR and stakeholder mapping, the northern cluster will prioritize municipalities such as Berane, Bijelo Polje and Pljevlja, while the coastal cluster will prioritize Bar and Ulcinj. These sites are particularly relevant because they concentrate issues related to youth unemployment, migration, rural disadvantage, social cohesion¹⁸, environmental pressure and differential access to services.

Stakeholder representativeness means that the sample will include duty-bearers and rights-holders, as well as institutions and organizations positioned at different points of the intervention chain. This includes UN agencies, government institutions, justice and oversight bodies, municipalities, civil society and implementing partners, child-rights and youth organizations, Roma NGOs and representatives, organizations of persons with disabilities, development partners and IFIs, academia and think tanks, private sector and social partners, and rights-holder / beneficiary groups.

The ET will tailor interview and consultation modalities to different stakeholder groups. Senior government, UN and development partner interlocutors will be approached primarily through individual semi-structured interviews. Results Groups, thematic groups, MAF governance actors and selected institutional clusters will be approached through group interviews or structured discussions where this is more efficient and analytically useful. Rights-holder perspectives will be captured primarily through FGDs or representative / mediated consultations, depending on the ethical feasibility of direct engagement. No dedicated FGDs with children are currently envisaged; child-related evidence will instead be gathered primarily through secondary data, institutional sources, CSOs and youth representatives. A brief online survey will be used mainly with UN programme and operations staff, and selectively with other stakeholders who cannot participate in person or through remote interviews.

¹⁸ The findings of the ongoing evaluation of the joint programme on social cohesion will be used in lieu of field visit, where applicable

The sampling strategy also incorporates a dedicated lens on the MAF. Rather than creating a fully separate sample, MAF-related actors will be deliberately oversampled across categories, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of European Affairs, the RC/RCO, the EU Delegation, bilateral contributors, the MPTF Office and the participating implementing agencies. This is necessary to assess the Fund's governance, strategic value, financing role and contribution to coherence and reform.

To reduce selection bias, the ET will not rely exclusively on stakeholders nominated by UN entities. While the UNCT, RCO and Results Groups remain central entry points, the ET will also use the stakeholder mapping, publicly available institutional information, prior evaluations and documentary evidence to identify additional respondents and validate the balance of the sample. This is particularly important for justice and oversight institutions, CSOs, representative organizations and rights-holder groups.

Table 2: Stakeholder sampling summary – Montenegro UNSDCF Evaluation

STAKEHOLDERS			DATA COLLECTION METHOD				
Stakeholder Type	Total number of Stakeholders identified	Representative Sample for data collection	Semi-structured Interviews (F2F)	Group interviews/ Discussions/FGDs (F2F)	Semi-structured Interviews (remote)	Group interviews/ Discussions/FGDs (remote)	Online Survey
Podgorica, central level							
UN officials (UNCT agencies + RCO)	20	16	8	4	4	–	25–30 respondents
International community (EU, bilateral donors, IFIs, selected regional / global actors)	18	10	4	–	6	–	–
Government institutions (ministries, central agencies)	18	14	8	3	3	–	–
Justice, oversight and specialized institutions	16	10	6	2	2	–	–
Civil society and implementing partners	23	12	3	5	2	2	6–8 respondents
Private sector / social partners / media	8	5	2	1	2	–	–
Academia and think tanks	4	3	1	–	2	–	–
Rights-holder / beneficiary groups (through FGDs or mediated consultation)	11 priority group types	6 consultations	–	4	–	2	–
Other							
Subtotal Podgorica / central level	118	76	32	19	21	4	31–38 respondents

Local community cluster 1: North (tentative, otherwise online interview/survey and secondary data collection will be used)							
Local self-government	3	3	3	–	–	–	–
Government / service institutions	3	3	3	–	–	–	–
Civil society / local implementing partners	3	3	–	3	–	–	–
Rights-holder groups	2	2	–	2	–	–	–
Subtotal North	11	11	6	5	–	–	–
Local community cluster 2: Coast (tentative, otherwise online interview/survey and secondary data collection will be used)							
Local self-government / city-level actors	2	2	2	–	–	–	–
Government / service institutions	1	1	1	–	–	–	–
Civil society / community partners	1	1	–	1	–	–	–
Rights-holder groups	1	1	–	1	–	–	–
Subtotal Podgorica community level	5	5	3	2	–	–	–
Indicative total sample	142	100	45	30	21	4	31–38 respondents
Total		5	5				

The proposed sample in Table 2 is indicative and will be discussed with the Evaluation Manager, the UNCT and the ESC before field implementation is finalised, in order to confirm that the final sample secures adequate coverage across programmes, stakeholder groups and geographic areas. The total number of stakeholders identified is based on the current stakeholder mapping and will be further refined through deduplication and consolidation of agency-specific lists during inception. The Evaluation Team will also monitor, to the extent possible, the gender balance of respondents and will seek a reasonably balanced representation of women and men across stakeholder categories.

Quality assurance throughout the entire evaluation process will be based on the following premises:

- the recommendations will be based on the analysis and presented in a separate section of the report; they will be clear, realistic, prioritized and actionable, and will be validated through discussion with key stakeholders; for each recommendation, the target audience, scope, expected outcome and indicative timeframe will be clearly defined.
- the lessons learned will add value to the evaluation by considering the potential implications of the findings beyond the immediate scope of UNSDCF design and implementation, including for future policymaking and development programming;
- the conclusions will build on the findings from the analysis, but go one step further by highlighting the key overall insights, successes and shortcomings of UNSDCF implementation in Montenegro during the period covered by the evaluation;
- the findings and conclusions will be based on robust evidence collected through desk review and primary data collection, triangulated and cross-referenced across sources and methods.

Additional sampling and consultation modalities

Group interviews and structured discussions will be used particularly with Results Groups, thematic groups, MAF governance actors, clusters of ministries or agencies, and some institutional partners. This modality is appropriate where the evaluation needs to capture the collective functioning of coordination mechanisms, inter-agency dynamics, or different perspectives within one institutional setting.

Focus group discussions will be used selectively and with strong ethical safeguards. They will be prioritized for stakeholder groups where interaction among participants is likely to generate richer evidence on shared barriers, access issues, inclusion, discrimination or differential outcomes. In Montenegro, this is particularly relevant for Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, youth in northern municipalities, migrants and stateless persons, and women affected by GBV, though the latter may in some cases require representative or mediated consultation rather than direct group discussion. No dedicated focus groups with children are currently envisaged, given the CF-level scope of the evaluation; child-related evidence will instead be drawn primarily from secondary sources and from consultations with institutions, service providers, CSOs and youth representatives.

The online survey will be used mainly to widen coverage of UN staff perspectives, particularly among those not interviewed directly, and may be extended selectively to implementing partners or local actors where participation constraints prevent direct engagement. The survey is not intended as a stand-alone evidence stream but as a complementary source for triangulation. For the purposes of the online data collection a state of the art professional software Dooble Survey to Go, that ensures the highest standards of data protection (<https://surveytogo.net/>) will be used.

Sampling limitations and mitigation measures

As in any country-level evaluation, there is a risk of selection bias if the sample relies too heavily on stakeholders nominated by UN entities or already closely involved in the UNSDCF coordination architecture. There is also a risk that respondents with direct ownership of the process may overstate achievements or understate implementation challenges. To mitigate these risks, the ET will apply a broad purposive sampling strategy, actively include external and less centrally positioned actors, and use systematic triangulation of documentary, statistical and interview-based evidence. In addition, the ET will seek out independent data sources and existing evaluation evidence beyond UN-generated material, including oversight reports, partner assessments and relevant national or international analyses.

A second limitation relates to the geographic concentration of institutions in Podgorica and the relatively short fieldwork window. To mitigate this, the evaluation will complement selective sub-national visits with remote interviews and use existing evaluative evidence where appropriate to strengthen territorial coverage. A third limitation concerns potential access and ethical constraints in relation to particularly vulnerable rights-holder groups. In such cases, the ET will work through established representative bodies, civil society organizations and service providers and will adapt methods to ensure safety, voluntariness and confidentiality. A fourth limitation concerns the uneven availability of official statistics disaggregated by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, geography and other vulnerability markers, which may constrain the precision of equity-focused quantitative analysis.

The findings from this phase were consolidated in the Inception Report, which defines the final evaluation methodology, the refined question set, the evaluation matrix, the sampling strategy, the fieldwork plan, the ethical risk mitigation measures, and the overall work plan for the remainder of the evaluation.

Phase 2. Data collection and analysis

The ET will employ a comprehensive approach to the final evaluation of the UNSDCF in Montenegro, integrating both summative and formative components. The evaluation is centred on the Cooperation Framework as the unit of analysis, not on the separate assessment of individual UN agencies, projects or activities. The summative dimension will critically assess the realization of results at output and outcome levels, drawing on evidence of achievements, good practices, innovations, bottlenecks and lessons learned. The formative dimension will look ahead, identifying areas for improvement, surfacing operational lessons, and informing the design of the next UNSDCF cycle or equivalent future programming arrangement.

The framework for this evaluation has been set out in the Terms of Reference and has guided the ET in developing a tailored methodology for Montenegro. The methodological approach is centered on a Theory of Change (ToC) perspective, which provides a structured way of analysing the sequence of events and causal pathways linking outputs, outcomes and broader change under the Cooperation Framework. By articulating assumptions and risks, the ToC-based approach enables the ET to assess the coherence of the UNSDCF, test the plausibility of contribution pathways, and identify the critical variables for measurement and analysis. Given the complexity of the UNSDCF - covering multiple sectors, diverse target groups, resident and non-resident agencies, and an evolving accession and reform context - the ET will complement this theory-based perspective with contribution analysis. This will help trace the logical chain from activities and outputs to observed outcomes, while considering alternative explanations and the influence of contextual factors.

Within this overall framework, the ET will apply a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative enquiry with a structured review of secondary quantitative evidence to answer the evaluation questions and ensure robust triangulation of findings. The evaluation will use a well-balanced combination of desk research, key informant interviews, group discussions, focus group discussions, field observation where relevant, a limited online survey or questionnaire used as a structured consultation tool, and reflective analytical sessions. The collection and analysis of secondary evidence - including UNSDCF and UN agency reports, Government and municipal documentation, statistical data, evaluation reports, and studies from CSOs, think tanks and development partners - will form the backbone of the desk phase. Because the object of evaluation is the CF as a collective framework, available indicators, official reports, Joint Work Plans and other secondary evidence will be used as the primary basis for assessing progress, while primary data collection will be used to triangulate, validate and explain those findings rather than to evaluate individual agency programmes as standalone objects. In line with the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines, no primary quantitative analysis is envisaged for this evaluation because the primary evidence base relies on purposive rather than statistically representative sampling. Quantitative findings presented in the evaluation will therefore be drawn from secondary sources already available and, where relevant, from financial and resource analysis.

Data collection modalities

Desk review. The desk review will provide the evidence base for understanding the intervention logic, planned and reported results, implementation context and existing monitoring data. It will also be used to identify evidence gaps, refine the evaluation questions and judgement criteria, and prepare tailored data collection tools.

Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders directly involved in the design, implementation, coordination or use of results. They will allow the evaluation to explore relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and emerging evidence of uptake or institutional change in greater depth.

Group interviews and focus group discussions. Group interviews and focus group discussions will be used where collective reflection can generate richer evidence, particularly among implementing partners, institutional beneficiaries, service providers, civil society actors or end users. These discussions will help identify shared experiences, differences in perception, and practical factors affecting the use and sustainability of results.

Online survey. Where used, the online survey will complement qualitative data collection by reaching a wider group of stakeholders and generating structured, perception-based feedback on the quality, usefulness, accessibility and perceived effects of the intervention. Survey findings will be interpreted as supplementary, non-generalizable evidence and triangulated with interviews, documents, monitoring data and any relevant financial analysis.

Direct observation and site visits. Where feasible, direct observation and site visits will be used to verify the existence, functionality, accessibility and practical use of supported outputs. This modality will help the evaluation move beyond reported results and assess whether outputs are operational, visible and relevant in their intended institutional or community setting.

Triangulation. Evidence from all modalities will be systematically triangulated to distinguish between reported achievements, stakeholder perceptions and independently verifiable evidence

of use, uptake and contribution to results. This will strengthen the credibility of findings and support balanced, evidence-based conclusions.

During the data collection phase, special attention will be given to the completeness of the sampling frame, including the inclusion of all major programme components and all relevant stakeholder groups- the triple representativeness of the sample of stakeholders. In addition, the ET will work on tailoring of interview and consultation approaches to different groups of stakeholders.

Phase 3. Synthesis and reporting

This phase will focus on the analysis and synthesis of the evidence collected during the desk and field phases and on the preparation of the draft and final evaluation reports. The ET will analyse data systematically against the Evaluation Design Matrix, using the evaluation questions, assumptions, indicators and stakeholder categories as the primary coding structure. Additional analytical categories may be added where necessary to capture cross-cutting themes, emerging patterns, territorial contrasts or stakeholder-specific perspectives. Qualitative coding software may be used to support systematic analysis of interview and focus group notes.

The analysis will proceed through triangulation across methods, sources and stakeholder categories. Findings will be derived from patterns that recur across more than one type of evidence and will be tested against available documentary and statistical material wherever possible. Interim analytical synthesis will be used during the reporting phase to identify inconsistencies, evidence gaps and emerging explanatory patterns. This will support the formulation of findings, conclusions and recommendations that are firmly grounded in evidence and clearly linked to the evaluation criteria.

The final report will present findings, conclusions and recommendations in a clear cause-and-effect logic. It will explain both what has happened and why, including the enabling and constraining factors shaping progress. Lessons learned will be distilled with a view to informing future programming, strengthening coordination and improving the strategic relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the next UNSDCF cycle or equivalent future programming arrangement. Recommendations will be actionable, prioritized and directed to the relevant stakeholders.

Phase 4. Review and validation

The draft evaluation findings and report will be reviewed by the UNCT, the Evaluation Steering Committee, government counterparts and other relevant stakeholders, in line with the management and quality assurance arrangements set out in the ToR. This phase will include preparation of the first draft report, review by DCO and country-level stakeholders, incorporation of comments, validation of findings, correction of factual inaccuracies, and finalization of the report. A validation workshop or structured validation meetings will be used to test the robustness, clarity and practical utility of the main findings and recommendations.

The ET will present preliminary findings before finalization of the report in order to ensure common understanding of the evidence, reduce factual uncertainty and enhance ownership of the final recommendations. This process is intended to support not only report quality, but also the future use of the evaluation in programme design, strategic positioning, pooled-fund governance and management response. The final report will include key findings, conclusions, actionable recommendations, lessons learned and good practices relevant to the design of the next programming cycle.

5 UNSDCF EVALUATION MATRIX

The UNSDCF Final Evaluation Design Matrix is based on the United Nations Development Coordination Office/ United Nations Evaluations Group Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks,¹⁹ which was broadly designed in line with the evaluation criteria defined by OECD DAC²⁰ and adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for evaluations. The Final Evaluation will be organised around the following key evaluation criteria – relevance & adaptability, coherence & coordination, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and orientation towards impact. The core questions and specific questions defined in the boxes below are based on the examples of potential evaluation questions in the above-mentioned Guidelines as well as the questions proposed in the FE Terms of Reference and similar FE Reports reviewed during the Inception Phase. The Evaluation Design Matrix is also based on an in-depth discussion with UN RCO staff and other UN stakeholders.

Using this Evaluation Matrix, the FE has prepared interview guides with specific question for each of the identified stakeholders' groups and on-line survey (see Annex V. for more information).

