



**Report on the final evaluation of
the strategic framework of the United Nations Office
for South-South Cooperation, 2022–2025**

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Abbreviations and acronyms	6
Executive summary.....	9
1. Introduction	21
1.1 Purpose and objectives	21
1.2 Context and history.....	21
1.3 Strategic framework of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 2022–2025, and its implementation	23
1.3.1 Integrated results framework.....	23
1.3.2 Programmatic development services and cross-cutting issues.....	24
1.3.3 Implementation and adaptation to global challenges.....	25
1.4 Evaluation approach	26
1.4.1 Scope.....	26
1.4.2 Evaluation criteria and questions	26
1.4.3 Evaluation approach and methodology.....	27
1.4.4 Data collection and information sources.....	27
1.5 limitations	28
2. Key findings and discussion	29
2.1 Relevance and effectiveness.....	29
2.1.1 Outcome 1	29
2.1.2 Outcome 2	31
2.1.3 Outcome 3	35
2.1.4 Cross-cutting issue: Gender equality and inclusivity	42
2.1.5 Organizational effectiveness.....	44
2.2 Efficiency.....	50
2.2.1 A fit-for-purpose organization in the face of a rapidly evolving South-South and triangular cooperation landscape	51
2.2.2 Operational innovations and proactive engagement.....	51
2.2.3 Efficiency considerations in managing trust funds	52
2.3 Sustainability.....	53
2.3.1 Outcome 1.....	53
2.3.2 Outcome 2.....	54
2.3.3 Outcome 3.....	54

2.4	Coherence	55
2.4.1	Internal coherence	55
2.4.2	External coherence	57
3.	Conclusions and recommendations.....	59
3.1	Conclusions	59
3.2	Recommendations	63
Annexes*		
I.	Terms of Reference: Final Evaluation of UNOSSC Strategic Framework 2022-2025	66
II.	UNOSSC Organogram	81
III.	UNOSSC Funding 2017 to 2024	82
IV.	Evaluation Matrix	83
V.	General Interview Protocol	87
VI.	Integrated Results Framework Progress Update for the Strategic Framework of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 2022–2025	92
VII.	List of interviewees	104
VIII.	List of documents consulted	108

*Please note that the annexes are presented in their original form and have not been copy-edited.

Abbreviations and acronyms

AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
BAPA	Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries
BERA	Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy [of UNDP]
BRICS	Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa
CCA	Common country analysis
CICETE	China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSO	Civil society organization
DCO	Development Coordination Office
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
G-77 and China	Group of 77 and China
GCTTN	Global Coalition of Think Tank Networks for South-South Cooperation
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment
GORD	Gulf Organisation for Research & Development
GPI	Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation
GSSD Expo	Global South-South Development Expo
GSSDC	Global South-South Development Centre
HDRO	Human Development Report Office
HLC	High-level Committee
IAM	Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation
IBSA	India, Brazil and South Africa
ICT	Information and communications technology

IEO	Independent Evaluation Office [of UNDP]
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRF	Integrated results framework
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LDC	Least developed country
LLDC	Landlocked developing country
MSIT	Ministry of Science and ICT
MTR	Midterm review
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NOREC	Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OSAA	Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
PGTF	Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation
QCPR	Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
RIS	Research and Information System for Developing Countries
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small island developing State
SSC	South-South cooperation
TCDC	Technical cooperation among developing countries
TICA	Thailand International Cooperation Agency
TIKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
TrC	Triangular cooperation
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations development system
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNFSSC	United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
VNR	Voluntary national review
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

1. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) commissioned the present evaluation to assess progress under its strategic framework, 2022–2025, with a focus on transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. Its purpose is to enhance organizational learning and accountability by evaluating the results and contributions of the framework to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specific objectives include assessing progress towards planned results, identifying contextual and operational factors that contribute to or hinder the delivery of results, evaluating UNOSSC services (including trust fund management), and providing recommendations to inform the development of the next strategic framework in alignment with the evaluation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation.
2. The strategic framework is designed every four years in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, such as Member States, United Nations entities, the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, think tanks and civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector and other relevant stakeholders. The integrated results framework (IRF) of the strategic framework outlines three outcome areas: advancing South-South and triangular cooperation policymaking, strengthening United Nations capacity for South-South cooperation (SSC) and triangular cooperation (TrC), and promoting SSC and TrC knowledge exchange and technology transfer.
3. UNOSSC delivers these results through five development services: (a) intergovernmental processes and policy advocacy; (b) strengthening the capacity of the United Nations development system (UNDS) and Member States to mainstream SSC and TrC in their development interventions; (c) knowledge co-creation and management; (d) the SSC and TrC Solutions Lab, which incubates and scales innovations; and (e) trust fund management (managing funds such as the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation (PGTF); the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation (UNFSSC); the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund); and the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, which operates within UNFSSC), with a 2025 portfolio of \$31.8 million across 29 projects.
4. The four cross-cutting services — communications, partnerships, results-based management (RBM) and operational support — facilitate implementation. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are integrated into all interventions.
5. The strategic framework was adapted to the post-coronavirus-disease (COVID-19) challenges, and the Office subsequently underwent organizational restructuring in 2022, which merged regional offices into the headquarters of UNOSSC. The restructuring was completed in mid-2023.
6. The present evaluation, which covers the period from January 2022 to February 2025, examined UNOSSC programmatic and operational efforts, including its five development services and four cross-cutting services. It employed internationally recognized criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and coherence) while recognizing the SSC principles. It addressed the overarching question: To what extent did UNOSSC contribute to the strategic framework goals and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
7. The methodology included the triangulation of data collected from multiple streams, encompassing document reviews and semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions with 107 stakeholders

(e.g. Member States, United Nations agencies and trust fund contributors), two focus-group discussions, and in-depth analyses of development services, cross-cutting services and headquarters. Limitations included data reliability, impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the limited availability of evaluations of trust fund projects. Triangulation mitigated these risks.

A. Key findings

Relevance and effectiveness

Outcome 1. Policies to advance South-South and triangular cooperation are strengthened through effective, evidence-based support to intergovernmental processes, multi-stakeholder dialogues and reporting.

8. UNOSSC made significant progress in strengthening policies to advance SSC and TrC. In 2024, the Office provided technical and policy support for the General Assembly. It prepared the 2024 report of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation (A/79/230), which informed the negotiation of the 2024 General Assembly resolution on South-South cooperation (A/RES/79/236). It also supported the Office of the Chair of the Group of 77 and China (G-77 and China).

9. Achievements include the integration of SSC and TrC into 39 General Assembly resolutions, declarations and outcome documents. The Office produced seven analytical reports, supported six policy forums, co-convened 12 thematic policy dialogues, and conducted five case studies focused on landlocked developing countries. Additionally, it provided research and technical support for intergovernmental discussions on emerging priorities, such as development financing, digital transformation and climate action. Despite these efforts, some targets set for 2025 are unlikely to be met, including the number of supported forums and the number of thematic policy briefs prepared. Preliminary findings suggest that these targets may have been overly ambitious given the size and expertise of the Office.

10. Stakeholder feedback highlighted strong appreciation from Member States for the contributions of UNOSSC but limited awareness among members of United Nations country teams (UNCTs) regarding intergovernmental processes and their significance.

11. Overall, the Office is aligned with its strategic framework and United Nations priorities, contributing meaningfully to advancing SSC and TrC, with outcome targets and most output targets on track to being reached.

Outcome 2. The capacity of United Nations entities to respond to requests by developing countries to address specific development challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda through South-South and triangular cooperation is strengthened.

