



Republic of North Macedonia and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025

Joint Workplan 2023

1. Country Context¹

The Joint Work Plan 2023 was developed in a challenging local and global context that overwhelmed the institutional capacities and seriously threatened the living standard of people, especially the most vulnerable groups.

The global energy crisis and rising food prices undermined the economic revival by the end of 2021 which intensified with the developments in Ukraine. The impact is predominantly indirect, arising from strong reliance on energy and food imports and strong trade exposure to EU markets. The people, but also businesses and especially SMEs have been strongly hit by the inflation and energy crisis that undermined already low competitiveness of the economy. Labour market picked up in 2021, however youth unemployment remains a problem. Financing of the budget deficit and the social spending is increasingly difficult, given the depleted financial buffers and the worsening capital markets. Human capital remains among the key challenges in the economy, with steady population decline confirmed by the Census 2021 due to decreased fertility and strong outmigration. Despite ongoing education reforms, the learning outcomes remain at low level and insufficiently aligned with the (future) market skills. While the number of Covid-19 cases declined, the health system continues to struggle due the lack of resources and medical staff. The social reform and fight against informalities is yet to produce results, while children rights and especially those with disabilities have improved.

The focus on climate change, environment and natural resources has reduced with worsening air pollution due to the energy crisis. The predominant focus on the crisis, failed public procurement on large environment investments (e.g. WWTP Skopje, Chebren HPP, greener Skopje public transport) and greater reliance on fossil fuels due to increasing energy prices resulted in less progress on environment issues. On the positive side, the increased energy prices are boosting incentives for green transition, by making renewable energy investments more attractive. Concerning the state of the three major lakes, challenges persist, with the situation in Prespa and Dojran Lake especially concerning and deteriorating. Significant investments in wastewater and solid waste management, natural resources management, as well as greater focus on recycling is needed.

The so called “French” proposal, accepted by the Government and the Parliament, helped in overcoming the Bulgarian veto on the EU Negotiating Framework with North Macedonia. The process of screening the level of transposition of EU acquis was launched in July 2022, however the negotiations with EU would officially open only after the country includes Bulgarian minority in the Constitution’s Preamble. Meanwhile, the challenges and delays within the EU accession process have decreased the popular support for the EU integration and deepened political polarization of the society. Inclusion and participation of stakeholders and the society at large in crafting policies has improved, however the implementation capacity, equity, and public trust in institutions continued to shrink. Corruption and lack of accountability remains the key societal problem. The Government continued to engage with UN and European human rights mechanisms, however, the integration and follow up on their recommendations remains challenging.

Consultations to formulate a twenty-year National Development Strategy continued and some important reforms were launched such as the new budgetary reform, as well as policies that target vulnerable groups such as women, youth, people with disabilities and Roma. The multidimensional crisis worsened the already difficult operating environment for local governments. The mixed migratory movements continued over the

¹ Based on [2022 UN Common Country Analysis \(CCA\) update](#)

borders due to the geostrategic position of the country on the Western Balkan sub-route and the country hosted 22,000 refugees entered from Ukraine. Only 5,900 remained, who have difficulty in accessing education, work and income. Statelessness is yet not addressed. There is a room for digital development, as the country scores below the European average on a wider regulatory framework.

Strengthening data management and implementation capacities, stepping up effective fight against corruption and informalities and designing anti-crisis measures that are strongly targeted at the needs of the most vulnerable in the context of scarce financing will be critical for the country in the period ahead. Despite the current challenges, the country must also maintain commitment for strategic investments in human capital, food security, climate change, environment and disaster resilience.

2. About the Joint Workplan

Joint Workplans (JWPs) are the annual tool that operationalizes the Republic of North Macedonia and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 (SDCF) – the key strategic document that guides the work of UN development system entities in North Macedonia.

All UN entities' country programmes derive from SDCF and are consolidated annually in joint workplans, one per SDCF outcome (see below).