Table 2: UNSDCF evaluation matrix

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE AND ADAPTABILITY				
EQ1.1. To what extent has the CF integrated the key development issues and challenges identified by the Common Country Analysis	<i>JC1.1.1. The extent to which the CF was based on a participatory and analytically robust CCA and reflected the key development issues and challenges identified in it.</i>	Evidence that the CF reflected key development issues and challenges identified in the CCA and related diagnostics.	Desk-based research	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans

¹⁹ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2972>

²⁰ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
(CCA) and other strategic diagnostics for Montenegro?	<i>JC1.1.2. The extent to which the CF outcomes and outputs are logically connected and formulated on the basis of a sound problem analysis.</i>	Evidence, including examples and opinions, that the CF was based on a sound problem analysis and that outcomes and outputs are logically connected to identified problems.	Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF Review of the results framework and performance indicators	Common Country Analysis and CCA updates National development and sectoral strategies, including those covering cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, disability inclusion and human rights EU accession documentation Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies and development partners
	<i>JC1.1.3. The extent to which the CF included performance indicators with baselines and targets that are relevant, measurable and realistic.</i>	Adequacy, measurability and relevance of the performance indicators, baselines and targets.	Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders concerning the UNSDCF	
	<i>JC1.1.4. The extent to which the CF design reflects territorial disparities, structural bottlenecks and groups at risk of being left behind.</i>	Evidence that regional inequality, demographic pressures, service-delivery gaps, governance weaknesses and LNOB concerns were reflected in the CF design.		
EQ1.2. To what extent are the CF objectives aligned and consistent with the needs, priorities and policies of Montenegro, including national development goals and targets, international human rights obligations, the SDGs and the EU accession agenda?	<i>JC1.2.1. The extent to which the CF responded to Montenegro's main development priorities and country needs.</i>	Evidence and examples that the CF addressed priority needs and responded to strategic priorities of Montenegro.	Desk-based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans
	<i>JC1.2.2. The extent to which the CF responded to national policies, plans, strategies and reform agendas.</i>	Evidence and examples that the CF responded to national policies, plans, strategies and programmes.	Review of the results framework and performance indicators Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders concerning the UNSDCF	Common Country Analysis and CCA updates National development and sectoral strategies, including those covering cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, disability inclusion and human rights
	<i>JC1.2.3. The extent to which the CF addressed international commitments, including Agenda 2030, LNOB, human rights, disability inclusion, gender equality and EU accession-related obligations.</i>	Evidence and examples that the CF responded to international commitments and the EU accession agenda.		

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC1.2.4. The extent to which the CF focused on areas where the UN holds a distinctive comparative advantage.	▪ Examples of UN comparative advantage in specific sectors or harder-to-address reform domains.		EU accession documentation, treaty commitments and relevant national reform documents Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, OPDs, rights-holder groups, academia and development partners
EQ1.3. To what extent are the CF objectives responsive to emerging needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?	JC1.3.1. The extent to which the CF remained relevant in a changing national context and responded to emerging needs and shocks, especially for the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups.	▪ Evidence that the UNCT / UN agencies were responsive in addressing emerging needs of the country.	Desk-based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF Review of the results framework and performance indicators Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders concerning the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans Common Country Analysis and CCA updates
	JC1.3.2. The extent to which UNCT / UN agencies adapted their support to changing priorities of vulnerable groups and underserved territories.	▪ Examples and opinions that the CF responded to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.		National development and sectoral strategies
	JC1.3.3. The extent to which the CF incorporated gender, child rights, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB considerations in responding to changing needs.	▪ Examples that the UNCT / UN agencies adapted support to provide timely assistance in line with changing priorities and emerging needs, including with due attention to gender equality, child rights, disability inclusion and LNOB.		EU accession documentation Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies and national partners
Relevant evaluation criteria: COHERENCE AND COORDINATION				

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
EQ2.1. Post-UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programmes and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the CF in both design and implementation?	JC2.1.1. The extent to which UN agency programmes and work plans were derived from the UNSDCF at the design stage.	Evidence and examples that UN agencies and their programmes and work plans reflected UNSDCF priorities at the design stage and during implementation.	Desk-based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans
	JC2.1.2. The extent to which agency implementation remained aligned with UNSDCF priorities and outcomes.	Examples of implementation choices, outputs or work planning anchored in the CF.	Review of agency programming instruments, work plans and coordination documentation Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders	Agency country programme documents and work plans Governance and coordination documents, including ToRs and meeting minutes of Results and thematic groups
	JC2.1.3. The extent to which derivation from the CF supported greater coherence of agency action and reduced fragmentation.	Stakeholder views on the extent to which agencies used the CF as the central strategic reference point.	Results from online surveys, where applicable	RCO documentation and relevant management records Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, and partners
EQ2.2. How coherent is the UNCT's support across agencies and outcomes, including clarity of roles, avoidance of duplication, use of joint programming, and the leveraging of normative mandates?	JC2.2.1. The extent to which UNCT support across agencies and outcomes is complementary and strategically aligned.	Examples of complementarity and synergy across agencies and outcomes.	Desk-based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans
	JC2.2.2. The extent to which roles and responsibilities across agencies are sufficiently clear to reduce duplication.	Examples of joint programming or joint initiatives and their perceived effectiveness.	Review of agency programming instruments, work plans and coordination documentation Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders	Agency country programme documents and work plans Governance and coordination documents, including ToRs and meeting minutes of Results and thematic groups
	JC2.2.3. The extent to which joint programming and collective action strengthened coherence and improved results.	Evidence of duplication avoided or, conversely, remaining overlap.	Online surveys, where applicable	

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC2.2.4. The extent to which the CF leveraged agency normative mandates in a complementary way.	Stakeholder perceptions of role clarity and coherence across the UNCT.		RCO documentation and relevant management records Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and other relevant institutions
	JC2.2.5. The extent to which oversight and coordination arrangements supported more effective problem-solving and collective delivery.	Internal UN stakeholder perceptions of the functionality and effectiveness of Results Groups and thematic groups		
EQ2.3. To what extent did the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT joint convening power and better coherence of the country team?	JC2.3.1. The extent to which the post-reform RCO contributed to stronger coherence across the country team.	Examples and opinions on the contribution of the RCO to coherence and collective positioning.	Desk-based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC / intervention logic designed for the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans
	JC2.3.2. The extent to which the RCO strengthened the UNCT's joint convening power and strategic positioning.	Evidence that coordination mechanisms supported planning, adaptation and implementation.	Review of agency programming instruments, work plans and coordination documentation	Agency country programme documents and work plans
	JC2.3.3. The extent to which coordination mechanisms contributed to planning, adaptation and implementation of the CF.	Evidence of decisions that addressed implementation bottlenecks or enabled more effective delivery.	Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders Online surveys, where applicable	Governance and coordination documents, including ToRs and meeting minutes of Results and thematic groups RCO documentation and relevant management records Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and other relevant institutions
Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFECTIVENESS				

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
EQ3.1. Have the outputs envisaged in the CF been achieved, and to what extent have they contributed to progress under the CF outcomes?	JC3.1.1. The extent to which UN agencies and national partners were effective in delivering outputs / results and progressing towards outcomes.	Examples of the main achievements during CF implementation, including delivery of outputs and progress towards outcomes.	Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and annual Country Results Reports
	JC3.1.2. The extent to which progress under CF outcomes has been achieved and targets met or plausibly advanced.	Evidence and figures showing progress under outcome and output indicators and advancement toward targets.	Analysis of the UNSDCF results chain / intervention logic Review of available data sets evidencing progress toward the targets	Strategic plans / country programme documents of UN agencies
	JC3.1.3. The extent to which the CF contributed to institutional, behavioural and legislative changes under the outcomes.	Examples and opinions that the CF contributed to key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes under the outcomes.	Interviews with key informants and group interviews with institutional beneficiaries and experts	Agency evaluations and thematic / project-level reviews
	JC3.1.4. Evidence of identifiable enabling factors and bottlenecks explaining progress and shortfalls, including institutional capacity constraints, enforcement gaps, weaknesses in data, cross-sector coordination, governance, implementation, monitoring, participation and financing.	Examples and stakeholder views on enabling factors and bottlenecks that affected results.	Focus groups / field visits where appropriate Online survey / questionnaires for UN staff, where applicable	National statistics, administrative data and sector reports
	JC3.1.5. Evidence of unintended positive or negative effects associated with CF implementation.	Examples and stakeholder views on unintended effects, positive or negative.		Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and beneficiaries where feasible
EQ3.2. To what extent has the CF contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural and	JC3.2.1. The extent to which the CF contributed to strengthening national capacities and driving systemic changes in key thematic areas.	Evidence that the CF contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering institutional, behavioural and legislative change.	Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and annual Country Results Reports

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
legislative changes necessary for advancing its intended results?	JC3.2.2. Evidence of institutional, behavioural and legislative changes occurring in the core sectors of intervention.	Examples of institutional, behavioural and legislative changes that the CF contributed to in the core areas of intervention.	Analysis of the UNSDCF results chain / intervention logic Review of available data sets evidencing progress toward the targets	Strategic plans / country programme documents of UN agencies Agency evaluations and thematic / project-level reviews
	JC3.2.3. Evidence of key changes in areas such as gender equality and women's empowerment, child rights, human rights, Roma inclusion, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability.	Examples of progress related to gender equality, child rights, human rights, Roma inclusion, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability.	Interviews with key informants and group interviews with institutional beneficiaries and experts Focus groups / field visits where appropriate	National statistics, administrative data and sector reports Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and beneficiaries where feasible
	JC3.2.4. Evidence of the remaining system-level changes hardest to achieve and their implications for potential course correction.	Stakeholder assessments of what systemic shifts occurred and what remains hardest to achieve.	Online survey / questionnaires for UN staff, where applicable	
EQ3.3. What have been the benefits for the people targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?	JC3.3.1. The extent to which CF results contributed to tangible improvements for vulnerable and marginalized groups.	Opinions of key stakeholders about the degree to which the CF considered and addressed the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.	Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports Analysis of the UNSDCF results chain / intervention logic	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and annual Country Results Reports Strategic plans / country programme documents of UN agencies
	JC3.3.2. Evidence of specific measures defined to address inequalities and cross-cutting issues.	Examples of specific measures that were defined to address inequalities and cross-cutting issues.		

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC3.3.3. Evidence of the extent to which benefits from the interventions were distributed unevenly across groups, territories or institutions, including which groups may have benefited more or less than others.	Examples of benefits for target groups in terms of service access, capabilities, protection, participation or rights realization.	Review of available data sets evidencing progress toward the targets Interviews with key informants and group interviews with institutional beneficiaries and experts Focus groups / field visits where appropriate Online survey / questionnaires for UN staff, where applicable	Agency evaluations and thematic / project-level reviews National statistics, administrative data and sector reports Stakeholders from the UNCT / UN agencies, Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and beneficiaries where feasible
Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFICIENCY				
EQ4.1. To what extent did the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund achieve its intended purpose in relation to attracting additional financing for strategic, catalytic and innovative UN interventions, value for money, and advancement of UN reform in Montenegro?	JC4.1.1. The extent to which the Fund supported strategic, catalytic and innovative interventions aligned with the CF.	Evidence of MAF-supported interventions aligned with CF priorities.	Desk-based research, with focus on annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans, budget and expenditure data, MAF portfolio and governance records, and other financing and management documents Review of MAF portfolio, governance, budget and delivery data	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and Country Results Reports
	JC4.1.2. The extent to which the Fund contributed to attracting or leveraging additional financing.	Amount and type of additional financing leveraged or catalysed.		MAF TOR, governance documentation, portfolio records and financing agreements
	JC4.1.3. The extent to which the Fund generated value for money and improved collective UN delivery.	Stakeholder perceptions and examples of value for money and catalytic effect.		Agency financial and implementation reports

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC4.1.4. The extent to which the Fund supported UN reform objectives in the country, including stronger coherence and joint action.	Evidence that the Fund supported joint UN action and reform-related improvements.	Analysis of management, advisory and coordination mechanisms and related decisions Interviews with key informants from the RCO, UN agencies, donors and implementing partners Online survey with UN programme and operations staff, where applicable	Available meeting minutes and relevant management records Stakeholders from the implementing partners, UN agencies, Government and development partners
EQ4.2. To what extent did the CF monitoring, evaluation and learning system effectively inform decision-making and enable adaptive management through data analysis, monitoring and learning?	JC4.2.1. The extent to which the CF MEL / M&E system informed decision-making and adaptive management.	Examples of monitoring, evaluation and learning informing decisions and adaptation.	Desk-based research, with focus on annual results reports, financing and management documents	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and Country Results Reports
	JC4.2.2. The extent to which monitoring and reporting arrangements were adequate to support course correction and learning.	Evidence on the adequacy of monitoring, reporting and learning arrangements.	Review of MAF portfolio, governance, budget and delivery data Analysis of management, advisory and coordination mechanisms and related decisions	MAF strategy, governance documentation, portfolio records and financing agreements Agency financial and implementation reports
	JC4.2.3. The extent to which the UNCT used results-based management to maintain a logical chain of results and strengthen evidence-based management.	Examples of course correction or adaptive management linked to MEL evidence.	Interviews with key informants from the RCO, UN agencies, donors and implementing partners Online survey with UN programme and operations staff, where applicable	Available meeting minutes and relevant management records Stakeholders from the implementing partners, UN agencies, Government and development partners

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
EQ4.3. To what extent has the CF collectively prioritized and reallocated resources according to collective priorities and changing needs and, to what extent, have inputs such as funds, expertise, time and other resources been converted into outputs and outcomes efficiently and with due care?	JC4.3.1. The extent to which resources were prioritized and, where necessary, reallocated according to collective priorities and changing needs.	Examples of resource prioritization or reallocation linked to collective priorities and changing needs.	Desk-based research, with focus on annual results reports, financing and management documents	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Joint Work Plans and Country Results Reports
	JC4.3.2. The extent to which financial, technical and human inputs were converted into outputs and outcomes efficiently and with due care.	Stakeholder views on whether funds, expertise, time and other resources were used efficiently.	Review of MAF portfolio, governance, budget and delivery data Analysis of management, advisory and coordination mechanisms and related decisions	MAF strategy, governance documentation, portfolio records and financing agreements Agency financial and implementation reports
	JC4.3.3. The extent to which resource mobilization, including joint fundraising beyond the MAF, allocation and delivery were broadly aligned with planned needs and priorities.	Evidence on alignment between planned and delivered resources, including any relevant joint resource-mobilization strategy, planning and monitoring arrangements beyond the MAF.	Interviews with key informants from the RCO, UN agencies, donors and implementing partners Online survey with UN programme and operations staff, where applicable	Available meeting minutes and relevant management records Stakeholders from the implementing partners, UN agencies, Government and development partners
Relevant evaluation criteria: SUSTAINABILITY				
EQ5.1. What are the main results achieved by the CF that are likely to last and/or can be sustained without further interventions or UN support?	JC5.1.1. The likelihood that progress under selected CF priority areas will be sustained.	Evidence that national partners have ensured or are likely to ensure financial and technical / human resources to maintain achievements.	Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports Review of policy, institutional and financing arrangements related to continuation of results	UNSDCF documents and related deliverables National strategies, budgets and institutional plans
	JC5.1.2. The extent to which national stakeholders demonstrate ownership and intent to sustain interventions.	Opinions of national stakeholders about ownership over the results achieved during CF implementation.		Agency reports and evaluations Stakeholders from Government, municipalities, CSOs,

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC5.1.3. The extent to which financial, technical and human resources are available or likely to be available to maintain achievements.	Examples of results already embedded in national systems, procedures, strategies or institutions.	Interviews with key informants and group interviews Case examples where useful	development partners and other implementing actors
	JC5.1.4. Evidence of specific risks that may facilitate or impede sustainability.	Risks and constraints identified by stakeholders.		
EQ5.2. Has the CF enabled innovative approaches embedded in institutional learning for national capacity development, including government, civil society and NGOs, so that these actors can continue achieving positive results without UN or development partner support?	JC5.2.1. The extent to which the CF enabled innovative approaches relevant to national development challenges.	Examples of innovative approaches introduced under the CF.	Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports Review of policy, institutional and financing arrangements related to continuation of results Interviews with key informants and group interviews Case examples where useful	UNSDCF documents and related deliverables National strategies, budgets and institutional plans Agency reports and evaluations Stakeholders from Government, municipalities, CSOs, development partners and other implementing actors
	JC5.2.2. The extent to which these approaches were embedded in institutional learning or practice.	Evidence of institutional learning, adoption or replication.		
	JC5.2.3. The extent to which government institutions, civil society and NGOs gained capacities to continue or replicate results.	Stakeholder assessments of capacities to continue or scale up interventions without further UN support.		
	JC5.2.4. Evidence of mechanisms for scaling up or replication being created or strengthened.	Examples of mechanisms supporting scaling, replication or wider institutional uptake.		
Relevant evaluation criteria: ORIENTATION TOWARDS IMPACT				
EQ6.1. What evidence is there of the UN’s contribution to higher-level change, including systems	JC6.1.1. The extent to which UN interventions contributed to higher-level changes beyond immediate outputs.	Examples of higher-level changes to which UN support plausibly contributed.	Desk-based research	All relevant programming and reporting documents

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
strengthening, normative alignment as a precondition to system-level change, resilience and equity gains, and what are the most plausible contribution pathways in Montenegro's accession and post-accession trajectory?	JC6.1.2. The extent to which UN support strengthened systems, institutions or policy environments.	Evidence of systems strengthening, normative alignment, resilience or equity gains.	Contribution analysis and ToC testing	National indicators, reform documents and partner assessments
	JC6.1.3. Evidence of the most plausible contribution pathways.	Stakeholder views on the most plausible contribution pathways.	Interviews with key informants and focus groups where relevant	Stakeholders from the implementing partners, UN agencies, Government, development partners and beneficiaries where feasible
	JC6.1.4. The extent to which the CF contributed to resilience and equity gains relevant to Montenegro's accession and post-accession environment.	Examples of UN contribution to broader national progress under relevant reform areas.	Case examples and beneficiary perspectives where feasible Online survey where useful	
EQ6.2. To what extent have UN activities stemming from the CF made a difference for beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their well-being and their human rights overall?	JC6.2.1. The extent to which CF-related activities generated meaningful changes for beneficiaries.	Examples and stakeholder views showing that UN activities made a difference for beneficiaries.	Desk-based research Contribution analysis and ToC testing	All relevant programming and reporting documents
	JC6.2.2. Evidence of beneficiary-level effects in well-being, access, empowerment or rights realization.	Evidence of improvements in well-being, access to services, participation, protection or human rights.	Interviews with key informants and focus groups where relevant	National indicators, reform documents and partner assessments
	JC6.2.3. Evidence that changes were more significant for some groups or regions than for others.	Examples of differential effects across groups, genders, ages, disability status or territories.	Case examples and beneficiary perspectives where feasible Online survey where useful	Stakeholders from the implementing partners, UN agencies, Government, development partners and beneficiaries where feasible

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Methods and tools for data collection	Sources of information
	JC6.2.4. The extent to which the CF contributed to reducing vulnerability, strengthening resilience and improving the evidence base on beneficiary well-being and rights.	Evidence or perceptions of increased resilience or reduced vulnerability, including UN contributions to data, monitoring or evidence generation that help show changes in beneficiary well-being and rights.		