12. United Nations entities are facing rising demands from developing countries for support in integrating SSC and TrC into the work of the United Nations system. The Office has implemented a range of initiatives to bolster United Nations-wide SSC and TrC capabilities:

- (a) **inter-agency coordination and knowledge exchange.** The Office serves as the secretariat for the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (IAM), fostering collaboration among 40+ United Nations entities. While IAM has facilitated joint advocacy

and knowledge-sharing, stakeholders suggested that it could be more dynamic in exchanging innovative ideas;

(b) **capacity-building, guidelines and tools for integrating SSC and TrC into United Nations interventions.** Responding to General Assembly resolution 76/221, the Office partnered with the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO) to produce **Guidelines** for SSC and TrC integration into the work of the United Nations system. These guidelines are recognized by regional United Nations actors and UNCTs as valuable, complementing similar frameworks developed by individual United Nations entities (e.g. the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). UNOSSC, together with the United Nations System Staff College, developed an **e-module** training programme to strengthen UNCT capacities in mainstreaming SSC and TrC. The e-module has been particularly well-received in regions such as the Asia-Pacific, where demand for structured SSC and TrC learning is strong. **Peer-support-group** collaborations have enabled SSC and TrC to be embedded within national and regional frameworks. In addition, 77 per cent of United Nations entities have incorporated SSC and TrC into their **strategic plans** at the global level, nearly reaching the UNOSSC 2025 target. However, regional implementation lags, at 65 per cent, unlikely to reach the target of 85 per cent; and

(c) **support for voluntary national reviews (VNRs).** The Office co-developed a handbook to assist Member States in incorporating SSC and TrC into VNRs presented to the high-level political forum. The handbook has been integrated into the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) global VNR guidance. In 2024, 50 per cent of new VNRs incorporated SSC and TrC perspectives, exceeding the 2025 target of 33 per cent.

13. Overall, outcome 2 is highly relevant to the UNOSSC mandate and aligns with global development priorities. Most targets associated with this outcome are on track or have already been met. However, findings from the mid-term review suggest that only half of the respondents rated UNOSSC as effective or highly effective in strengthening system-wide SSC and TrC capacities. Challenges remain in fully optimizing inter-agency coordination, particularly at the regional and country levels, and ensuring that IAM provides more interactive exchanges of innovations and good practices.

Outcome 3. Developing countries are enabled to implement the 2030 Agenda through harnessing South-South and triangular cooperation knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and facilitation of technology development and transfer.

14. Most of the output indicators will not be achieved by the end of the strategic framework cycle in December 2025. Although the results are unlikely to be achieved by the end of that cycle, a survey conducted in 2023 by the mid-term review of the UNOSSC strategic framework, 2022–2025, found that more than 70 per cent of the respondents saw UNOSSC as an effective knowledge broker and valued its contributions to knowledge creation and dissemination in the field of SSC and TrC.

15. **Knowledge co-creation and management.** South-South Galaxy houses 960 solutions from 190 countries, generated mainly through external partners (involving 616 organizations registered on the platform). The majority of these solutions are drawn from recently completed or ongoing interventions. The solutions cover all 17 SDGs and concern new and emerging technologies (42 solutions on digital transformation) as well as existing challenges (65 solutions on climate change and natural resource management). The platform provides a user-friendly interface that significantly simplifies query and

analysis. Vetting the solutions is the responsibility of those submitting them, and the solutions offer no external validating evidence from independent evaluations. Hence, the quality and validity of the solutions cannot be assessed with the available information. UNOSSC is developing metrics to analyse how the South-South Galaxy platform is being used and its impact. At present, the **use and impact** of its knowledge products cannot be determined. However, the platform avoids duplicating efforts by other United Nations entities that host a knowledge platform. It also serves as a portal for all United Nations knowledge platforms by providing links to all existing knowledge platforms of United Nations entities.

16. The Global South-South Development (GSSD) Expo is a flagship knowledge-sharing platform whose 11th edition was organized in 2022 with significant investment from UNOSSC and the Government of Thailand.

17. The Office has developed a **knowledge management and engagement strategy** through a lengthy consultative approach to facilitate more effective use of its knowledge products. The strategy will be implemented in 2025.

18. The Office also has established partnerships with think tanks, academic institutions and experts from the Global South and pursues SSC- and TrC-related research (e.g. the Global Coalition of Think Tank Networks for SSC and TrC).

19. **SSC and TrC Solutions Lab.** Launched in 2024 in partnership with United Nations entities and external actors,¹ the Solutions Lab conceptually represents a unique and innovative approach to promoting SSC and TrC. However, while it is too early to assess the likelihood of success, the relatively low investment level (\$40,000 per proposal) may limit the scope of achievement for selected proposals.