SDCF strategic priorities and outcomes

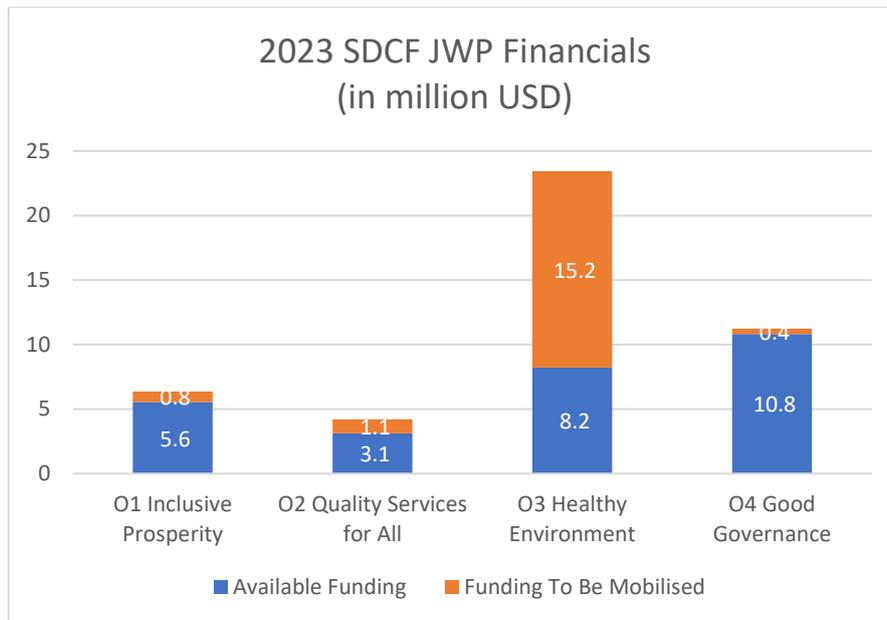
SDGs	Strategic priority	Outcomes by 2025
Prosperity & People	1. Sustained and inclusive economic and social development	1. The living standard of all people in North Macedonia is improved through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem
		2. People in North Macedonia have universal access to rights-based quality social services – healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection - rooted in systems resilient to emergencies.
Planet SDGs	2. Climate action, natural resources and disaster risk management	3. People in North Macedonia benefit from ambitious climate action, sustainably managed natural resources and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster resilient communities
Peace SDGs	3. Transparent and accountable democratic governance	4. People in North Macedonia benefit from improved rule of law; evidence-based, anticipatory and gender-responsive policies; greater social cohesion; and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable and responsive institutions

The 2023 JWPs thus consolidate the activities that will be undertaken by 17 UN entities during 2023. The four outcomes and 19 outputs are implemented through 144 sub-outputs (sum of activities aimed to achieve certain result) as planned by UN entities through their ongoing and pipeline projects or programmes.

The 2023 Joint workplan was developed in participatory process. Changing development context and strategic priorities were discussed at workshops that took place at the end of November and beginning of December 2022 with over 120 representatives from the government, donors and civil society, while draft Joint workplan was shared with over 300 representatives of the partnering entities. Received feedback is incorporated into the JWP to the feasible extent. However, the Joint workplan is a living document that is updated regularly throughout the year, based on the changing context, received demand and available funding. Any further needs for changes and adjustments will be taken directly by the relevant UN entities.

2023 funding requirements

The total estimated budget for all activities is \$45.2 million, of which \$27.7 million (61.2%) is already secured and \$17.5 million (38.8%) still needs to be mobilized. This is the initial estimated budget, that will slightly change, once 2022 accounts are closed and unspent budgets transferred into 2023 workplans. The total amounts will be adjusted throughout the year, and with the mid-year progress review.



Review and monitoring of the JWPs

SDCF and JWPs are digitized through the [UN INFO](#), which is the online planning, monitoring and reporting platform. The UN INFO reflects the UN development system’s effort to improve coherence, transparency and accountability, and to better address the needs and priorities of UN Member States.

The tool encourages more regular monitoring of joint workplans so that all development activities are on track to deliver results. This enables senior leadership to make corrections to programming or shift resources in real-time. The public can also see a full picture of UN development system activities through public dashboards linked to UNCT websites.