6 THEORY OF CHANGE

Recognizing the interconnected nature of Montenegro's development challenges, the UNSDCF 2023–2027 addresses economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions in an integrated manner, while embedding the principles of sustainability, inclusion, resilience, gender equality and Leaving No One Behind across the full results chain. The overall theory of change, as presented in the approved UNSDCF, posits that if Montenegro advances inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability, human capital development, reducing vulnerability and social inclusion, and social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights, then the country will reduce multidimensional and income poverty and accelerate progress towards a sustainable, resource-efficient and innovation-based economy, with an improved state of the environment and increased respect for human rights, social justice and inclusion of the most vulnerable by 2027. The UNSDCF graphically represents this overall logic on page 14, alongside the cross-cutting themes of LNOB, GE&WE, EU accession, disaggregated data and digital transformation.

The Theory of Change is rooted in the CCA and in the consultation process that shaped the Cooperation Framework. The UNSDCF states that it was developed through the internally prepared Common Country Analysis and consultations with government, civil society, development partners, member states, and targeted consultations with women and youth. Technical consultations culminated in the Strategic Prioritisation Retreat and a high-level Strategic Prioritisation Workshop, which endorsed the strategic priorities. The earlier MAPS exercise also played an important role by demonstrating strong synergies between the 2030 Agenda and EU accession, particularly through Chapters 27, 23 and 19. This means that the ToC was not framed only as a UN programming device, but as a strategic articulation of how SDG progress, human rights obligations and accession-related reforms could reinforce one another.

The ToC is built around the understanding that Montenegro has already made substantial development progress, but that a number of structural bottlenecks continue to slow progress and reproduce exclusion. The UNSDCF identifies these bottlenecks as being typical of an upper-middle-income, EU-candidate country, and particularly linked to the cross-cutting issue of governance and institutions. Weak implementation capacity, incomplete policy execution, gaps in data use, insufficient coordination, uneven institutional performance and weaknesses in accountability affect all three strategic priorities. The Theory of Change therefore assumes that progress in Montenegro does not depend only on sector interventions, but on whether governance and institutional constraints can be addressed in ways that support the economy, environment, social sectors, and the realization of rights.

The UNSDCF identifies three broad **areas of opportunity** that anchor this logic:

- (i) promoting economic transformation and environmental sustainability;
- (ii) investing in human and social capital; and
- (iii) enhancing governance and institutional capacities.

These opportunity areas are clearly articulated in the country context and ToC narrative and together explain why the UNSDCF is organized around the three strategic priorities. The underlying premise is that vulnerability and poverty can only be reduced in a durable way if these three dimensions progress simultaneously and in a mutually reinforcing manner.

Figure 2: UNSDCF Theory of Change

6.1.1 Theory of Change analysis

The inception phase included a preliminary analysis of the soundness, relevance and evaluability of the UNSDCF Theory of Change and the broader results chain. This preliminary review focused on whether the original theoretical ToC was conceptually robust, whether it remained relevant in light of evolving country conditions, and whether it required major reconstruction for the purposes of the final evaluation. The assessment also drew on the guidance requirement that the ToC serves as the key reference framework for the evaluation and that the evaluation team should determine whether it is sufficiently articulated for selecting and analysing outcomes.

The analytical basis for the design of the ToC

The preliminary assessment is that the original theoretical ToC is **sound, relevant and strategically coherent**. First, it is clearly aligned with Montenegro's national development priorities, SDG commitments, international human rights obligations and the EU accession process. The UNSDCF explicitly links its priorities to the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the 2030 Agenda, EU accession requirements and a wide set of national reform strategies. This gives the ToC a strong policy anchor and ensures that it is not detached from the country's actual reform trajectory.

Second, the ToC is strong because it is based on an explicit diagnosis of **root causes**, not just sector outputs. The central theory is that Montenegro's remaining gaps and vulnerabilities are sustained by weak institutional performance, uneven governance quality, exclusion of vulnerable groups, a narrow and environmentally unsustainable growth pattern, and insufficiently inclusive and resilient social systems. The ToC therefore does not treat economic transformation, social inclusion, service quality, environmental sustainability and governance as separate agendas. Rather, it presents them as interdependent pathways that must advance together if Montenegro is to reduce multidimensional poverty, accelerate SDG progress and strengthen readiness for EU membership.

Third, the ToC is strong because it identifies **clear strategic pathways** under each priority area. Under **Strategic Priority 1**, the theory focuses on economic transformation, greener and more inclusive growth, labour-market reform, climate adaptation and mitigation, sustainable natural resource management and disaster risk reduction. Under **Strategic Priority 2**, the framework articulates two complementary pathways: one around social and child protection, labour activation, school-to-work transition, migration and vulnerability reduction; and another around health, education and early childhood development as drivers of stronger human capital. Under **Strategic Priority 3**, the framework links rule of law, public administration reform, civic participation, gender equality, social cohesion and the fight against violence, hate speech, corruption and organized crime to stronger accountability and greater realization of rights. These pathways are elaborated both in the visual ToC and in the narrative explanations for Outcomes 1–4.

Fourth, the ToC is strengthened by a set of **cross-cutting acceleration strategies**. The UNSDCF identifies synergy with EU accession, production and use of quality disaggregated data, digital transformation and innovation, SDG financing, partnerships with IFIs and the private sector, youth participation, and a prevention approach as key accelerators. This is important because it clarifies not only what the UN wants to contribute to, but how those contributions are expected to gain traction in practice. These strategies also increase the realism of the ToC by acknowledging that outcome-level progress depends on financing, information, partnerships and systemic coordination, not only on programme delivery.

Fifth, the ToC embeds a clear **UN comparative advantage** logic. The UNSDCF states that the UN's main comparative advantages in Montenegro lie in its rights-based mandate, neutrality, advocacy role, convening power, access to international and regional expertise, ability to create linkages across sectors, and capacity to support sensitive reforms such as gender equality, human rights and LNOB. The ToC is therefore not simply about doing more activities; it is about using the UN's distinctive role to enable reforms, partnerships, learning and institutional change in areas where this added value matters.

That said, the ToC is also **highly ambitious and interconnected**, and this has implications for evaluability. Because the strategic priorities are mutually reinforcing and because many outcomes depend on policy and institutional changes influenced by multiple actors, the causal pathways between UN-supported outputs and broader national outcomes are not always sufficiently explicit for evaluative purposes. The outcome-level results framework is useful as a strategic direction-setting instrument, but for the final evaluation it will be necessary to reconstruct more clearly the **output-to-outcome contribution pathways** and test the

assumptions behind them. In that sense, the ToC is strategically sound, but it still requires analytical unpacking during the evaluation.

Real-time relevance and responsiveness to emerging issues

The preliminary conclusion is that the original ToC was flexible enough to accommodate emerging issues without requiring a fundamental redesign. The UNSDCF was formulated in the aftermath of the COVID-19 shock and explicitly notes that short-term policies would be guided by the principles of “building back better” and by a proactive response to regional and global developments. The CCA and UNSDCF narrative already recognized that Montenegro faced macroeconomic vulnerability, climate risk, demographic challenges, social exclusion, and institutional bottlenecks, and that future implementation would take place in a volatile environment.

The approved UNSDCF also includes an explicit set of assumptions and risks. These include continued political commitment to EU accession and human rights implementation, manageable macroeconomic and fiscal conditions, availability and use of disaggregated data, political stability and continuity of the development vision, absence of severe regional spillovers, no major escalation of COVID-19 or other health crises, and continued commitment to low-carbon development. The risk section further highlights political and administrative transition, social cohesion risks, infrastructure and service-access risks, displacement and migration pressures, public health crises, environmental and climate risks, and economic and financial instability. Because these risks were already identified ex ante, the ToC appears to have been designed with a substantial degree of strategic flexibility.

At the same time, the evaluation will still need to examine whether implementation practice remained faithful to the theory and whether adaptive management operated mainly at activity level or also altered the practical logic of contribution under some outcomes. In Montenegro’s case, important contextual developments after UNSDCF adoption included continued fiscal and policy reforms, growing attention to climate and disaster-risk frameworks, expansion of digitalization in social sectors and public administration, deepening accession-linked reform pressures, and persistent territorial and demographic disparities. These developments do not appear to invalidate the theoretical ToC, but they may have altered the relative importance of some pathways or the feasibility of some assumptions.

For that reason, the evaluation does not need to replace the original ToC with a new theory, **but it does need to produce an evaluative reconstruction of how the framework was actually implemented.** This means clarifying which output pathways were most active, which assumptions held or did not hold, and where external factors, coordination dynamics, funding constraints or institutional bottlenecks changed the practical route from outputs to outcomes. In particular, the evaluation will need to pay close attention to the four outcome pathways, the role of cross-cutting strategies, and the extent to which governance and institutional reform functioned in practice as the intended cross-cutting enabler of change.

Overall preliminary conclusion on the ToC

On the basis of the preliminary documentary review, the Evaluation Team concludes that the original UNSDCF Theory of Change remains a valid strategic framework for the final evaluation. It is aligned with national priorities, SDG commitments, human rights obligations and the EU accession trajectory; it identifies the key structural bottlenecks and enabling conditions; and it already incorporates a degree of adaptability through its cross-cutting strategies, assumptions and risks. At the same time, because the ToC is highly interconnected and ambitious, the evaluation will need to clarify and test the more specific contribution pathways from UN-supported outputs to outcome-level changes, rather than rely only on the broad strategic logic. In that sense, the ToC does not require wholesale reconstruction, but it does require evaluative refinement so that the final report can assess what held, what changed, what enabled progress, and where the theory proved more ambitious than implementation conditions allowed.

7 EVALUATION WORK PLAN AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

In line with the Terms of Reference and the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines, the section below translates the agreed Montenegro evaluation architecture into an operational work plan, a deliverables schedule, and a clear governance and reporting structure. The sequencing follows the five phases set out in the ToR—Preparation, Design/Inception, Fieldwork, Reporting/Validation, and Use/Management Response—and strengthens them with a more explicit visual calendar, milestone logic, and quality-assurance checkpoints. The management arrangements are designed to balance three requirements: evaluator independence, rigorous quality assurance, and practical utility of findings for the next programming cycle.

7.1 OVERALL WORK PLAN

The work plan is structured so that governance, recruitment and documentary preparation are completed before methodological design begins; the inception products are cleared before fieldwork starts; and reporting, validation and management response are staged in a way that allows findings to feed into the next CCA / Cooperation Framework design process. The calendar below therefore preserves the ToR milestones, while making explicit the critical dependencies between tasks, deliverables and review points.

Table 3: Work plan

TASK / DELIVERABLE	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Governance set-up, roadmap and recruitment									
Desk review and inception consultations									
Theory of Change analysis and EDM development									
Drafting, QA and approval of the Inception Report									
Fieldwork: KIIs, FGDs, site visits and survey									
Data coding, triangulation and synthesis									
Preliminary findings presentation									
Draft Evaluation Report									
Validation workshop and feedback integration									
Final Evaluation Report									
Management Response and dissemination									

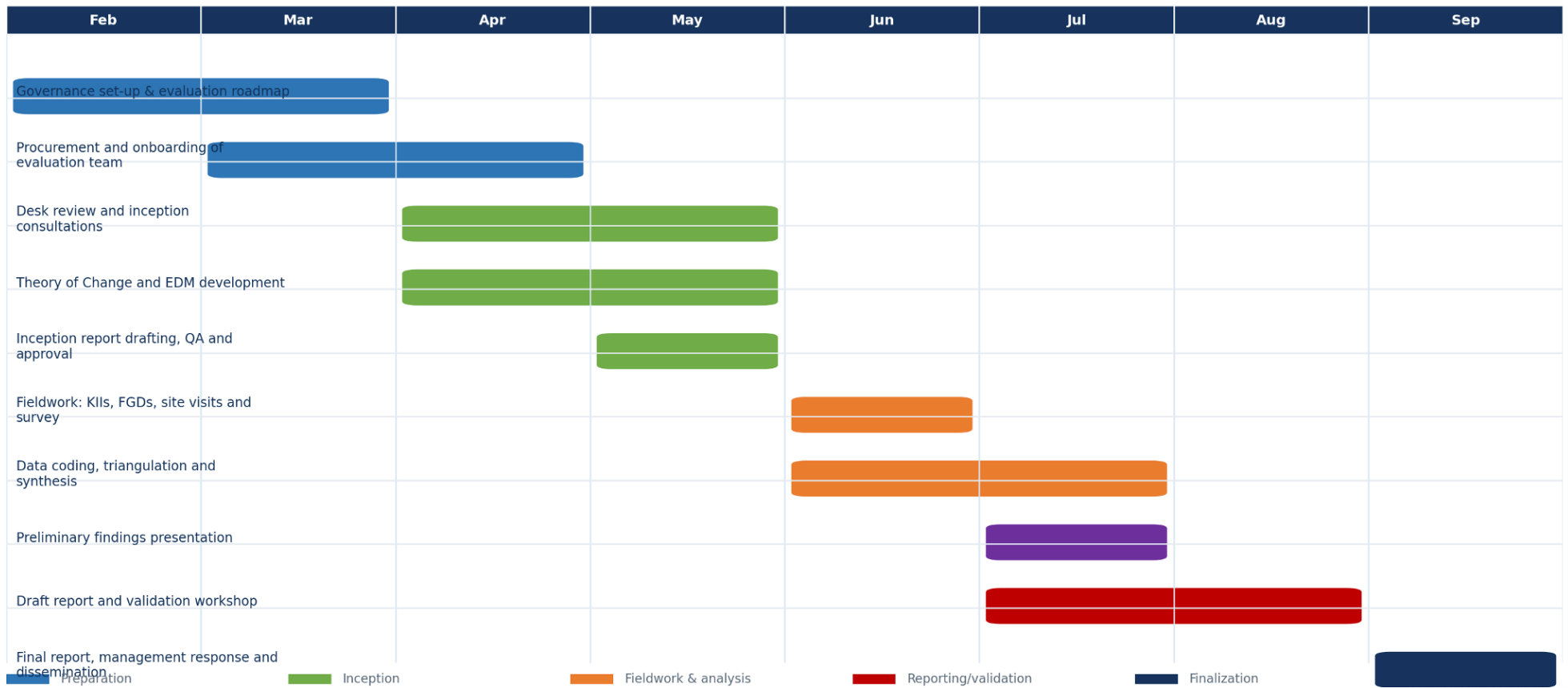
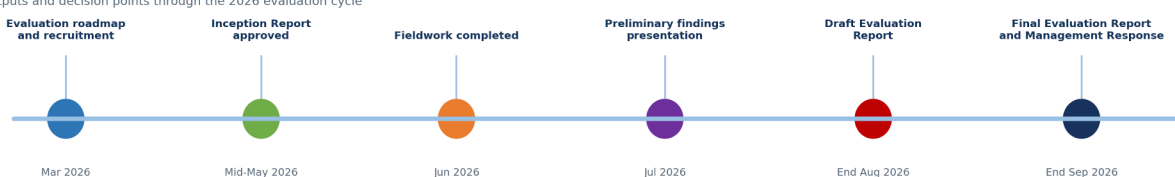
Figure 3: Overall Evaluation Work Plan