20. **Trust fund management.** Trust funds have emerged as a valuable mechanism for enhancing UNOSSC contributions to SSC and TrC. They provide visibility to the work of the Office while facilitating the exchange of technical and practical knowledge among programme countries. The portfolio expansion and diversification signal increasing interest from Southern donors and a growing confidence in UNOSSC capacity to manage SSC and TrC initiatives.

21. Despite these positive trends, there are missed opportunities to maximize impact. The Office has largely replicated typical SSC interventions rather than pursuing a catalytic approach that could demonstrate its distinct added value. Moreover, trust fund projects are not systematically aligned with UNCT priorities or broader policy advocacy efforts. Similarly, there is no explicit requirement for project frameworks to align with key strategic priorities under the IRF of the strategic framework.

22. Since 2018, the trust funds that UNOSSC manages have expanded rapidly, growing from an average of \$3.5 million to \$4.0 million to \$17.6 million in 2025. This increase underscores the need for enhanced alignment with the established practices of major United Nations trust fund managers. Strengthening risk identification and mitigation measures while ensuring compliance with funders' expectations is essential. Leveraging the guidance of established entities, such as the [United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund](#)² and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group quadrennial comprehensive policy review of

¹ First cohort of partners: Economic Commission for Europe, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), World Food Programme (WFP), Gulf Organisation for Research and Development (GORD), Masdar City and Zayed International Foundation for the Environment.

² For information on common management features across pooled funds.

operational activities for development of the United Nations system ([QCPR framework](#)),³ could provide valuable insights for the Office.

23. A key challenge remains: demonstrating the added value of trust fund projects. While UNOSSC has developed monitoring and reporting mechanisms, the ability to measure impact is limited by a paucity of completed project evaluations.

24. Overall, the expansion of the trust fund mechanism reflects growing confidence in the role of UNOSSC in SSC and TrC. However, further refinements in project alignment, impact measurement and strategic coordination with UNCTs could strengthen its long-term effectiveness.

25. **Cross-cutting issue: gender equality and inclusivity.** UNOSSC strives to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) into its efforts to implement the strategic framework. However, greater focus is needed to mainstream GEWE into SSC and TrC effectively, as indicated by data collected from interviewees, document review and analysis of South-South Galaxy. However, the gender analysis and gender-disaggregated data need to be more systematically incorporated across all knowledge products.

26. **RBM approaches.** The strategic framework provides a relevant framework to track progress and achievements; however, it is not based on a theory of change and did not engender programmatic synergies. The IRF provides a manageable and efficient framework for tracking progress but it is not fully evaluable and some of its targets are overoptimistic. The RBM culture of the Office remains weak, despite the Office prioritization of tracking progress and a results-oriented approach. The Office has established measures for the regular collection of IRF data; however, it does not systematically analyse those data to identify strengths, gaps and bottlenecks, which is needed for course correction. The analysis is not routinized owing to weak demand and a lack of prioritization.

27. **Strategic partnerships.** The Office maintains a results-driven approach to partnerships, tracking implementation progress and contribution to the achievement of UNOSSC goals. As of February 2025, it had exceeded its target for formalized partnership agreements, with 12 costed work plans agreed and implemented. However, execution of key actions under the partnership strategy lags expectations, with only 50 per cent completed, falling short of the 2024 milestone of 70 per cent.

28. While the Office has successfully engaged in collaborations, such as TrC with the Republic of Korea and initiatives such as the Solutions Lab, it continues to rely predominantly on its in-house resources. This limits the potential benefits of existing partnerships. For example, greater integration of external expertise (e.g. leveraging think tanks for technical policy briefs) could enhance contributions to intergovernmental processes and amplify the impact of the Office.