OUTCOME 1: INCLUSIVE PROSPERITY

Corresponding outcome:	By 2025, the living standard of all people in North Macedonia is improved through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem.
Chairing United Nations entity:	ILO
Results Group Members:	FAO, ILO, UNDP, UN Women, IOM, UNHCR, UNESCO, ITU
National Partners:	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy; Ministry of Education and Science, Employment Services Agency; Fund for Innovation and Technological Development; Trade Unions; Chambers of Commerce; Economic and Social Councils; Employers organizations; Farmers Associations, Producer organizations
Work plan duration:	1 year
Anticipated start/end dates:	1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023

SUMMARY OF 2023 ACTIVITIES

(for detailed activities of the UN entities under this Outcome, please review the attached excel file)

Throughout 2023, UN will continue with interventions that support the living standard of the people, by enhancing the access to quality and productive employment and business environment that supports innovation and inclusion.

In this context UN will support employment creation in sustainable and modern enterprises, primarily SMEs, that are internationally competitive and resilient and support circular economy in key sectors of the economy, including the creative and culture sectors. To advance this, UN will also work on enhancing employability of vulnerable groups, such as youth, hard to employ people and people with disabilities by creating the right set of skills, support services and lifelong learning.

UN will also work on enhancing a gender-responsive business environment, regulatory framework and social services that support family friendly and transformative employment adjusted to the modern trends and international labor standards, while setting the base for digital development. Focus would also be put on food security in the context of the current multidimensional crisis, as well as on supporting productive engagement of diaspora in the country development. In addition, the UN will work on improving regulations and enforcement capacities aimed at improving the quality of jobs, with a focus on Health and Safety.

To support a competitive and inclusive rural economy, UN will continue to work on mainstreaming gender aspect in the respective policies and support the authorities to advance land consolidation and mobility and strengthen animal health management.

Total estimated budget (in USD):*	\$ 6,356,280	
<small>* Total estimated budget includes both direct program costs and indirect support costs.</small>		
Out of which:		\$ 5,551,279
Funded		
Unfunded		\$ 805,001
Estimated budget per output (in USD)		
By Output:	Output 1.1.	\$ 947,219
	Output 1.2.	\$ 2,523,634
	Output 1.3	\$ 1,855,427
	Output 1.4	\$ 340,000
	Output 1.5	\$ 690,000

OUTCOME 2: QUALITY SERVICES FOR ALL

Corresponding outcome:	By 2025, people in North Macedonia have universal access to rights-based quality social services – healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection - rooted in systems resilient to emergencies.
Chairing United Nations entity:	UNFPA
Results Group Members:	IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO
National Partners:	Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; Health Institutes, Associations or Directorates; Vocational Training Institutes; Trade Union of Health Workers; Civil Society; Academia, Private Sector
Work plan duration:	1 year
Anticipated start/end dates:	1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023

SUMMARY OF 2023 ACTIVITIES

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Better protection and efficient provision of social services to all persons living in the country, but especially to those left behind, has never been so important as it is these years. What started with the Covid-19 pandemic and continued with energy and food crises throughout 2022, impacts the most vulnerable disproportionately.

With the COVID-19 pandemic calming down, the reforms of the primary **health care** system can now pick up in full speed. In 2023, UN entities will provide technical and advisory support to the Ministry of Health for establishment of Policy analysis unit, developing a concise plan/strategy for addressing the key health system challenges, and developing a strategic communication plan. More activities will include Hypertension Initiative in one demonstration site; development of the Master plan for Primary health Care; continuity of the PHC restructuring plans; trainings of primary health care professionals; design and roll out of digital tools; development of national patient safety plan and Action plan for strengthening of the Agency for accreditation and quality of health institutions. Activities initiated in 2022 related to strengthening mental health in PHC will continue by mapping of mental health services; policy dialogues; awareness raising activities; development national plan for strengthening mental health of children and adolescents and promotion of the findings of the 2022 HBSC study.

Maternal and newborn health will further be improved through continued technical support for implementation of the perinatal death surveys and for implementation of the Master Plan for Perinatal Care; Initiation of activities for digitalization of collection of the data for perinatal death reviews; Technical support in the introduction of anonymous review of critical cases (near-miss maternal deaths – OSRS). Improved access to sexual and reproductive health services for those most left behind in remote areas through provision of mobile gynecological services, counseling on family planning, maternal health, cervical cancer prevention, and other basic health diagnostics will be supported as well as including strengthened advocacy and communication with the general public on the available tools and resources for prevention of cervical cancer.

Capacity building for improving surveillance, coverage and management of vaccines including COVID will continue. Strengthened NCDs surveillance and monitoring, as well as strengthening national capacities for introducing health promoting schools as well.