Table 4: Key Deliverables and Indicative Deadlines

NO.	DELIVERABLE	DATE
1.	Evaluation roadmap and recruitment completed	31 March 2026
2.	Approved Inception Report	End-May 2026
3.	Fieldwork and primary data collection completed	June 2026
4.	Preliminary Findings Presentation	July 2026
5.	Draft Evaluation Report	End August 2026
6.	Final Evaluation Report	End September 2026
7.	Management Response finalized and disseminated	End September/October 2026

Figure 4: Key Deliverables and Milestones

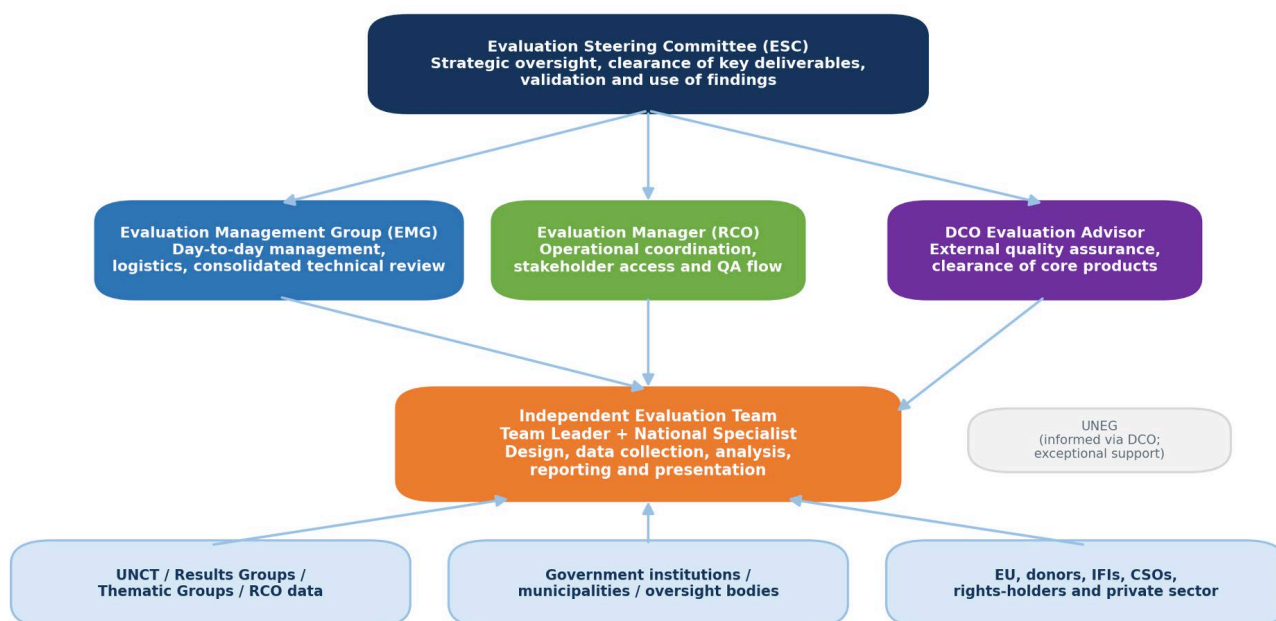
Critical outputs and decision points through the 2026 evaluation cycle



7.2 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The evaluation will be managed through a three-tier governance structure that combines strategic oversight, day-to-day technical management and fully independent implementation. This arrangement is designed to safeguard evaluator independence while ensuring timely access to evidence, structured quality assurance, and practical use of findings by the Government of Montenegro, the UNCT and the wider stakeholder group. It follows the governance architecture described in the ToR and the expectations in the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines that work plans should clarify reporting lines, division of labour, quality assurance arrangements and the process for obtaining and incorporating stakeholder comments on draft deliverables.

Figure 5: Evaluation Governance and Management Structure



Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC). The ESC is the highest oversight body for the evaluation. It provides strategic direction, endorses the evaluation process and reviews / clears the main deliverables. In line with the ToR, the existing UNSDCF Steering Committee assumes this role. It is co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN Resident Coordinator and includes participating ministries and Heads of UN Agencies, with the possibility of inviting selected development partners, private sector or civil society representatives where relevant. The ESC also ensures that evaluation findings are linked to national planning processes and to the design of the next Cooperation Framework or equivalent programming arrangement.

For clarity, the Montenegro evaluation architecture does not envisage a separate Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) as an additional formal governance layer. Functions that might elsewhere be associated with an ERG are covered here through the ESC for strategic oversight and validation, and through the EMG for day-to-day technical consolidation and feedback.

Evaluation Management Group (EMG) and Evaluation Manager. The EMG is responsible for the routine management of the evaluation and serves as the main interface between the independent Evaluation Team and the UNCT system. In Montenegro, the existing MEL Group performs this role and is expanded to include Results Group co-chairs to ensure programmatic coverage across the three strategic priorities. The Evaluation Manager, housed in the RCO, coordinates day-to-day process

management, procurement support, stakeholder access, consolidated comments, and the internal quality assurance flow before products move to ESC review and DCO quality clearance.

Independent Evaluation Team. The Evaluation Team is composed of an international Team Leader and a national Evaluation Specialist, as foreseen in the ToR. The Team works in full independence from the RCO, the UNCT and implementing entities. It is responsible for detailed evaluation design, data collection, evidence synthesis, drafting of the inception, draft and final reports, and presentation of preliminary and final findings. The Team reports operationally to the EMG / Evaluation Manager for process purposes, while preserving full analytical independence over methods, judgments, findings and recommendations.

DCO Evaluation Advisor and UNEG. The DCO Evaluation Advisor provides external quality assurance across all key products and reviews the TOR, inception report, draft and final report, in line with the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines and EQAS requirements. UNEG is informed through DCO and may be engaged in exceptional circumstances. This arrangement introduces an external assurance layer that strengthens credibility and protects the integrity of the process.

Division of labour and reporting lines. The Team Leader is responsible for the conceptual leadership of the exercise, detailed methodology, work planning, oversight of evidence synthesis, overall report drafting and presentation of results. The national specialist supports contextual analysis, stakeholder outreach, fieldwork, interviews, evidence consolidation and drafting of assigned sections. The Evaluation Manager coordinates process management and consolidates institutional feedback, but does not direct the content of findings. The EMG provides technical support and quality review; the ESC provides strategic endorsement and validation; and DCO provides external quality assurance and clearance.

Quality assurance. Quality assurance is embedded throughout the process. It includes routine process checks by the Evaluation Manager and EMG, formal review of the inception, draft and final reports, external quality review by DCO, validation of preliminary findings with UNCT and national counterparts, and a final management response prepared in parallel with report endorsement. This sequencing ensures that comments are incorporated transparently while preserving evaluator independence.

Table 5: Key Actors and Principal Responsibilities

ACTOR	PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES
ESC	Strategic oversight, endorsement of process, review/clearance of key deliverables, validation and use of findings
EMG	Routine technical support, consolidated comments, logistics, scheduling, alignment with Results Groups and thematic groups
Evaluation Manager	Day-to-day coordination, procurement and administration support, stakeholder access, QA flow, liaison with DCO
Evaluation Team	Independent design, data collection, analysis, reporting, presentations and recommendations
DCO Evaluation Advisor	External quality assurance and clearance of core products; liaison with UNEG as needed
UNEG	Informed through DCO; exceptional technical engagement if required

8

EVALUABILITY, RISKS AND LIMITATIONS**8.1 EVALUABILITY**

The Evaluation Team undertook a preliminary evaluability assessment during the inception phase, drawing on the UNEG and UNSDCF guidance and the macro-requirements commonly used for Cooperation Framework evaluations. Overall, the assessment indicates that the Montenegro UNSDCF is sufficiently evaluable to support a credible and useful final evaluation. The framework has been implemented for more than 24 months, the evaluation is taking place in the penultimate year of the cycle, and the Terms of Reference, scope and intended use of the exercise are clearly defined. This provides an adequate basis for a theory-based final evaluation focused on contribution, performance, learning and accountability.

Evaluability is strengthened, first, by the existence of a clear strategic architecture. The UNSDCF includes an explicit theory of change, an articulated results framework, defined strategic priorities, outcome and output statements, and a set of assumptions, risks and cross-cutting strategies. The framework is firmly anchored in the Common Country Analysis, national development and reform priorities, the SDGs, international human rights obligations and the EU accession agenda. This gives the evaluation a sufficiently strong conceptual foundation against which relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and orientation towards impact can be assessed.

Second, the evaluability of the UNSDCF is supported by the breadth of the available evidence base. The Terms of Reference identify annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans, CCA updates, agency-level evaluations, national statistics, including census and MICS data, and thematic assessments as key sources of evidence. The Cooperation Framework itself also provides outcome and output indicators, assumptions and partner mappings, while the methodology foresees systematic use of government and ministry reports, agency and joint evaluations, national oversight reports and EU assessments. Taken together, these sources provide a sufficiently broad foundation for contribution analysis and triangulation across strategic priorities and stakeholder groups.

Third, the institutional and managerial conditions for evaluability are broadly in place. The Terms of Reference establish a clear governance structure for the evaluation, including the Evaluation Steering Committee, Evaluation Management Group, Evaluation Manager, independent Evaluation Team and DCO quality assurance role. The UNSDCF implementation architecture also includes Results Groups, thematic groups, MEL-related structures and annual review processes, all of which support access to evidence, validation of findings and the practical use of results. From an evaluability perspective, these arrangements increase the likelihood that the evaluation will be able to access information, engage relevant stakeholders and produce findings that can realistically feed into the next programming cycle.

At the same time, evaluability is not uniform across all parts of the framework. A first limitation concerns the level at which some results are framed and measured. A number of outcome indicators are high-level national indicators or depend on the influence of multiple actors and wider contextual factors. They are therefore useful for assessing strategic direction and progress, but less suited on their own for isolating the specific contribution of the UN system. This is a common feature of Cooperation Framework evaluations and reinforces the need for a contribution-oriented approach supported by reconstruction of output-to-outcome pathways and systematic triangulation.

A second limitation concerns the quality and disaggregation of data, especially from an HRBA and LNOB perspective. The Terms of Reference require disaggregation by sex, age, disability status, migration status, ethnicity, geography and other relevant equity markers to the extent possible. In practice, however, disaggregation is likely to remain uneven across indicators and sectors, particularly for smaller, stigmatized or less systematically measured groups. This does not invalidate the evaluation, but it means that quantitative analysis will need to be complemented with purposive qualitative evidence to assess differential results, exclusion patterns and the extent to which the UNCT reached those furthest behind.

A third evaluability challenge relates to the assessment of institutional, behavioural and legislative change, which is central to the Montenegro Terms of Reference. These changes are often only partially captured by

the formal results framework and are better evidenced through a combination of documentary review, stakeholder testimony, case examples and process evidence. For this reason, the evaluation will not rely only on the status of indicators, but will also examine policy uptake, institutionalization, use in practice, quality of implementation and the durability of supported reforms.

A fourth challenge concerns the evaluation of UN coherence, coordination and financing for development, including the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund. These dimensions are evaluable, but require evidence that goes beyond standard programme reporting. Their assessment depends on access to governance documents, financial and management records, meeting minutes, stakeholder views and comparative perceptions of added value vis-à-vis bilateral and agency-specific approaches. The Terms of Reference and methodology provide for such evidence, but this dimension will require deliberate attention during data collection.

Overall, the Evaluation Team considers the Montenegro UNSDCF to be sufficiently evaluable, but with clear methodological caveats. The evaluation is strongest where results chains, documentary evidence and stakeholder access are more robust. It is more challenging where results depend on diffuse contribution pathways, uneven data disaggregation, system-level change or evolving institutional arrangements. These limitations are manageable, provided the evaluation continues to use a theory-based approach, applies purposive sampling with triple representativeness, draws systematically on existing evaluative evidence, and uses the Evaluation Design Matrix as the core tool for linking questions, judgement criteria, indicators, methods and sources.

8.2 RISKS AND LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Table 6: Risks and limitations and mitigation measures overview

#	RISK / LIMITATION	MITIGATION MEASURE
1	Breadth of the intervention portfolio vs. finite resources. The evaluation covers all three Strategic Priorities, multiple resident and non-resident entities, cross-cutting commitments, pooled financing and a changing national context. Reliance on a purposive sample creates a risk that the sample may not fully capture the diversity of implementation experiences or may over-represent better-documented or more visible interventions.	Sampling is designed around triple representativeness - programmatic, geographic and stakeholder - in order to reduce bias from over-reliance on a single set of actors, sectors or locations.
2	Timely availability of data and evidence. Some data may not yet be available for the full implementation period, may be published with delay, or may not exist at the disaggregation level required for a robust LNOB analysis - particularly for some vulnerable groups, territorial comparisons and outcome-level changes that depend on official statistics or periodic surveys.	Systematic disaggregation analysis combined with targeted qualitative enquiry wherever quantitative disaggregation is limited, and increased reliance on administrative data, qualitative evidence and triangulation across sources to fill data gaps.
3	Accessibility and availability of key informants, and social desirability bias. High-level interlocutors may face scheduling constraints; some rights-holder groups and local stakeholders may be harder to reach because of time, distance, safeguarding requirements or the need for mediated access. Respondents	Methodological triangulation - systematically combining documentary review, secondary data, interviews, group discussions, focus groups, field visits and online surveys - so that findings rest on more than one source or method wherever possible.

	may also be cautious about sharing critical views on politically sensitive issues.	
4	Positive review bias. Stakeholders closely involved in the design, implementation or oversight of the UNSDCF may be more inclined to emphasize achievements than bottlenecks, or may interpret progress through the lens of institutional ownership rather than independent assessment.	Drawing on a wide range of independent and pre-existing evidence, including agency evaluations, national oversight reports, EU assessments and other third-party materials, to reduce overdependence on internally generated UN evidence.
5	Assessment of contribution in a multi-actor environment. Many of the changes targeted by the UNSDCF - accession reforms, public administration, social sector reform, green transition, human rights - are shaped by multiple national and international actors operating simultaneously, so the evaluation will often be able to assess plausible contribution rather than direct attribution.	Transparency in the report about the strength and limits of the available evidence, particularly where conclusions rely on plausible contribution rather than direct measurement of change, making the evaluability limitations explicit and reflecting them in the level of confidence attached to specific evaluative claims.
6	Ethical and practical constraints around engaging directly with vulnerable or at-risk groups (e.g., women affected by GBV, children, persons at risk of stigma or reprisal, specific migrant or stateless groups), where direct focus groups would not be the most ethically appropriate consultation modality.	Application of human rights-based, gender-responsive and child-rights-based consultation modalities, including mediated consultation through service providers, CSOs or representative organizations where direct engagement would raise concerns about safety, voluntariness or dignity. Where any evidence activity directly involving children or adolescents becomes necessary, informed consent and assent procedures and additional safeguarding measures will apply.

9 ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

UNSDCF core and coordination documents

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. Interagency groups functioning: Update (Internal working document).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. Outcome indicators (Data set).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UN Cooperation Framework coordination and management arrangements.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UNCT Montenegro disability inclusion employment statement.
- United Nations & Government of Montenegro. (2022). United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UNSDCF governance and management arrangements (Internal working document).

Joint programme evaluation reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026, January). Final evaluation report: EmpowHER joint programme.
- United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2024, August). Final evaluation report: UNPRPD joint programme - Montenegro.

Agency programme documents

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2023). Country Programming Framework for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- International Labour Organization. (2023). Decent Work Country Programme for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2022). Country Programme Document for Montenegro (2023–2027).
- United Nations Children’s Fund. (2022). UNICEF Country Programme Document for Montenegro 2023–2027.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). Strategic partnership framework.