29. **Strategic communications.** Given the limited size and resources of UNOSSC, it needs to define clearly and communicate the support and services that it can realistically provide. There is a need to

³ “‘Common management features’ are defined as: a well-articulated strategy, including innovation features where relevant, clear theories of change, solid Results-Based Management systems, well-functioning governance bodies supported by effective secretariats, quality assurance on issues of United Nations norms and values; risk management systems and strategies; operational effectiveness/reporting/visibility/transparency standards; and planning and funding for joint and system wide evaluations that meet United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards.” Source: [QCPR Monitoring Framework](#) (2021–2024), page 15, indicator 4.5.3, and page 18, footnote 12.

enhance the reach and influence of the Office, particularly in the Global South. Addressing this challenge requires investment in targeted and user-friendly communication products and platforms, collaboration with Southern media outlets and influencers, and stronger linkages between communications and policy advocacy to maximize impact.

Efficiency

30. **Fit-for-purpose organization and SSC and TrC evolution.** Stakeholders acknowledge the contributions of UNOSSC, particularly its strong engagement and responsiveness despite resource limitations. However, SSC and TrC have expanded significantly in scale and complexity. Reports indicate that SSC now represents 12 to 15 per cent of global development finance, more than doubling its share from 2000. This evolution has led to concerns about whether UNOSSC and the broader United Nations system are fully equipped to address emerging needs and maintain strategic relevance.

31. **Operational innovations and engagement.** The Office has demonstrated agility in engaging diverse actors across complex topics. Recent initiatives, such as the Triangular Cooperation Window of UNFSSC and the Solutions Lab illustrate efforts to introduce operational innovations. The UNOSSC leadership has taken proactive steps, including action-oriented partnerships with UNDP and the development of a regional engagement strategy.

32. Despite these advancements, UNOSSC is often perceived as task-oriented and reactive rather than strategic and proactive. A lack of unified direction among teams has contributed to fragmented efforts, prioritizing immediate demands over long-term impact. This perception affects the Office visibility and ability to shape SSC and TrC discussions at the intergovernmental level.

33. **Efficiency considerations in trust fund management.** Trust fund stakeholders, including Member States, United Nations agencies and resident coordinators, expressed their appreciation of UNOSSC efficiency and flexibility in fund management. The Office currently dedicates 5.5 of its 23 staff positions to managing trust funds. In addition, the team has 5.5 non-staff contract holders (consultants, United Nations Volunteers) dedicated to the management of the trust funds. A deeper analysis of trust fund operations reveals several limitations:

(a) Project design and approval processes lack transparency, with minimal involvement from implementing agencies. As a result, design flaws, such as unrealistic time frames and costs, have led to frequent extensions⁴ across nearly all reviewed projects.

(b) The weak project oversight mechanisms restrict learning and prevent knowledge transfer beyond individual projects. Without credible evidence of value added, the Office risks pursuing a “pass-through” model, managing funds primarily to collect fees rather than enhancing project quality.

34. **Governance and operational efficiencies.** The fragmentation of UNOSSC-managed trust funds results in high transaction costs and operational inefficiencies. Separate governance structures, such as those of the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, the IBSA Fund and the PGTF, require distinct reporting and oversight, thereby increasing administrative burdens. Strengthening business processes,

⁴ Some of the recent delays could be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

streamlining project approval mechanisms and harmonizing operational workflows could enhance efficiency and reduce complexity.

35. **Considerations for the pending United Nations restructuring.** Ahead of the anticipated United Nations restructuring, UNOSSC may need to redefine its trust fund engagement model. Greater emphasis on quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation could reinforce its substantive oversight role. Addressing concerns from Member States and fund contributors will be crucial in optimizing its trust fund portfolio and strategic positioning.

Sustainability

36. The assessment of the sustainability of UNOSSC achievements shows a mixed performance. UNOSSC efforts to advocate for integrating SSC and TrC into key United Nations policy frameworks (outcome 1) provide an enabling environment and legitimacy for UNDS to prioritize integrating SSC and TrC into its interventions, thereby providing a durable impact. IAM provides a platform for improved coordination of SSC and TrC among the entities of UNDS at the headquarters level. Meanwhile, the guidance published by UNOSSC to mainstream SSC and TrC in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs), along with the training provided to operationalize this guidance, is likely to yield durable results in strengthening the mainstreaming of SSC and TrC in United Nations interventions in programme countries (outcome 2). However, there is insufficient independent evidence to demonstrate that the knowledge products, South-South Galaxy and the trust fund projects (outcome 3) have a lasting impact.