UN will continue supporting the **education** reform, revision of education policies and associated programmes conducive to safe, healthy, gender-responsive, inclusive and adequately resourced environments by supporting development of the primary and secondary education curricula. It will provide support in development and implementation of comprehensive and quality in-service and pre-service professionals' capacity building; and support the design and implementation of evidence-based communication for development initiatives in the area of education and child protection (including CWDs and minorities) as well as creation of quality and inclusive learning tools and resources (also to address COVID-19), including digital resources, that are in line with the pre-primary, primary and secondary education curricula. Support to primary school optimization and improving the budgetary allocations system in primary and secondary education will be strengthened in 2023. Efforts will continue to ensure that children left behind, including children of refugees and asylum seekers are included in the education process.

Support to the implementation of social protection reform will continue with activities in several areas. Integration of the temporary stay of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers will be supported through capacity building for improved provision of social services, consultations and assistance; improvement of the national referral procedures for

vulnerable individuals; provision of legal support to the persons of concern, or provision of support in adjusting the necessary legislation.

Child protection remains the second large area of social protection activities of the UN entities. Activities for design and deployment of services that support parents and caregivers to stimulate child development and nurturing care and prevent adversity accessible to all families and caregivers will continue this year as will the support towards full implementation of the assessment model for additional educational, health and social protection support to children and youth, based on the International Classification of Functioning (ICF). Implementation of the recommendations from multi-dimensional poverty will intensify along with advocacy for policy improvements, including enhancement of the national statistical system. Evaluations on UNICEF interventions for inclusion of children with disabilities and support to the social reform will be completed to provide valuable lessons learned guide for further programming.

Prevention from and fight against all forms of violence is the last area of UN work under this outcome. Disrupting Harm Research will be conducted in the region to understand online child sexual exploitation and abuse and create an evidence help governments strengthen their prevention and response and update legislation. Activities on GBV and domestic violence will accelerate – development of programme for perpetrators, mapping of GBV and SRH services and identification of gaps, capacity building of service providers; legislation development, support to the victims, directly or through CSOs support as well as development of a new integrated data collection system.

Total estimated budget (in USD):*		\$ 4,210,846
<i>* Total estimated budget includes both direct program costs and indirect support costs.</i>		
Out of which:		\$ 3,134,593
Funded		
Unfunded		\$ 1,076,253
Estimated budget per output (in USD)		
By Output:	Output 2.1	\$ 1,075,700
	Output 2.2	\$ 1,155,550
	Output 2.3	\$ 1,385,891
	Output 2.4	\$ 593,705

OUTCOME 3: HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Corresponding outcome:	By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from ambitious climate action, sustainably managed natural resources and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster resilient communities.
Chairing United Nations entity:	UNDP
Results Group Members:	FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNECE, UNOPS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIDO, WHO, IOM, ITU, UNITAR
National Partners:	DPM for Economic Affairs, Ministries of Environment and Physical Planning, Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Education and Science, Health, Economy, Finance, and Culture. Further partners include the National Hydrometeorological Service, National Extension Agency, Crisis Management Centre, civil protection agencies, Institute for Public Health, Food and Veterinary Agency, City of Skopje, municipalities in the Skopje and Polog regions, municipalities around Ohrid and Prespa lakes, and Radovish, civil society organisations, academic institutions, schools, commercial banks and international organizations/IFIs.
Work plan duration:	1 year
Anticipated start/end dates:	1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023

SUMMARY OF 2023 ACTIVITIES

(for detailed activities of the UN entities under this Outcome, please review the attached excel file)

In the period 2021-2025, the UN entities contribution to healthy environment focuses on policy support, capacity building and community actions for low-emission development and multi-sector resilience to climate change; sustainable and inclusive management of natural resources; prevention and response to air pollution threats; effective disaster risk reduction and response; and waste reduction and efficient waste management.