Business Operations Strategy

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026). Business Operations Strategy review 2026.

Common Country Analysis (CCA) and SDG policy briefs

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2021). Common Country Analysis: Montenegro.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2022). Common Country Analysis: 2022 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). Common Country Analysis: 2023 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). Common Country Analysis: 2024 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). Common Country Analysis: 2025 update.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. SDG policy brief 1: SDG financing.

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. SDG policy brief 2: Is Montenegro's North at risk of being left behind?
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. SDG policy brief 3: Poverty and child poverty in Montenegro.

European Union progress reports

- European Commission. (2023). Montenegro 2023 report.
- European Commission. (2024). Montenegro 2024 report.
- European Commission. (2025). Montenegro 2025 report.

Flagship analyses and thematic studies (preliminary, non-exhaustive list)²¹

- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Fourth environmental performance review of Montenegro.
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. (2024). Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Montenegro. United Nations.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2023). Digital development country profile: Montenegro.
- DigitAll Montenegro. Assessment of e-government and e-services in local self-government units in Montenegro.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2026). EU accession and SDGs convergence analysis.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Montenegro.
- International Labour Organisation. Gender pay gap analysis.
- UN Women. Gender-responsive budgeting in Montenegro.
- Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. (2024). GREVIO baseline evaluation report on Montenegro. Council of Europe.
- Committee on Enforced Disappearances. (2025). Review of Montenegro (Working document). United Nations.
- Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers. (2024). Country visit report: Montenegro. United Nations Human Rights Council.
- Human Rights Council. (2023). Summary of the Universal Periodic Review: Montenegro. United Nations.
- United Nations Human Rights Committee. (2025, May 7). *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Montenegro (CCPR/C/MNE/CO/2)*. United Nations.
- *Montenegro: Media Freedom Rapid Response Mission Report*. (2024). SafeJournalists Network and partners. Available at: <https://srfreedex.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/MNE-1-2024.pdf>
- *United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures Communication AL MNE 1/2024 (gId=30354)*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2024. <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30354>
- *United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures Communication AL MNE 2/2024 (gId=30330)*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2024. <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30330>
- United Nations Human Rights Committee. (2025, May 7). *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Montenegro (CCPR/C/MNE/CO/2)*. United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025). Gender equality profile: Montenegro.
- United Nations Office for Project Services. Analysis of digital flows in Montenegro.

²¹ For any missing sectoral flagship analysis, it can be added to the shared folder and in parallel listed in this section

Joint Country Steering Committee

- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2022). JCSC 2022 minutes (Internal meeting minutes).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2024). JCSC 2024 minutes (Internal meeting minutes).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (n.d.). JCSC members (Internal working document).
- Joint Country Steering Committee. (2025). JCSC 2025 minutes (Internal working document).

Joint Work Plans

- Joint Work Plan 2023/2024
- Joint Work Plan 2025
- Joint Work Plan 2026/2027

Montenegro Acceleration Fund

- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. (2025). 2025 MAF report.
- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. (2024). MAF progress report 2024.
- Montenegro Acceleration Fund. MAF terms of reference.

Results Groups

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025, February). Članovi i ko-sazivači rezultatskih grupa (Members and co-conveners of Results Groups, internal document in Montenegrin).

UN SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2023.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2024.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). Montenegro UN-SWAP report 2025.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. UNCT Montenegro UN-SWAP report with action plan (final).

Annual Results Reports

- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2023). UN country results report 2023 (English web edition).
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2024). UN Montenegro annual results report 2024.
- United Nations Country Team Montenegro. (2025). UN Montenegro annual results report 2025.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2023). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2023.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2024). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2024.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2025.
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2023). UNICEF annual report - Montenegro 2023.
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2024). UNICEF Montenegro annual report 2024 (final, English).
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2025). UNICEF Montenegro annual report summary 2025.

Other

UNICEF Executive Board. (2023). *Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF* (E/ICEF/2023/27). United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

ANNEX 2. COMPREHENSIVE STAKEHOLDER MAP

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Interview w (F2F)	Group interview ws/ FGDs (F2F)	Individua l interview ws (remote)	Group interview ws/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
UN AGENCIES										
1	Office of the UN Resident Coordinator		Resident Coordinator / Head of RCO / Evaluation Manager	Overall	1,2,3	√				
2	UNDP		Resident Representative / senior programme lead	UNDP	1,2,3	√				
3	UNICEF		Representative / senior programme lead	UNICEF	2,3	√				
4	IOM		Chief of Mission / senior programme lead	IOM	2,3	√				
5	WHO		Representative / technical lead	WHO	2	√				
6	UNHCR		Representative / protection lead	UNHCR	2,3	√				
7	ILO		National Coordinator / programme lead	UNICEF	1,2	√				
8	OHCHR		Human rights adviser	OHCHR	3			√		
9	UNESCO		Head / programme specialist	UNESCO	2,3	√				
10	FAO		Representative / programme lead	FAO	1,2	√				
11	UNOPS		Head of Office / programme lead	UNOPS	1,2,3	√				
12	UNECE		Programme officer / focal point	UNECE	1,3			√		
13	UN Women		Head of Office / programme lead	UN Women	2,3	√				
14	UNODC		Head of Office / Officer in Charge	UNODC	3	√				
15	UNDRR		Programme focal point	UNDRR	1			√		
16	UNEP		Programme / project focal point	UNEP	1			√		
17	UNIDO		Programme focal point	UNIDO	1			√		
18	IFAD		Programme focal point	IFAD	1			√		
19	ITU		Programme specialist / focal point	FAO	1,3			√		

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Intervie w (F2F)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (F2F)	Individua l intervie ws (remote)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
20	UNCTAD		Programme focal point	UNCTAD	1			√		
UN COORDINATION STRUCTURES										
21	UNCT (all 19 agencies)		Heads of Agencies / UNCT members	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
22	UNCT MEL Group		MEL Group representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
23	Results Groups		Results Group co-chairs / representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
24	Gender Theme Group		Theme Group chair/representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
25	Human Rights and LNOB group		Theme group chair/representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
26	Communications Group		Communications Group representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
27	OMT		Operations Management Team representatives	Overall	1,2,3				√	√
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY										
28	EU Delegation		Head of Cooperation / programme lead	EU / MAF	1,2,3	√				
29	Swiss Confederation		Head of Cooperation / programme manager	MAF contributor	1,2,3			√		
30	Republic of Austria		Programme / development cooperation lead	MAF contributor	1,2,3			√		
31	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg		Programme / development cooperation lead	MAF contributor	1,2,3			√		
32	Ireland		Programme / development cooperation lead	MAF contributor	1,2,3			√		
33	United Kingdom		Programme / political / rule of law lead	Bilateral donor	3			√		
34	Government of Slovenia		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral donor	1,2,3			√		
35	Republic of Korea		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral donor	1,2,3			√		

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Intervie w (F2F)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (F2F)	Individua l intervie ws (remote)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
36	Germany (GIZ/KfW)		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral/IFI	1,2,3			✓		
37	Sweden, Norway, Denmark		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral donors	2,3			✓		
38	United States of America		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral donor	1,2,3			✓		
39	Slovakia		Programme / development cooperation lead	Bilateral donor	1,2,3			✓		
40	World Bank		Country office / sector lead	IFI	1,3	✓				
41	EBRD		Country office / sector lead	IFI	1	✓				
42	European Investment Bank (EIB)		Country office / sector lead	IFI	2			✓		
43	KfW (German Development Bank)		Programme / country office lead	IFI	1,2,3			✓		
44	AFD (French Agency for Development)		Programme / country office lead	IFI	1,2,3			✓		
45	OSCE Mission to Montenegro		Programme / rule of law lead	External partner	3	✓				
46	Council of Europe		Programme / human rights lead	External partner	3	✓				
47	OECD		Policy / programme expert	External partner	1,2,3			✓		
48	Regional organizations (Western Balkans)		Regional programme representative	Regional actors	1,3			✓		
MAF-SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDERS										
49	MAF Joint Steering Committee		Co-chairs / governance members	MAF	1,2,3		✓		✓	
50	MAF Advisory Board		Board members / independent advisers	MAF	1,2,3		✓		✓	
51	MPTF Office		Administrative agent / fund management focal point	MAF	1,2,3			✓		

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Intervie w (F2F)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (F2F)	Individua l intervie ws (remote)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
5 2	9 joint programme implementing agencies		Agency representatives / joint programme leads	UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, ILO, UNESCO, UNOPS, ITU, UN Women, OHCHR, UNECE	1,2,3	√			√	
GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS										
5 3	Ministry of Foreign Affairs		State Secretary / Directorate Director	IOM, UNDP, UN Women	3	√				
5 4	Ministry of European Affairs		State Secretary / Director General	UNDP, UNDP, UN Women, UNECE, UNICEF	1,2,3	√				
5 5	Ministry of Finance		Director General / budget lead	UNDP, UNDP, UN Women	1,3	√				
5 6	Ministry of Economic Development		Director General / sector lead	UNDP, ITU, UNECE	1	√				
5 7	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue		Minister / Director General / labour lead	ILO, IOM, UNDP, UN Women	1,2	√				
5 8	Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography		State Secretary / Director General / Department Head	UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF	2	√				
5 9	Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation		State Secretary / Department Head / sector lead	UN Women, UNECE, UNICEF, UNODC, UNDP	2	√				
6 0	Ministry of Health		Director General / Department Head / Advisor	UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC	2	√				
6 1	Ministry of Interior		Director General / Directorate Head / Department Head	IOM, UNECE, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP	2,3	√				
6 2	Ministry of Justice		State Secretary / Director General / Directorate Head	OHCHR, UN Women, UNDP, UNECE	3	√				
6 3	Ministry of Human and Minority Rights		Director General / Department Head / Office Lead	UN Women, UNDP, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF	3	√				
6 4	Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development		Director General / Department Head	UNECE, UNDP	1	√				

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Interview w (F2F)	Group interviews/ FGDs (F2F)	Individual interviews (remote)	Group interviews/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
65	Ministry of Energy and Mining		Council / department lead	UNDP, UNECE	1	√				
66	Ministry of Public Administration		Director General / digital transformation lead	UNDP, UN Women, UNOPS	3	√				
67	Office for Sustainable Development		Office head / SDG coordination lead	UNECE, UNDP	1,2,3	√				
68	MONSTAT		Deputy Director / SDG statistics lead	UN Women, UNDP, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF	1,2,3	√				
69	Human Resource Management Authority		Director / reform lead	UNDP, UN Women	3	√				
70	Institute for Public Health		Director / department head	UNECE, UNICEF	2	√				
71	Employment Agency of Montenegro		Director / programme lead	UNDP	1,2	√				
72	Ombudsperson		Ombudsperson / rights protection representative	OHCHR, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP	3	√				
73	Council on the Rights of the Child		Council / secretariat representative	UNICEF	2,3		√			
74	Independent Monitoring Mechanism on Rights of Persons with Disabilities		Monitoring Mechanism / OPD representatives	UNICEF, UNDP	3		√			
75	Supreme Court of Montenegro		Judicial leadership / focal point	UNICEF	3	√				
76	Supreme State Prosecutor's Office		Senior prosecutor / department lead	OHCHR	3	√				
77	Special Prosecutor's Office		Senior prosecutor / department lead	UNODC	3	√				
78	Agency for Prevention of Corruption		Director / integrity lead	UNODC, UNDP	3	√				
79	Police Directorate / Border Police		Directorate / border management lead	UN Women, UNHCR	2,3	√				
80	Central Bank of Montenegro		Sector lead / expert	UNDP	1	√				

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Interview w (F2F)	Group interviews/ FGDs (F2F)	Individual interviews (remote)	Group interviews/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
81	Revenue and Customs Administration		Director / customs lead	UNODC	1,3	√				
82	Institute for Unified Disability Assessment		Director / assessment lead	UNICEF, UNDP	2,3	√				
83	Institute for Social and Child Protection		Director / sector lead	UNDP, UNICEF	2	√				
84	National Ozone Unit		Coordinator / technical focal point	UNDP	1	√				
85	Parliament		Committee member / parliamentary service lead	FAO, OHCHR, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF	1,2,3	√				
LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS / COMMUNITIES										
86	Podgorica		Mayor / local administration / service providers	IOM, UNDP	1,2,3	√	√			
87	Berane		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNICEF, UNDP	1,2,3	√	√			
88	Bijelo Polje		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNDP, UN Women	1,2,3	√	√			
89	Pljevlja		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS, UNDP	1,2,3	√	√			
90	Ulcinj		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS, UNDP	1,2,3	√	√			
91	Bar		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNDP, UN Women	1,2,3	√	√			
92	Mojkovac		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS	2,3	√	√			
93	Petnjica		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS	1	√	√			
94	Tuzi		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS, UNDP	1	√	√			
95	Zeta		Mayor / local administration / service providers	UNOPS, UNDP	1	√	√			
96	All 25 municipalities		Mayors / local administration representatives	UNICEF, UNDP	1,2,3	√	√			
NON-GOVERNMENTAL / CIVIL SOCIETY										

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Interview w (F2F)	Group interviews/ FGDs (F2F)	Individual interviews (remote)	Group interviews/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
97	NGO Civic Alliance		Executive Director / programme lead	OHCHR, UNHCR, UNDP	3	√				
98	NGO Juventas		Executive Director / programme lead	UNICEF, UNDP	2,3	√				
99	NGO Montenegrin Association Against AIDS (CAZAS)		Executive Director / programme lead	UNODC, UNDP	2	√				
100	NGO Montenegrin Foundation for HIV and Viral Hepatitis		Executive Director / programme lead	WHO, UNDP	2	√				
101	NGO Parents Association of Montenegro		Executive Director / programme lead	OHCHR, UNICEF	2,3	√				
	NGO Centre for Child Rights and		Executive Director / programme lead	UNICEF						
	NGO Junior Achievement.		Executive Director / programme lead	UNICEF						
102	NGO Red Cross Montenegro		Secretary General / programme lead	UNHCR, UNICEF	2,3	√				
103	NGO Scout Association of Montenegro		Programme lead / coordinator	UNICEF	2,3	√				
104	NGO Ukrainian Association Dobro Djelo		Chairperson / programme lead	IOM, UNICEF	2,3	√				
105	NGO Association for Democratic Prosperity ZID		Executive Director / programme lead	UNDP, UNICEF	3	√				
106	NGO Association of Youth with Disabilities Montenegro		Executive Director / rights advocate	OHCHR, UNICEF	2,3	√				
107	NGO Young Reporters MNE		Programme lead / coordinator	UNICEF	3	√				

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Interview w (F2F)	Group interviews/ FGDs (F2F)	Individual interviews (remote)	Group interviews/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
108	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (11 OPDs)		OPD representatives / chairs	UNDP, UNICEF	2,3		√			
109	Women's Parliamentary Club		Parliamentary representatives	FAO, OHCHR, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF	3	√				
110	Women's Leadership Network		Network representatives	UNDP	3		√			
111	Women in Diplomacy Network		Network representatives	UNDP	3	√				
112	Trade unions (CTUM / UFTUM)		Union leadership / social dialogue representatives	ILO	1,2		√			
113	Media self-regulatory bodies		Media / self-regulatory representatives	UNDP	3		√			
114	International Women's Club / HEMIIAS Foundation		Foundation / philanthropic representatives	UNICEF	2	√				
115	TUI Care Foundation		Programme representatives	UNICEF	1,2	√				
116	Network for Rural Development of Montenegro		Network representatives	FAO	1,2	√				
PRIVATE SECTOR										
117	Montenegro Employers Federation		Federation leadership / employer representative	ILO	1	√		√		
118	Chamber of Economy of Montenegro		Chamber leadership / sector representative	FAO, UNDP	1	√		√		
ACADEMIA / THINK TANKS										
119	University of Montenegro		Professor / researcher / policy expert	UNICEF, UNDP	1,2,3			√		
120	University of Donja Gorica		Professor / researcher / policy expert	UNHCR	1,2,3			√		
121	Academic and research experts		Professor / researcher / policy expert	UNDP	1,2,3			√		

#	Entity/ Authority	Name (omitted)	Title	UN AGENCY	UNSDC F PILLAR	Individ ual Intervie w (F2F)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (F2F)	Individua l intervie ws (remote)	Group intervie ws/ FGDs (remote)	Online survey
FINAL BENEFICIARIES / RIGHTS-HOLDER GROUPS										
12 2	Roma and Egyptian communities		Community representatives / rights-holders	UNDP, UNICEF	2,3		√			
12 3	Persons with disabilities		Rights-holders / community representatives	UNDP, UNICEF	2,3		√			
12 4	Children and youth		Young participants / youth representatives	UNICEF	2,3		√			
12 5	Women experiencing GBV		Women's support service users / representatives	UNDP	3		√			
12 6	Migrants, asylum seekers, refugees		Rights-holders / community representatives	IOM	2,3		√			
12 7	Stateless persons / persons at risk of statelessness		Rights-holders / community representatives	UNHCR	2,3		√			
12 8	Older persons		Older persons / community representatives	UNHCR	2		√			
12 9	Informal workers / seasonal workers		Workers / community representatives	UNDP, IOM	1,2		√			
13 0	LGBTI persons		Community representatives / rights-holders	OHCHR	3		√			
13 1	Children without parental care		Care-experienced children / youth representatives	UNICEF	2,3		√			
13 2	Youth in northern municipalities		Youth representatives / local participants	UNDP, UNICEF	1,2,3		√			

For operational purposes, the detailed sampling frame maintained by the Evaluation Manager and the Evaluation Team will also cover additional stakeholders proposed during review, including the Centre for Child Rights, Junior Achievement, SOS Nikšić, Women's Safe House, Women's Rights Centre, relevant Roma NGOs and Slovakia as a bilateral development partner. These actors are considered part of the wider CSO and donor universe reflected in the stakeholder map and sampling approach.