37. The ongoing paradigm shift in multilateral development assistance poses a significant challenge to the financial sustainability of the United Nations system, including that of UNOSSC. It is likely that, to address the significant shortfalls in traditional official development assistance (ODA), SSC and TrC will become even more critical, including the efforts currently under way.

Coherence

38. **Internal coherence.** The strategic framework provides a comprehensive structure for UNOSSC development services but it lacks an operational theory of change to clarify how resources and expertise are translated into optimal outcomes and outputs. Without this guiding framework, the Office interventions across the three outcome areas do not effectively leverage one another, limiting synergies between programmatic and operational efforts.

39. While teams within UNOSSC collaborate on visibility campaigns, knowledge-sharing and operational support, these interactions remain ad hoc rather than systematically integrated. For example, efforts to systematically link trust fund experience to inform intergovernmental engagement are still underdeveloped. Attempts by the management to break down silos, such as forming task forces for shared deliverables, have enhanced coordination but team collaboration continues to be fragmented, which affects the overall impact and strategic positioning of the Office within the United Nations system.

40. **External coherence.** UNOSSC has established strong working relationships with key intergovernmental bodies, serving as the substantive secretariat for the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and providing technical support to the Chair of the G-77 and China. IAM convenes over 40 United Nations entities to advance SSC and TrC coordination yet remains underutilized in peer-to-peer learning and promoting innovations.

41. The Office has strengthened collaboration with resident coordinator offices (RCOs), integrating SSC and TrC considerations into country-level planning. It also established a strategic partnership with UNDP, leveraging its global presence. However, broader engagement with other United Nations agencies (e.g. the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNICEF) remains underdeveloped, limiting opportunities to scale SSC and TrC interventions. Additionally, a disconnect exists between intergovernmental processes and country-level SSC and TrC efforts, since many UNCT members remain unaware of relevant United Nations policies and resolutions.

B. Conclusions

Conclusion 1. SSC and TrC and multilateral development assistance are undergoing transformative changes.

42. The twenty-first century has seen SSC and TrC grow more complex, with digital technology and artificial intelligence (AI) transforming development cooperation. Their share in global development finance has more than doubled, attracting new actors. Meanwhile, major ODA reductions expected after 2026 will increase demand for SSC and TrC support. These changes require UNOSSC to adapt its approach to remain effective.

Conclusion 2. UNOSSC is favourably regarded by key stakeholders; its services are valued, its efforts are relevant to the Office mandate and United Nations SSC and TrC needs, and it is on course to achieve many of its IRF targets.

43. Key stakeholders among Member States, United Nations entities and external partners interviewed confirmed the relevance and responsiveness of UNOSSC, praising the professionalism of its leadership. The three strategic-framework outcome areas align with United Nations system needs, with most of the 2025 targets likely achievable. These outcomes support SSC policymaking, UNDS capacity and knowledge exchange – all critical to the UNOSSC mandate.

44. The Office has strengthened the implementation of the strategic framework by streamlining the support for intergovernmental SSC and TrC policy processes, convening multilateral SSC and TrC dialogues and tracking global progress, enhancing UNDS coordination through IAM and entering into a collaboration agreement with UNDP, co-creating SSC and TrC knowledge solutions, administering trust fund projects, building UNCT capacities through SSC and TrC training and developing guidance to mainstream SSC and TrC in UNCT interventions, and engaging external partners such as development banks and think tanks. Monitoring data show that 80 per cent of IRF targets for which data are available are likely to be achieved despite COVID-19-induced delays and an Office restructuring that was completed in mid-2023.

Conclusion 3. Despite these achievements, the visibility of UNOSSC remains low within the United Nations system, particularly at the country level, raising questions regarding the impact of its interventions and results.