On climate change (Output 3.1), in 2023 the UN plans to support to country in policy development and monitoring (support for implementation of the enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution (eNDC), through better coordination of key national stakeholders and development of concrete project proposals and resource mobilization for the same; development of the National Adaptation Plan and accompanying institutional, planning and programing aspects³, development of National Plans on phase-out of HCFC and phase-down of HFC), in access to finance (favorable loans for SMEs and households for renewable energy and energy efficiency through the Green Financing Facility, access to Green Climate Fund² and seed funding for youth for modeling innovative climate-friendly solutions), and multi-sector resilience to climate change (climate change and agriculture: improved irrigation infrastructure and efficient management of land and water resources, development of high-quality data for decision making in the context of climate- smart agriculture and agroecology, enhancing resilient seed systems and promoting quality seeds of climate tolerant varieties and climate change and education: integration of climate change in national education policies and curricula).

In terms of improved management of natural resources (Output 3.2) in 2023 the UN will provide support to a diverse set of activities related to land and forest (various measures focused on land degradation neutrality, sustainable land and forest management and sustainable mountain landscapes management including development of Soil Protection Strategy, Law on Soil Protection and Guidelines for Establishing Soil Quality Monitoring Programme, strengthening national capacities for sustainable management of forests, mountain landscapes and land, biodiversity conservation in the agriculture sector and practical application of integrated landscape approach in the pilot area in Shar Mountains), water (Prespa Lake Region: new support to improved nature protection through improved waste and waste water infrastructure and greening of local agriculture, tourism and other private sector activities, strengthened transboundary cooperation and Ohrid Lake: development of Feasibility Study for the Ohrid Lake Coastal Zone Urban Plan).

In 2023, UN's support to reducing air pollution (Output 3.3.) will be expanded, with comprehensive technical and advisory assistance in 8 cities around the country facing substantial air pollution issues - Skopje, Bitola, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kumanovo, Kavadarci, Strumica and Struga. Measures will be focused on provision of cleaner public building heating, transport, industry, agriculture and waste management as well as public awareness raising and strengthening air pollution monitoring. Targeted education, awareness and mobilization activities on air pollution are also planned with children. Further, the inter-linkages between human mobility and air pollution will be analysed.

² This activity is in pipeline and has not secured funding yet.

Disaster Risk Reduction (Output 3.4): UN support to flood risk reduction in Polog region and Drin River Basin will continue in 2023. Planned activities include restoration of riverbed, stabilisation of priority landslides, establishment of early warning system and knowledge and public awareness activities in Polog and development of hydrological and hydraulic model for flood risk management, comprehensive capacity building programme, restoration of Sateska River and implementation of non-structural measures in the Drin River Basin. Also, activities for greater health emergency preparedness through various activities, such as development of Feasibility study for establishing at MOH Vulnerability and Risk Analysis & Mapping (VRAM/STAR); Developing and costing Strategic National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS); building capacities of national laboratories and risk communication activities. Further, capacity building on human displacement caused by disasters and implementation of subnational INFORM Index³ for Risk Management³ are planned.

Waste (Output 3.5): In 2023, the UN will continue to provide sizable support in the cleanup of hazardous waste in environmental hotspots (OHIS Factory Complex: HCH waste, small waste basin), improved wastewater and solid waste management in Prespa Lake region and in Temporary Migrant Reception Centers in Kumanovo and Gevgelija as well as monitoring of e-waste.

Total estimated budget (in USD):*		\$23,426,526
<i>* Total estimated budget includes both direct program costs and indirect support costs.</i>		
Out of which:	Funded	\$ 8,213,501
	Unfunded	\$ 15,213,025
Estimated budget per output (in USD)		
By Output:	Output 3.1.	\$ 6,820,248
	Output 3.2.	\$ 6,567,478
	Output 3.3.	\$ 4,371,658
	Output 3.4.	\$ 3,007,842
	Output 3.5.	\$ 2,659,300