ANNEX 2.1 JUSTIFICATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE STAKEHOLDER MAP

The table below consolidates the principal stakeholder clusters for the evaluation and their relevance to the inquiry. It is a summary version for use in the report. A fuller operational contact list should be maintained separately by the Evaluation Manager and ET.

Stakeholder category	Illustrative actors	Role in evaluation	Why they matter
Governance and oversight	MoFA; RC/RCO; UNCT; DCO Evaluation Advisor; MEL Group	Oversight, management, QA, validation	They govern the evaluation process and ensure use of findings
Government primary users	Ministries of European Affairs, Finance, Education, Labour, Social Welfare, Health, Interior, Justice, Human and Minority Rights, Ecology, Public Administration; MONSTAT; Office for Sustainable Development	Primary users; duty-bearers; key data sources	They are central to policy uptake, systems change, financing and sustainability
UNCT agencies	UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, WHO, UNHCR, ILO, OHCHR, UNESCO, FAO, UNOPS, UNECE, UN Women, UNODC, UNDRR, UNEP, UNIDO, IFAD, ITU, UNCTAD	Primary data sources, validation partners, users	They are collectively accountable for UNSDCF delivery and results
Development partners and IFIs	EU Delegation; Switzerland; Austria; Luxembourg; Ireland; UK; Slovakia, Germany; World Bank; EBRD; EIB; KfW; AFD	KIIs; validation partners; external coherence sources	They inform complementarity, financing, pooled fund governance and sustainability
Justice and oversight institutions	Supreme Court; Supreme State Prosecutor's Office; Special Prosecutor's Office; Agency for Prevention of Corruption;	KIIs; specialized evidence sources	They are essential for SP3, accountability and human rights analysis

Stakeholder category	Illustrative actors	Role in evaluation	Why they matter
	Ombudsperson; Council on the Rights of the Child		
Municipalities and local governments	Podgorica; Berane; Bijelo Polje; Pljevlja; Bar; Ulcinj; selected others	Fieldwork respondents; local validation	They surface territorial disparities and local implementation conditions
Civil society and representative organizations	Civic Alliance; Juventas; CAZAS; Red Cross; Centre for Child Rights Parents Association; Association of Youth with Disabilities; OPDs; women's and youth networks; trade unions; employers' federation	KIIs; FGDs; independent validation	They provide implementation experience, advocacy perspectives and HRBA evidence
Rights-holder groups	Roma and Egyptian communities; persons with disabilities; children and youth; women affected by GBV; migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; stateless persons; older persons; children without parental care	FGDs / mediated consultations	They are needed to assess LNOB, accessibility, benefit patterns and barriers
MAF-specific actors	MAF JSC; Advisory Board; MPTF Office; Ministry of European Affairs; EU Delegation; bilateral contributors; implementing agencies	Dedicated KIIs	They are central to assessing the pooled fund's governance and performance

ANNEX 2.2. STAKEHOLDER PRIORITISATION SUMMARY

Priority	Stakeholder category	Rationale	Indicative modalities
Critical	MoFA; Ministry of European Affairs; EU Delegation; RC/RCO; UNCT agencies with largest delivery footprint; MAF Joint Steering Committee	Core governance, financing and accountability actors	KIIs; validation meetings

Priority	Stakeholder category	Rationale	Indicative modalities
High	Ministries with strongest multi-agency engagement; MONSTAT; Ombudsperson; justice and oversight institutions	Highest programmatic exposure and strongest contribution-analysis value	KIIs; group discussions
High	Roma and Egyptian communities; persons with disabilities; children and youth in northern municipalities; women affected by GBV; migrants/stateless persons	Most important for LNOB and HRBA evidence	FGDs; mediated consultations
High	Podgorica; Berane/Bijelo Polje/Pljevlja; Bar/Ulcinj	Territorial disparity and implementation lens	Field visits; local KIIs
Medium	IFIs; bilateral donors with smaller portfolios; trade unions; employers; OPDs not directly implementing	Needed for external coherence and sustainability assessment	KIIs
Secondary	Academia; media self-regulatory bodies; private sector entities not directly engaged	Useful for learning, contextual triangulation and communications dimensions	Selective KIIs

ANNEX 2.3. INDICATIVE STAKEHOLDER SAMPLING SUMMARY

Stakeholder category	Estimated pool	Indicative representative sample	Main data-collection methods
UNCT agencies and RCO	19 agencies + RCO	15-18 interviews / discussions	KIIs; group discussions; online survey
Government ministries and central institutions	~17 core institutions	12-14 institutions; 18–22 interviews/discussions	KIIs; structured group discussions
Justice and oversight / specialized bodies	~10–12	8–10 interviews	KIIs
Municipalities / local self-governments	5–6 priority sites	4–5 municipalities; 6–8 interviews/discussions	KIIs; local discussions

Stakeholder category	Estimated pool	Indicative representative sample	Main data-collection methods
Development partners and IFIs	~15–18	8–10 interviews	KIIs
Civil society and representative organizations	~20–25	10–12 interviews / small-group discussions	KIIs; small-group discussions
Rights-holder / beneficiary groups	10+ priority group types	5–7 FGDs / mediated consultations	FGDs; representative consultations
MAF-specific actors	7 key categories	6–8 interviews	KIIs

ANNEX 2.4. GEOGRAPHIC SAMPLING NOTE

The geographic sample combines a national perspective with targeted sub-national inquiry. The final selection should remain flexible, but it should preserve the logic of covering the capital, at least one northern location and at least one coastal location. In addition to territorial disparities, the sub-national inquiry will pay attention, where evidence allows, to gendered economic disparities, including women's labour-force participation, unpaid care burdens and pay-gap related constraints. To the extent possible, the evaluation will also draw on evidence already generated through the JP PBF/social cohesion evaluation in Podgorica, Bar, Ulcinj, Bijelo Polje and Pljevlja, together with additional stakeholder inputs.

Location	Why it matters	Likely stakeholder clusters
Podgorica	National policy, governance, pooled fund governance, justice institutions, largest concentration of UN and partner actors	Central ministries, RCO/UNCT, IFIs, oversight bodies, selected CSOs
Berane / Bijelo Polje / Pljevlja (north)	Territorial disparity, youth employment, social cohesion, social and child protection, ageing, rural service gaps	Municipal authorities, service providers, youth, older persons, CSOs
Bar / Ulcinj (coast)	Social cohesion, migration, youth employment, coastal inequalities and environmental pressure	Municipal authorities, migrant- and youth-related actors, local CSOs
Optional: Petnjica / Tuzi / Zeta / Mojkovac	Useful where rural competitiveness, local governance or social inclusion evidence needs strengthening	Selected local authorities and implementing partners

RIGHTS-HOLDER CONSULTATION NOTE (HRBA AND SAFEGUARDS)

The evaluation will approach rights-holder consultation as a structured HRBA exercise. The purpose is to understand barriers, access, participation, protection, perceived benefits and differential outcomes, while avoiding harm and respecting confidentiality.

Rights-holder group	Why priority	Preferred modality	Safeguards / conditions
Roma and Egyptian communities	Persistent education and social inclusion gaps, especially among girls who are in higher risk of early drop out, early marriages etc.	FGD or mediated community discussion	Use trusted mediators; ensure accessible language and safe venue
Persons with disabilities	Disability assessment reform; deinstitutionalization; access and inclusion	FGD with OPDs / representative consultations	Accessibility, accommodation and communication support
Children and youth	Education, NEET, participation, territorial inequality	FGD through schools / youth councils / CSOs	Use trusted mediators; ensure accessible language and safe venue
Women affected by GBV	Protection, justice and service response	Mediated consultation through specialist service providers	No direct outreach without safeguards; confidentiality and do-no-harm approach
Migrants, asylum seekers, refugees	Protection, legal status, access to services	FGD or small-group consultation through service NGOs/UNHCR/IOM partners	Confidentiality, voluntary participation, interpretation if needed
Stateless persons / persons at risk of statelessness	Documentation, access to rights and services	Small-group or representative consultations	Confidentiality and legal-sensitivity safeguards
Older persons	Ageing, service access, daycare and care systems	Small-group discussion	Accessible venue and pace
Children without parental care	Deinstitutionalization, foster care	Mediated consultation through professionals or representative bodies	Child protection standards; no direct consultation without safeguards

STAKEHOLDER-METHOD MATRIX

Stakeholder category	Primary methods	Most relevant evaluation dimensions	Examples
Governance and oversight actors	KIIs; validation meetings	Coordination; efficiency; use of findings; accountability	MoFA; RC/RCO; MEL Group; DCO Evaluation Advisor
Government institutions	KIIs; group discussions	Relevance; effectiveness; sustainability; impact orientation	European Affairs; Finance; Education; Labour; Health; Justice; MONSTAT
UNCT agencies	KIIs; group discussions; survey	All criteria, especially coherence, coordination, effectiveness and efficiency	UNDP; UNICEF; IOM; WHO; UNHCR; ILO; OHCHR
Development partners / IFIs	KIIs	External coherence; comparative advantage; efficiency; sustainability	EU Delegation; Switzerland; Austria; World Bank; EBRD; EIB
Municipal / local actors	KIIs; local discussions	Effectiveness; territorial disparities; sustainability	Podgorica; Berane; Bijelo Polje; Pljevlja; Bar; Ulcinj
Civil society / OPDs / representative groups	KIIs; small-group discussions	HRBA; LNOB; accessibility; perceived benefit patterns	Civic Alliance; Juventas; OPDs; women's and youth networks
Rights-holders / beneficiaries	FGDs; mediated consultations	Effectiveness; unintended effects; accessibility; well-being and rights realization	Roma and Egyptians; PWDs; youth; migrants; older persons
MAF-specific actors	KIIs	Efficiency; pooled financing; coordination; sustainability	MAF JSC; Advisory Board; MPTF Office; contributors; implementing agencies

SUPPORTING STAKEHOLDER MAPPING FILES REVIEWED

The following agency-specific stakeholder mapping files and consolidated stakeholder materials were available and reviewed to inform the sampling strategy and annexes.

FAO - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

ILO - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

IOM - Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

ITU - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

OHCHR - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UN WOMEN - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNDP - Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNECE - Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNCT - Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNHCR - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNICEF - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNODC - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

UNOPS - UNSDCF Evaluation Stakeholders mapping

ANNEX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDES

During the field phase, the Evaluation Team will use semi-structured interviews guided by the question sets below. The interviews will allow the Evaluation Team to ask additional, more specific questions in line with the Evaluation Matrix and the Terms of Reference. The object of inquiry is the Cooperation Framework as a collective instrument; accordingly, agency-specific examples will be used only insofar as they help assess CF-level relevance, implementation, coordination and contribution to results.

Also, the Evaluation Team will prioritise in-person interviews, with the intention of ensuring a representative sample during the field phase. Other options, like online surveys, will be explored and discussed as needs arise.

Interview Guide: UN Resident Coordinator – RCO / UN Agencies and UN Results Groups

RELEVANCE AND ADAPTABILITY

EQ1.1: To what extent has the UNSDCF integrated the key development issues and challenges identified by the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and other strategic diagnostics for Montenegro?

SQ1.1.1: To what extent has the UNSDCF reflected the key development issues and challenges identified by the CCA (2021) and the CCA Updates (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025), including territorial disparities, demographic decline, the persistent implementation gap and EU accession-related reform needs?

SQ1.1.2: How were the UNSDCF outcomes and outputs across the three Strategic Priorities logically connected to the problems identified? Can you provide examples?

SQ1.1.3: Were the performance indicators (with baselines and targets) in the Results Matrix relevant, measurable and realistic for tracking progress?

SQ1.1.4: To what extent does the UNSDCF design reflect regional inequality (notably the situation in the north), service-delivery gaps, governance weaknesses and groups at risk of being left behind (children, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, single-parent households, migrants, victims of violence)?

EQ1.2: To what extent are the UNSDCF objectives aligned and consistent with the needs, priorities and policies of Montenegro, including national development goals, international human rights obligations, the SDGs and the EU accession agenda?

SQ1.2.1: How did the UNSDCF align with Montenegro's national development priorities and country needs?

SQ1.2.2: How did the UNSDCF respond to national policies, plans and reform agendas (e.g., Europe Now 2, National Adaptation Plan, social and child protection reforms, education reform, deinstitutionalization, public administration reform)?

SQ1.2.3: In what ways did the UNSDCF respond to international commitments – Agenda 2030, LNOB, human rights, disability inclusion, gender equality – and EU accession-related obligations?

SQ1.2.4: In which areas does the UN system hold a distinctive comparative advantage in Montenegro, particularly in harder-to-address reform domains?

EQ1.3: To what extent are the UNSDCF objectives responsive to emerging needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

SQ1.3.1: How did the UNCT/UN Agencies adapt their support to changing national contexts and emerging needs (e.g., fiscal pressures, climate and disaster shocks, EU accession milestones, demographic shifts)?

SQ1.3.2: How effectively were the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups – and underserved territories such as the north – addressed during these adaptations?

SQ1.3.3: How were gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB considerations incorporated when responding to changing needs?

COHERENCE AND COORDINATION

EQ2.1: Post-UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programmes and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the UNSDCF in both design and implementation?

SQ2.1.1: How were UN agency country programme documents and joint work plans linked to the UNSDCF at the design stage?

SQ2.1.2: To what extent have agency programmes and work plans remained aligned with UNSDCF priorities and outcomes during implementation?

SQ2.1.3: How has derivation from the UNSDCF supported greater coherence of agency action and reduced fragmentation?

EQ2.2: How coherent is the UNCT's support across agencies and outcomes, including clarity of roles, avoidance of duplication, use of joint programming, and the leveraging of normative mandates?

SQ2.2.1: In what ways are UNCT support and outcomes complementary and strategically aligned across resident and non-resident agencies?

SQ2.2.2: How clear are roles and responsibilities across agencies in reducing duplication? Can you provide examples of overlap that remain?

SQ2.2.3: Which joint programming initiatives or joint actions have been most effective in strengthening coherence and improving results?

SQ2.2.4: How well has the UNSDCF leveraged agency normative mandates in a complementary way (e.g., human rights, gender, child rights, labour, environment)?

SQ2.3.4: How effective were oversight and coordination arrangements in problem-solving and collective delivery?

EQ2.3: To what extent did the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT joint convening power and better coherence of the country team?

SQ2.3.1: How has the post-reform RCO contributed to stronger coherence across the country team?

SQ2.3.2: How has the RCO strengthened the UNCT's joint convening power and strategic positioning vis-à-vis Government, the EU Delegation, donors and partners?

SQ2.3.3: How well have coordination mechanisms – the Joint Steering Committee, Results Groups, MEL Group, Gender Theme Group, Human Rights and LNOB groups, inter-agency task teams – contributed to planning, adaptation and implementation of the UNSDCF?

EFFECTIVENESS

EQ3.1: Have the outputs envisaged in the UNSDCF been achieved, and to what extent have they contributed to progress under the UNSDCF outcomes?