45. The limited human and financial resources of UNOSSC compared to those of country-based United Nations entities are likely to contribute to low visibility. While achieving success in knowledge co-creation, capacity development and trust fund administration, its direct impact on people's lives remains unclear. **The insufficient focus on high-impact SSC and TrC interventions also contributes to the low visibility of the Office. High-impact SSC and TrC solutions are linked to addressing critical development gaps.** While

UNDS can identify emerging needs, UNOSSC underutilizes this capacity. Better engagement could generate demand where SSC and TrC could have a significant impact.

46. **UNOSSC also has not fully capitalized on its access to intergovernmental processes to identify the critical priorities of Member States.** Though supporting bodies such as the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, it missed opportunities during broader discussions on resolutions to understand the priorities of the South. **The Office did not adequately leverage the SSC and TrC experience and expertise of the United Nations entities in designing and implementing high-impact initiatives.** It lacks both a strategy to prioritize high-impact SSC and TrC interventions and research to identify effective solutions.

Conclusion 4. The United Nations development system is unaware of the value proposition of the Office and lacks clarity regarding its role and function, which hinders demand for high-impact SSC and TrC.

47. Many United Nations entities do not fully understand the role of UNOSSC. With ongoing United Nations reforms, clarifying its value proposition is crucial, given its limited resources but broad mandate.

48. The Office has yet to undertake a systematic effort to identify and maximize the value that it adds to the ongoing SSC and TrC efforts within the United Nations system. While recognizing the need to facilitate inter-agency learning and broker partnerships, it lacks a systematic approach. For example, IAM meetings have not fully realized their potential for substantive exchanges, and technical support often relies only on in-house capacity.

49. The trust fund projects missed the opportunity to showcase the value proposition of UNOSSC. While improving visibility and addressing country needs, they have not adequately demonstrated a catalytic impact or synergies with UNCT efforts, risking duplication.

50. The Office has strengthened its external partnerships but has not fully leveraged them to benefit the United Nations system. Partnerships with Southern think tanks and academia remain underutilized for brokering knowledge exchange or addressing priorities such as AI governance. Such partnerships could also have been used to address the increasing demand from national actors to enhance their capacities for promoting SSC and TrC in the Global South.

Conclusion 5. The weak internal and external coherence of UNOSSC and its interventions is likely to compromise their quality and impact.

51. There was a lack of shared vision and goals among the Office teams, which generally functioned as silos. The absence of interlinkages among the three strategic framework outcomes reinforced this. While the Office teams provided valuable stakeholder support, their collaboration remained ad hoc, lacking shared priorities, which limited their overall impact.

52. The Office has established and institutionalized working relationships with intergovernmental bodies, UNDS and external partners. However, it underutilizes synergies among its SSC and TrC interventions and its partnerships. For example, intergovernmental support does not sufficiently leverage the collective experience of IAM members, and regional DCO collaboration has not improved the understanding of regional SSC and TrC priorities. As a result of not sufficiently leveraging partnerships, the

Office may not be able to adapt in an agile manner to address the dynamic context of SSC and TrC needs with its limited financial and human resources

Conclusion 6. Weak results-based management (RBM) and an anaemic culture of results hinder learning and course corrections necessary to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Office.

53. While the Office enhanced its monitoring systems, the collected data were not analysed for decision-making. It lacks key performance indicators to assess progress towards strategic framework targets regularly.

54. The Office and the United Nations system have yet to develop a measure to determine the added value (impact) of SSC and TrC interventions. Despite an increased focus on results, methodological challenges persist in assessing the value of SSC and TrC, with no sector-specific measures established system-wide.

55. The design and implementation of the strategic framework were not grounded in a theory of change and failed to identify and manage critical risks as well as validate the assumptions underlying its approach. For example, outcome 1 (support to SSC and TrC policymaking) was not linked to outcome 3 (SSC and TrC knowledge exchange), and programmatic service 3 (knowledge co-creation and management) was not connected to service 5 (trust fund management), missing opportunities to enhance impact.

C. Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Develop and implement a strategy to prioritize high-impact SSC and TrC interventions, enhancing the visibility and relevance of the Office.