OUTCOME 4: GOOD GOVERNANCE

Corresponding outcome:	By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from improved rule of law; evidence-based, anticipatory and gender-responsive policies; greater social cohesion; and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable and responsive institutions.
Chairing United Nations entity:	UNHCR
Results Group Members:	UNDP, UN Women, UNHCR, IOM, UNODC, UNICEF, UNFPA, OHCHR, UNOPS, UNESCO
National Partners:	Prime Minister's Cabinet, Mol, MLSP, MFA, MoIS, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Local Self-Government, Ministry of Finance, Bureau for Regional Development, State Audit Office, Public Revenue Office, Agency for Youth and Sport, National Bank, SSO, Academy of Judges and Prosecutors, Ombudsman, National Non-Discrimination Coordination Body, NHRIs, MFA – National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow up, OPDs, Inter-ministerial WG for adoption of Migration Policy, Parliament, BAR association, MYLA, MoJ, SfA, Judiciary, Mol, Public Prosecutors Office, Prosecution on Organized Crime and Corruption, Customs Admiration, WCO, INTERPOL, Customs Agency; National Commission for UNESCO, Association of Finance Officers (AFO), Association of Units of Local Self Government, Network of Associations of Local Authorities of SE Europe, local government units, National Council for Gender Equality, Akcija Zdruzenska, other CSOs and Academia
Work plan duration:	1 year
Anticipated start/end dates:	1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023

SUMMARY OF 2023 ACTIVITIES

(for detailed activities of the UN entities under this Outcome, please review the attached excel file)

The UN in North Macedonia works towards effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all branches and levels of government, and promotion and protection of human rights for all, focusing on people left behind or at risk of being left behind, including women, children, youth not in education, employment or training (NEET), persons with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic communities, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless, LGBTI persons, people in rural areas, and older persons.

Throughout 2023, the UN will continue strengthening the partnership and capacities of the government and all other stakeholders to accelerate progress on policy, legislative and institutional reforms advancing good governance and rule of law. The whole of government and whole of society approach, will continued to be engraved in key national strategic processes – National Development Strategy setting the development trajectory for the next 20 years, EU accession negotiations and achievement of SDGs.

The UN will continue supporting the development of polices and laws in line with international human rights standards and EU *acquis*. Key areas include fundamental rights, non-discrimination, gender equality, migration management, justice sector and justice for children, assets recovery and countering corruption and transnational organized crimes (such as trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, illicit financing of terrorism, firearms and digital sex crimes).

The implementation capacities of central and local government, judiciary, law enforcement and other independent institutions will be enhanced to ensure forward-looking, inclusive and evidence-based policy making, backed up with sufficient budget allocations to perform effectively. National capacities for EU accession will be further strengthened, especially on the approximation process (NPPA), transposition of gender equality *acquis*, and negotiation skills of Parliament and Government.

The UN will continue investing in increased transparency and accountability of public spending central to good governance. The public expenditure analysis and monitoring of the justice for children and primary and secondary education will be improved. Public oversight of gender responsive budgeting and new gender machinery will be strengthened, along with systemic measures to improved fiscal transparency and accountability of both central and local government. The services will become more responsive to the needs of excluded groups and their social and economic vulnerabilities, improving the quality of their live. Innovative and digital solutions, stronger inter-sectoral and inter-institutional cooperation, community grants to CSOs at local level and youth and women initiatives, and clear indicators to measure and demonstrate progress, will aim at restoring public trust in the governance system.

Societal cohesion and respect for diversity will be promoted through mutually reinforcing actions, including support for municipal youth councils, youth dialogue platforms with policymakers; preventing divisive, hate speech and

masculinities and gender stereotypes among young people of different identities and backgrounds. Interaction and cooperation between public media and local youth media networks and young influences will be promoted. UN will work and train journalists, and support public events and media contents that will inspire social change and positive narratives about vulnerable groups and persons at risk of being left behind, their integration and contribution to the society. Meaningful participation of civil society, diverse communities, excluded groups and people left behind, as well as non-traditional partners in decision making will continue to be promoted. The agency and engagement of young people, adolescents, women, persons with disabilities, invisible people and others that live on the margins of the society will be systematically encouraged. People left furthest behind will be empowered to seek protection, justice and free legal aid, especially those in humanitarian context. Eradication of statelessness, and creating complementary pathways for integration of refugees, migrants and other groups are integral part of the efforts for more sustained, just and equitable development.

Total estimated budget (in USD):*		\$ 11,227,565
<i>* Total estimated budget includes both direct program costs and indirect support costs.</i>		
Out of which:		
Funded		\$10,816,632
Unfunded		\$ 410,933
Estimated budget per output (in USD)		
By Output:	Output 4.1.	\$ 4,328,748
	Output 4.2.	\$ 3,898,828
	Output 4.3.	\$ 1,681,153
	Output 4.4.	\$ 1,078,836
	Output 4.5.	\$ 240,000