SQ3.1.1: What have been the main achievements during UNSDCF implementation – delivery of outputs and progress towards outcomes under each Strategic Priority?

SQ3.1.2: How has progress under outcomes been tracked, and to what extent have targets been met or plausibly advanced?

SQ3.1.3: To what extent did the UNSDCF contribute to key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes under the outcomes?

SQ3.1.4: What were the main enabling factors and bottlenecks affecting results (e.g., institutional capacity, enforcement gaps, data weaknesses, cross-sector coordination, governance, financing)?

SQ3.1.5: Have there been any unintended positive or negative effects linked to UNSDCF implementation?

EQ3.2: To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes necessary for advancing its intended results?

SQ3.2.1: Can you describe examples of UNSDCF contribution to strengthening national capacities and driving systemic change in core thematic areas (climate and DRR, social and child protection, education, health, digital transformation, justice and rule of law, public administration)?

SQ3.2.2: What institutional, behavioural and legislative changes have occurred in the core sectors of intervention?

SQ3.2.3: What progress has been made in gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability?

SQ3.2.4: Which system-level changes have been hardest to achieve, and what are the implications for potential course correction?

EQ3.3: What have been the benefits for the people targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

SQ3.3.1: To what extent did UNSDCF results contribute to tangible improvements for vulnerable and marginalized groups (children, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, women survivors of violence, migrants, populations in the north)?

SQ3.3.2: What specific measures targeting inequalities and cross-cutting issues have been implemented, and with what impact?

SQ3.3.3: To what extent were benefits distributed unevenly across groups, territories or institutions? Which groups may have benefited more or less than others?

EFFICIENCY

EQ4.1: To what extent did the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) achieve its intended purpose – attracting additional financing for strategic, catalytic and innovative UN interventions, ensuring value for money, and advancing UN reform in Montenegro?

SQ4.1.1: To what extent has the MAF supported strategic, catalytic and innovative interventions aligned with the UNSDCF?

SQ4.1.2: How much additional financing has the MAF leveraged or catalysed (e.g., from the EU, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Ireland, the Government's EUR 1 million contribution)?

SQ4.1.3: Has the MAF generated value for money and improved collective UN delivery? Examples?

SQ4.1.4: How has the MAF supported UN reform objectives in Montenegro, including stronger coherence and joint action?

EQ4.2: To what extent did the UNSDCF monitoring, evaluation and learning system effectively inform decision-making and enable adaptive management through data analysis, monitoring and learning?

SQ4.2.1: How has the UNSDCF MEL/M&E system informed decision-making and adaptive management?

SQ4.2.2: Were monitoring and reporting arrangements (annual Country Results Reports, Joint Work Plans, UNINFO) adequate to support course correction and learning?

SQ4.2.3: How has the UNCT applied results-based management to maintain a logical chain of results and strengthen evidence-based management?

EQ4.3: To what extent has the UNSDCF collectively prioritized and reallocated resources according to collective priorities and changing needs, and to what extent have inputs (funds, expertise, time and other resources) been converted into outputs and outcomes efficiently and with due care?

SQ4.3.1: Can you provide examples of resource prioritization or reallocation linked to collective priorities and changing needs?

SQ4.3.2: Were financial, technical and human inputs converted into outputs and outcomes efficiently and with due care?

SQ4.3.3: Were resource mobilization, allocation and delivery broadly aligned with planned needs and priorities?

SUSTAINABILITY

EQ5.1: What are the main results achieved by the UNSDCF that are likely to last and/or be sustained without further UN interventions or support?

SQ5.1.1: Which results under selected UNSDCF priority areas are most likely to be sustained, and why?

SQ5.1.2: To what extent do national stakeholders (Government, municipalities, civil society) demonstrate ownership and intent to sustain interventions?

SQ5.1.3: Are financial, technical and human resources available or likely to be available to maintain achievements – especially in a post-accession environment with shifting financing modalities?

SQ5.1.4: What specific risks may facilitate or impede sustainability (political turnover, fiscal pressures, climate shocks, demographic decline)?

EQ5.2: Has the UNSDCF enabled innovative approaches embedded in institutional learning for national capacity development – Government, civil society, NGOs – so that these actors can continue achieving positive results without UN or development partner support?

SQ5.2.1: What innovative approaches has the UNSDCF introduced (e.g., MAF financing, digital service delivery, climate risk integration, deinstitutionalization)?

SQ5.2.2: To what extent have these approaches been embedded in institutional learning or practice?

SQ5.2.3: Have Government, civil society and NGOs gained capacities to continue or replicate these results?

SQ5.2.4: What mechanisms for scaling up or replication have been created or strengthened?

ORIENTATION TOWARDS IMPACT

EQ6.1: What evidence is there of the UN's contribution to higher-level change – systems strengthening, normative alignment, resilience and equity gains – and what are the most plausible contribution pathways in Montenegro's accession and post-accession trajectory?

SQ6.1.1: Can you provide examples of higher-level changes (beyond immediate outputs) to which UN support has plausibly contributed?

SQ6.1.2: In what ways has UN support strengthened systems, institutions or policy environments?

SQ6.1.3: What are the most plausible contribution pathways the UN has followed in Montenegro?

SQ6.1.4: What has been the UN contribution to resilience and equity gains relevant to Montenegro's accession and post-accession environment?

EQ6.2: To what extent have UN activities stemming from the UNSDCF made a difference for beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their well-being and their human rights overall?

SQ6.2.1: Can you provide examples and views on how UN activities made a difference for beneficiaries?

SQ6.2.2: What evidence is there of improvements in well-being, access to services, participation, protection or rights realization?

SQ6.2.3: Were changes more significant for some groups, genders, ages, disability status or territories than for others?

SQ6.2.4: To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to reducing vulnerability and strengthening resilience?

Interview Guide: UN MEL Group

Could you please introduce yourself, including the UN Agency you are representing?

General questions

- Could you describe your involvement in the preparation and/or implementation of UNSDCF 2023–2027?
- In your opinion, what are Montenegro's key national development priorities? Has the UNSDCF been well-targeted and effective in addressing these priorities, including EU accession-related reforms?
- Are there any important areas that should be considered for the next UNSDCF cycle?

MEL-specific questions

- How appropriate and realistic have the UNSDCF outcomes and established targets been? How adequate have the outputs been in achieving these targets?
- To what extent has the Logic Matrix and hierarchy of objectives ensured internal coherence?
- Have the indicators been well-defined to measure progress under outcomes and outputs?
- To what extent have Results-Based Management principles and tools been reflected in the UNSDCF Results Matrix?
- To what extent have the indicators and targets reflected gender equality, disability inclusion, human rights and "leave no one behind"?
- Have indicators (benchmarks, targets, baselines) been revised and updated to reflect external developments, the CCA Updates, the 2023 Census, MICS and progress achieved?
- How do you assess the level of data availability for the established indicators (including disaggregated data)? What challenges exist – especially in territorial disaggregation – and how can they be addressed?
- What is the data management capacity of national partners (MONSTAT, line ministries, municipalities)? What would you recommend to strengthen national data availability and management practices, particularly in light of EU accession data requirements?
- To what degree did the UNSDCF contribute to SDG targets? Can you provide examples of how UNSDCF outcomes correspond with SDG indicators and VNR findings?
- Have UN Agencies used these indicators to report results and progress through UNINFO and the Country Results Reports? What is your opinion of the work of the UNSDCF MEL Group?
- Has the UNSDCF effectively strengthened data collection and analysis capacities to ensure disaggregated data, including by region (north/centre/south), sex, age and disability?

Interview Guide: Chair of the UN Communication Group

Could you please introduce yourself, including the UN Agency you are representing?

General questions

- Have you been involved in the preparation and/or implementation of UNSDCF 2023–2027?
- In your opinion, what are Montenegro's key national development priorities? Has the UNSDCF been well-targeted and effective in addressing them?
- Are there any important areas that should be considered for the next UNSDCF cycle?

Communication-specific questions

- Has a UN Joint Communication Strategy been developed and implemented? Is the joint communication approach satisfactory?
- Do you think the principle of "One UN voice" is an important element for UN coherence and the effectiveness of results in Montenegro, particularly during the EU accession process?
- How effective has the UNCT been in communicating UNSDCF results in Montenegro? Could you provide examples of the most important communication activities implemented in the context of the UNSDCF (e.g., SDG advocacy, EU-UN joint communication, LNOB visibility)?
- How coherent are UN agencies in delivering core UN advocacy messages (especially those related to UNSDCF implementation, human rights, gender equality, LNOB and EU accession)?
- Has communication among UN Agencies been satisfactory?
- What suggestions would you offer for improving and strengthening internal communication and facilitating access to and sharing of information among UN Agencies and staff in Montenegro?

Interview Guide: Government and Institutional Partners

Could you please introduce yourself, your institution and your role in this institution?

Are you familiar with the work of the United Nations Agencies in Montenegro? If yes, how is your work related to the areas of intervention of the United Nations Agencies in Montenegro?

Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE AND ADAPTABILITY

- What have been Montenegro's priority development needs in the period 2023–2026, particularly in the context of EU accession?
- Which specific development priorities of the country and needs of the population (especially vulnerable groups – children, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, populations in the north) is your institution addressing?
- Do you think the UN Agencies have been sufficiently focused on the priority areas and the needs of citizens, including LNOB groups?
- Have any external factors (fiscal pressures, climate shocks, demographic decline, geopolitical context, accession milestones) affected the country's development needs? Did new needs emerge? Did any previously recognized needs lose priority?

Relevant evaluation criteria: COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS, IMPACT and SUSTAINABILITY

- Which UNSDCF-related initiatives have you supported or implemented in Montenegro? What are your priority sectors? What has been the degree of cooperation with UN Agencies?
- How has your institution coordinated and cooperated with UN Agencies? Were there policy dialogues, joint working groups or joint interventions in place to coordinate efforts? If not, what other mechanisms were in place?
- Are there examples of successful cooperation (e.g., joint forces for implementing activities in priority sectors) between UN Agencies and your institution, or other partners? What factors contributed to the effectiveness of these joint actions?
- From your experience, did any UN Agencies take a leadership role in delivering support in specific sectors? How effective was UN Agency leadership in those sectors or sub-sectors in contributing to the results?
- How effective has the post-reform Resident Coordinator's Office been in convening, coordinating and ensuring coherence of UN support to Montenegro?
- Have national partners created a policy environment conducive to sustaining the accomplished results? Are there sufficient financial, technical and human resources to maintain results, especially in a post-accession context?
- In your opinion, what are the most relevant country priorities and needs for the upcoming five-year period, including those linked to Montenegro's potential EU member status?

Interview Guide: International Development Partners – Bilateral and Multilateral Donors

Could you please introduce yourself, your organisation and your role in this organisation?

Are you familiar with the work of the United Nations Agencies in Montenegro? How is your work related to their intervention areas?

Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE AND ADAPTABILITY

- From your perspective, what have been Montenegro's priority development needs in the period 2023–2026? Which specific development priorities and needs of the population (especially vulnerable groups) is your organisation addressing, including through UN Agencies?
- Who are your main UN partners? Do you think the UN Agencies you partner with have a relevant and adequate approach to addressing priorities, including EU accession-related reforms?
- Have any external factors (fiscal pressures, accession milestones, climate shocks, regional political dynamics) affected the country's development needs?
- Which areas should be prioritised in the future, particularly in light of Montenegro's accession trajectory?

Relevant evaluation criteria: COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS, IMPACT and SUSTAINABILITY

- What have been the main results that you have achieved in partner initiatives or UNSDCF-aligned activities supported or implemented by your organisation in Montenegro? What are your priority sectors?
- What has been the degree of cooperation and communication with UN Agencies?
- Was there an effective government-led mechanism for donor coordination in place (e.g., EU coordination structures, sector working groups)? If not, what other mechanisms were in place?
- Are there examples of successful cooperation – including through the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) – between UN Agencies and your organisation or other donors? What factors contributed to the effectiveness of these joint actions?
- Has your organisation contributed to or considered contributing to the MAF? How do you view the catalytic and value-for-money role of the MAF in Montenegro?
- From your experience, did any UN Agencies take a leadership role in delivering support in specific sectors? How effective was UN Agency leadership in those sectors or sub-sectors in contributing to the results?
- Have the national partners (the Government of Montenegro and other stakeholders) created a policy environment conducive to sustaining the accomplished results?
- In your opinion, what are the most relevant country priorities and needs for the upcoming five-year period? What role should the UN play once Montenegro accedes to the EU?

Interview Guide: EU Delegation

Could you please introduce yourself, your role at the EU Delegation, and your engagement with the UN system in Montenegro?

EU–UN strategic alignment

- How well has the UNSDCF 2023–2027 been aligned with the EU accession agenda and the priorities outlined in the EU's annual progress reports for Montenegro?
- In which clusters or chapters (Fundamentals, Internal Market, Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, Green Agenda, External Relations) has UN support added the most value?
- In which areas does the UN system hold a distinctive comparative advantage that complements EU action?

Coordination, joint action and financing

- How effective have the joint EU–UN initiatives been in Montenegro? Can you provide examples of successful collaboration?
- How do you view the role of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF), to which the EU contributes? Has it delivered catalytic, strategic and innovative results?
- How effective have coordination mechanisms been between the EU Delegation, the RCO and UN Agencies?
- Were there areas of duplication or unclear division of labour between the EU and the UN?

Effectiveness, sustainability and future role

- What have been the most significant UN contributions to Montenegro's reform agenda – particularly in human rights, rule of law, social inclusion, gender equality, climate and DRR, and public administration reform?
- How sustainable are these contributions? Are national partners taking sufficient ownership?
- What role should the UN play in Montenegro's post-accession context, particularly on normative functions, LNOB and persistent disparities?

Interview Guide: Municipalities and Local Authorities

Could you please introduce yourself, your municipality and your role?

Are you familiar with the work of the United Nations Agencies in Montenegro? In which areas has your municipality cooperated with the UN?

Relevance and adaptation to local needs

- What are the most pressing development challenges in your municipality (demographic decline, service-delivery gaps, climate risks, housing affordability, social cohesion)?
- To what extent has UN support responded to these local realities, including territorial disparities between the north, centre and south?
- How well has UN support reached groups at risk of being left behind in your municipality (children, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, women survivors of violence, single-parent families)?

Effectiveness and partnerships

- What concrete results of UN support are visible in your municipality?
- How was cooperation organized between UN Agencies and your municipality? Were there joint initiatives or local platforms in place?
- Did UN support contribute to strengthening local institutional capacities, planning systems and service delivery?

Sustainability and future priorities

- Are the results of UN-supported activities likely to be sustained by the municipality after UN support ends?
- What support would your municipality need from the UN in the next cycle, particularly in light of EU accession?

Interview Guide: Civil Society Organizations, OPDs and Rights-Holder Groups

Could you please introduce yourself, your organisation and the rights-holder groups you represent or work with?

Relevance and inclusion

- To what extent has the UNSDCF reflected the priorities and needs of the groups you represent (e.g., children, women, persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian communities, LGBTI+ persons, migrants, survivors of violence)?
- Was your organisation consulted in the design of the UNSDCF or its joint work plans? How meaningful was that consultation?
- How well does the UNSDCF integrate gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB considerations?

Effectiveness and partnership

- What concrete benefits have your organisation's constituencies seen from UN-supported activities?
- How effective and inclusive has the partnership between UN Agencies and CSOs been? Were there opportunities for joint advocacy, monitoring and implementation?
- How would you describe the level of UN responsiveness to emerging needs of vulnerable groups?

Voice, participation and future role

- Have UN-supported processes created mechanisms for the meaningful participation of rights-holders and CSOs in policy dialogue?
- What changes in laws, policies, services or attitudes do you attribute (at least in part) to UN engagement?
- What should the UN prioritise in Montenegro going forward, particularly to ensure no one is left behind during and after EU accession?

Interview Guide: Beneficiaries (if appropriate)

Note: No dedicated focus groups with children are currently not planned, because the evaluation assesses CF-level progress under outcomes and strategic priorities rather than individual agency interventions. Where youth perspectives are sought, consultations will be conducted primarily through youth representatives, institutions and civil society organizations. If direct evidence activities involving children or adolescents become necessary at a later stage, separate tools and informed consent / child assent procedures will be developed and applied.

Could you please introduce yourself,

- How did you become involved in the activities of UN Agencies?
- How did you benefit from the support of UN Agencies? Please provide specific examples.
- Are you aware of other results of UN support?
- What were your needs, and did the UN support address these needs? Did UN Agencies' work and results help improve the situation in your community or in Montenegro?
- Do you have any suggestions for improving the support that UN Agencies provide?
- What are the priority areas of your community (or the country) that you recommend for future development assistance?

ANNEX 3.2. ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UN MANAGEMENT AND PROGRAMME / PROJECT STAFF

Which Outcome does your work primarily relate to?

(Please select the closest match.)

Outcome 1: All people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved management and state of natural resources and increasingly innovative, competitive, gender-responsive and inclusive economic development that is climate resilient and low-carbon.

Outcome 2: All people, especially the vulnerable, increasingly benefit from equitable, gender-responsive and universally accessible social and child protection system and quality services, including labour market activation and capabilities.

Outcome 3: All people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from strengthened human capital including early childhood development, and more resilient, gender-responsive, and quality healthcare and education.

Outcome 4: All people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved social cohesion, increased realization of human rights and rule of law and accountable, gender-responsive institutions.

1. To what extent has the UNSDCF 2023–2027 addressed Montenegro's national development needs and priorities?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

2. How well did the UNSDCF integrate the key development issues identified in the UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) and CCA Updates – including territorial disparities, demographic decline and EU accession-related reform needs?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

3. To what extent did the UNSDCF respond to emerging needs, especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups during the implementation period (e.g., children, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, populations in the north, single-parent families)?

- Completely
- Sufficiently

- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

4. How effectively were human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability integrated into the design and implementation of UNSDCF activities?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

5. To what extent did the UNSDCF align with Montenegro's EU accession agenda and reform process?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

6. To what extent were UN Agency work plans and programmes derived from and aligned with the UNSDCF 2023–2027?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If insufficient, please explain:

7. To what extent have the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities contributed to coherence among UN Agencies in Montenegro?

- Completely
- To a large extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

8. How have the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities facilitated or hindered joint efforts among UN Agencies?

- Strongly facilitated
- Somewhat facilitated
- Neither facilitated nor hindered
- Somewhat hindered
- Strongly hindered

If you think it has been hindering or strongly hindering, can you please explain why?

9. Has the UNSDCF strengthened complementarity, harmonization and coordination among UN Agencies?

- Completely
- To a large extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

10. To what extent has the UNSDCF facilitated collaboration with external development partners (Government, EU Delegation, civil society, private sector, municipalities)?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

11. How effective have UN agencies been in achieving results under the UNSDCF?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

12. From your perspective, what have been the most important results achieved during UNSDCF implementation (at the level of laws, policies, institutions, services and beneficiaries)?

13. Would you say there were areas in which the UNSDCF has been underperforming?

- Yes
- No

- I don't know

If yes, which ones?

14. Would you say there were unplanned (unintended) results achieved during UNSDCF implementation?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If yes, which ones (positive or negative)?

15. Have you been cooperating with other UN Agencies during programming and planning of new initiatives?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide examples.

16. Have you been cooperating directly with other UN Agencies while implementing activities (projects and programmes), including through joint programming?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide examples.

17. In your opinion, have UN Agencies in Montenegro sufficiently used joint programming and the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) to address complex development challenges?

- Yes
- No

Please explain your answer.

18. From your experience, how would you rate the functionality and effectiveness of the UNSDCF joint coordination structures (Joint Steering Committee, Results Groups, MEL Group, Gender Theme Group, Human Rights and LNOB groups) in ensuring progress towards outcomes?

- Highly functional and effective
- Sufficiently functional and effective
- Insufficiently functional and effective
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficiently functional and effective, can you please explain why?

Additional questions for members of Results Groups and inter-agency thematic groups (if applicable):

19. Are you a member of any Results group or inter-agency thematic groups?

- Yes
- No

19a. If yes, which ones:

- Result group 1: Inclusive Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability
- Result group 2: Human capital development, reducing vulnerability, social inclusion
- Result group 3: Social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Group
- Human Rights and Leave No One Behind Thematic Group
- Gender Thematic Group
- Joint Communications Team
- PSEA Task Force
- SDG finance
- Digitalisation
- UN Network on Migration in Montenegro

19.b From your perspective as a member of a Results Group or inter-agency thematic group, how effectively has the group contributed to mainstreaming cross-cutting priorities into planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting under the UNSDCF?

- Very effectively
- Sufficiently effectively
- Insufficiently effectively
- Not at all effectively
- I don't have enough information

19c. What concrete examples can you provide of group-level influence on joint planning, course correction, data use, coordination or collective advocacy?

19d. What have been the main constraints affecting the effectiveness of these groups, and what improvements would you suggest?

20. To what extent did the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) achieve its intended purpose in attracting additional financing, ensuring value for money and advancing UN reform in Montenegro?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, please explain why.

21. How effectively has the UN system mobilized and utilized its resources (human, technical and financial), along with inter-agency synergies, to achieve the planned UNSDCF results?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, please explain why.

22. In your opinion, are the financial and human resources allocated by the UN Agencies appropriate to support the implementation of UNSDCF strategies and achievement of UNSDCF outcomes?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, please explain why.

23. To what extent did the UNSDCF MEL system (annual Country Results Reports, UNINFO, Joint Work Plans) effectively inform decision-making and enable adaptive management?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

Please provide examples or explain.

24. Have there been external factors that (negatively) affected efficiency in UNSDCF implementation (e.g., political turnover, fiscal pressures, climate shocks, EU accession dynamics)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't have enough information about it

If yes, please explain.

25. In your opinion, what would you improve to ensure more efficient (individual and joint) delivery of results?

26. From your perspective, has the UNCT's contribution led to measurable development changes in Montenegro during 2023–2026, including systems strengthening, normative alignment and equity gains?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If yes, please provide examples:

27. Do you believe that achievements under the UNSDCF are likely to be sustainable without UN support, particularly in a post-EU-accession environment?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

28. What factors could affect the sustainability of UNSDCF achievements (political, financial, institutional, demographic, climate-related)?

ANNEX 3.3. ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UN OPERATIONS STAFF

Please provide answers to the following questions primarily having in mind your priority area of work.

1. In your opinion, how well were the UNSDCF 2023–2027 and UN Agencies' activities aligned with Montenegro's national priorities, the needs of the people and the EU accession agenda?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

2. To what extent have the UNSDCF and UN Agencies been addressing the needs of the people in Montenegro since 2023?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

3. To what degree did the UNSDCF follow the "leaving no one behind" principle in Montenegro and contribute to the SDGs and other international commitments (including EU acquis alignment and international human rights instruments)?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

4. How appropriate have the financial and human resources allocated by UN Agencies been in supporting the implementation of strategies and achievement of UNSDCF outcomes?

- Extremely appropriate
- Very appropriate
- Moderately appropriate
- Somewhat appropriate
- Not appropriate at all

5. How effectively has the UNCT established and implemented procedures and resources to ensure contribution to achieving the defined outcomes?

- Extremely effectively
- Very effectively
- Moderately effectively
- Somewhat effectively
- Not effectively at all

6. How well do the mobilized and delivered resources compare to the planned resources for UNSDCF implementation, including resources channelled through the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF)?

- Completely aligned
- Mostly aligned
- Moderately aligned
- Slightly aligned
- Not aligned at all

7. In your opinion, how has the Delivering as One / Business Operations Strategy approach been implemented in Montenegro?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

8. In which operational areas has the Delivering as One approach advanced?

(Select all that apply and provide examples or explanation for each.)

- Joint procurement of goods

Example and explanation:

- Joint procurement of services

Example and explanation:

- Joint recruitment of experts / joint HR approach

Example and explanation:

- ICT and ICT support

Example and explanation:

- Establishment of One UN budget

Example and explanation:

-
- Financial management

Example and explanation:

-
- Joint communication

Example and explanation:

-
- Shared premises / common services / common utilities

Example and explanation:

-
- I don't have enough information about it

9. In your opinion, in which operational areas has the Delivering as One approach been underperforming?

(Select all that apply and provide examples or explanation for each.)

- Joint procurement of goods

Example and explanation:

-
- Joint procurement of services

Example and explanation:

-
- Joint recruitment of experts / joint HR approach

Example and explanation:

-
- ICT and ICT support

Example and explanation:

-
- Establishment of One UN budget

Example and explanation:

-
- Financial management

Example and explanation:

-
- Joint communication

Example and explanation:

-
- Shared premises / common services / common utilities

Example and explanation:

-
- I don't have enough information about it

10. Have you been cooperating directly with other UN Agencies while implementing activities (projects and programmes)?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide examples.

11. In your opinion, to what extent have the roles and responsibilities of the post-reform Resident Coordinator's Office facilitated UN Agencies in achieving better coherence in implementing the UNSDCF?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why?

12. From your experience, how would you rate the functionality and effectiveness of the UNSDCF joint coordination structures (Joint Steering Committee, Results Groups, MEL Group, Gender Theme Group, Human Rights and LNOB groups) in ensuring progress towards outcomes?

- Highly functional and effective
- Sufficiently functional and effective
- Insufficiently functional and effective
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficiently functional and effective, can you please explain why, and be specific about which structure you are referring to?

13. How would you assess cooperation and communication among UN Agencies in Montenegro?

- Highly functional and effective
- Sufficiently functional and effective
- Insufficiently functional and effective
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information

If you think it was insufficiently functional and effective, can you please explain why?

14. How would you assess cooperation with other UN Operations staff and units (e.g., through the Operations Management Team)?

- Very satisfactory
- Satisfactory
- Fair
- Unsatisfactory
- Non-existent

If you think it was unsatisfactory, can you please explain why?

15. In your opinion, has the UN in Montenegro sufficiently used Delivering as One mechanisms to enhance and improve delivery of results?

- Yes
- No

Please explain.

16. Have there been external factors that (negatively) affected efficiency in UNSDCF implementation in Montenegro?

- Yes
- No
- I don't have enough information about it

If yes, please explain.

17. In your opinion, what would you improve to ensure more efficient (individual and joint) delivery of results in Montenegro?

ANNEX 3.4. ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NATIONAL PARTNERS

(translation to Montenegrin will be used)

Please answer the following questions, keeping primarily in mind the area in which you work and collaborate with the United Nations system.

1. In what capacity have you collaborated with United Nations agencies in Montenegro during the period 2023–2027?

- a. As an expert/consultant
- b. As a partner from a government institution (ministry, agency, institute, etc.)
- c. As a partner from a local self-government institution
- d. As a partner from the private sector
- e. As a partner from a non-governmental organization (NGO)
- f. Other, please specify: _____

2. In your opinion, to what extent were the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Montenegro 2023–2027 and the activities of UN agencies aligned with Montenegro’s national priorities, citizens’ needs, and the European Union accession process?

- Fully aligned
- Sufficiently aligned
- Insufficiently aligned
- Not aligned at all
- I do not have enough information

If you believe the alignment was insufficient, please explain why.

3. To what extent has the work of the United Nations since 2023 responded to the needs of the citizens of Montenegro?

- Fully
- To a sufficient extent
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I do not have enough information

If you believe the response to citizens’ needs was insufficient, please explain why.

4. To what extent has the work of the United Nations in Montenegro applied the “Leave No One Behind” principle and contributed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other international commitments (including alignment with the EU acquis and international human rights instruments)?

- Fully
- To a sufficient extent
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I do not have enough information

If you believe the contribution was insufficient, please explain why.

5. How adequate were the financial and human resources deployed by United Nations agencies in supporting the achievement of planned results?

- Extremely adequate
- Very adequate
- Moderately adequate
- Partially adequate
- Not adequate at all
- I do not have enough information

6. How would you assess cooperation and communication among individual United Nations agencies in Montenegro?

- Very functional and effective
- Sufficiently functional and effective
- Insufficiently functional and effective
- Not functional and effective at all
- I do not have enough information

If you believe cooperation and communication were not sufficiently functional and effective, please explain why.

7. Were there any external factors that negatively affected the efficiency of the implementation of United Nations activities in Montenegro?

- Yes
- No
- I do not have enough information

If yes, please specify which factors.

8. In your opinion, what should be improved to ensure more effective achievement of results in Montenegro, both through individual agency initiatives and joint United Nations activities?

9. Are you a member of a Results Group or an inter-sectoral/inter-agency thematic group?

- Yes → Please proceed to Questions 9a, 9b and 9c
- No → Please proceed to Question 10

9a. From your perspective as a member of a Results Group or inter-sectoral/inter-agency thematic group, how successful was the group in integrating cross-cutting priorities into the planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes under the United Nations Cooperation Framework?

- Very successful
- Sufficiently successful
- Insufficiently successful
- Not successful
- I do not have enough information

If you believe the group was not sufficiently successful, please explain why.

9b. Can you provide specific examples of the group's influence on joint planning, adaptation of activities, use of data, coordination, or joint advocacy efforts?

9c. What were the main constraints affecting the effectiveness of these groups, and what measures would you recommend to improve their performance?

10. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share regarding the work of the United Nations system in Montenegro?

ANNEX 4: TENTATIVE AGENDA OF IN-COUNTRY VISIT AND PROPOSED MEETINGS²²

The tentative agenda for the Evaluation Team's in-country mission, **8–19 June 2026**, is provided below. It reflects programmatic and stakeholder representativeness. Geographical representativeness will be ensured by additional visits as agreed– besides Podgorica, the capital – to **the north** (e.g., Bijelo Polje, Berane, Pljevlja, Rožaje) and **the coast / south** (e.g., Bar, Kotor, Ulcinj) – to interview local self-governments, local stakeholders, civil society and vulnerable groups, including Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities and women's organizations.

UNSDCF Montenegro Evaluation Mission – Field Data Collection

Draft agenda as of June 3 2026 (daily updates will be reflected in a separate file)

DAY	TIME	RESPONDENTS	VENUE	NOTES (PROGRAMMATIC / GEOGRAPHICAL / STAKEHOLDER)	ORGANIZATION
8 June, Monday	9:00 – 17:00	Brief with Evaluation Manager UNCT Resident Coordinator RCO team Evaluation management group Heads of Agencies: UNDP Heads of Agencies: UNICEF Heads of Agencies: ILO End of day briefing	UN Eco House, Podgorica	UN focus	RCO / EM

²² The final agenda will depend on the availability of the stakeholders.

DAY	TIME	RESPONDENTS	VENUE	NOTES (PROGRAMMATIC / GEOGRAPHICAL / STAKEHOLDER)	ORGANIZATION
9 June, Tuesday	9:00 – 17:00	Heads of Agencies: OHCHR Heads of Agencies: UNHCR Heads of Agencies: WHO Heads of Agencies: IOM EU Delegation EBRD End of day briefing	UN Eco House	UN focus first part of the day, international partners afternoon	RCO / EM
10 June, Wednesday	9:00 – 17:00	Results group 1: co-chairs meeting Civil society focus group Academia/specialized institutions Continuation End of day briefing	UN Eco House	UN / GoM / civil society / academia / experts	RCO / EM
11 June, Thursday	9:00 – 17:00	Results group 2: co-chairs meeting World Bank EIBD Ministry of Foreign Affairs Council of Europe End of day briefing	UN Eco House / WB, EIBD, MFA and CE premises	UN / GoM / international partners	RCO / EM
12 June, Friday	9:00 – 17:00	Results group 3: co-chairs meeting Government institutions and line ministries Debriefing with UNRC/O	UN Eco House	UN focus / Government of Montenegro	RCO / EM

DAY	TIME	RESPONDENTS	VENUE	NOTES (PROGRAMMATIC / GEOGRAPHICAL STAKEHOLDER)	ORGANIZATION
15 June, Monday	14:00 – 17:00	Heads of Agencies: UN Women, UNIDO	Online	UN focus	RCO / EM
16 June, Tuesday	9:00 – 17:00	Heads of Agencies: FAO; UNESCO, UNECE, UNCTAD, UNEP	Online	UN focus	RCO / EM
17 June, Wednesday	9:00 – 17:00	Heads of Agencies: UNDRR, ITU, IFAD, UNODC, UNOPS	Online	UN focus	RCO / EM
18 June, Thursday	9:00 – 17:00	International partners: ADA, SDC, Luxemburg, Ireland, Norway	Online	Donors focus – MAF contributors	RCO / EM
19 June, Friday	9:00 – 17:00	Individual GoM and local government meetings Final debriefing	Online	GoM	RCO / EM