56. UNOSSC should:

- (a) collaborate with United Nations entities and UNCTs to map critical country-level demands and identify global SSC and TrC priorities (e.g. digitalization, climate change);
- (b) proactively engage Member States through intergovernmental processes (e.g. G-77 and China ambassadorial meetings, discussions on General Assembly resolutions);
- (c) strengthen collaboration with regional bodies (e.g. African Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to map regional SSC and TrC priorities;
- (d) invest in research for SSC and TrC solutions to global challenges (e.g. AI governance, debt restructuring);
- (e) develop measures to assess the added value of SSC and TrC, including intangible benefits such as solidarity; and
- (f) enhance the alignment of UNOSSC interventions (support to intergovernmental bodies, capacity development, South-South Galaxy, trust fund projects) with priority focus areas and maximize high-impact SSC and TrC support.

Recommendation 2. Clarify the UNOSSC value proposition to Member States and the United Nations system.

57. UNOSSC should:

- (a) map all ongoing SSC and TrC work in the United Nations system to identify gaps where coordination and facilitation are needed, avoiding duplication while brokering external partnerships;
- (b) in implementing the UNOSSC agenda, promote innovations and cutting-edge research to deliver high-impact solutions to priority needs. Ensure that the latest solutions for the priority focal areas of UNOSSC are captured, analysed and disseminated widely on the UNOSSC digital knowledge platform; and
- (c) establish ongoing efforts to communicate clearly the UNOSSC role and responsibilities to UNDS members at all levels and to Member States.

Recommendation 3. Strengthen synergies and coherence across SSC and TrC interventions.

58. UNOSSC should:

- (a) ensure programmatic connections among the three strategic-framework outcomes by introducing linkage indicators and connecting strategic-framework results to assessments of staff performance;
- (b) leverage UNDS expertise and external partnerships to enhance support for intergovernmental processes, reducing the Office workload;
- (c) enhance the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for SSC and TrC and collaboration with regional DCOs to strengthen UNCT capacity for integrating SSC and TrC;
- (d) address the demand from national entities that promote SSC and TrC to strengthen their capacities, leveraging the collaboration with United Nations agencies and external partnerships; and
- (e) conduct an independent assessment of the four trust fund project portfolios to evaluate their added value, catalytic impact and synergies with UNSDCF interventions and alignment with the UNOSSC value proposition.

Recommendation 4. Conduct an organizational assessment of the Office to determine an appropriate structure and the capacities needed to ensure that the Office operates as a cohesive unit with a shared vision, fit for purpose in delivering its future priorities and commitments.

59. The current arrangement has led to the Office teams operating in silos, which significantly hinders synergies across five programmatic development services and interventions aimed at achieving the three outcomes. The assessment should address the UNOSSC organizational design, capabilities to meet emerging SSC and TrC priorities, and the financial and operational sustainability under the current United Nations reforms and expected reductions to core and non-core resources.

Recommendation 5. Strengthen the culture of results and results-based management within the Office.

60. UNOSSC should:

- (a) ensure that the next strategic framework and IRF include evaluable indicators and realistic targets based on experience;
- (b) develop and implement key performance indicators aligned with intermediate milestones for achieving IRF targets and the theory of change; and
- (c) establish regular analysis of portfolio performance using monitored key performance-indicator data to enable timely course corrections.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and objectives

61. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) commissioned the present independent, external evaluation to assess progress towards the established goal and results in the strategic framework, 2022–2025. The evaluation responds to the decisions of the twentieth and twenty-first sessions of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation (SSC) in which Member States stress the need for improving the transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of UNOSSC.⁵ The terms of reference for this evaluation are found in annex I.

62. The **purpose** of the evaluation is to enhance organizational *learning* and *accountability* by assessing the strategic framework results and contributions to the SDGs.

63. This evaluation is both summative, since it assesses the work of UNOSSC since the beginning of the current strategic framework, and formative, since its conclusions and recommendations aim to guide decision-making regarding the upcoming UNOSSC strategic framework. The evaluation also identifies lessons and offers recommendations for enhancing ongoing and future programme design, implementation and contributions to the 2030 Agenda.

64. Specific **objectives** of the evaluation are to:

- (a) assess the progress towards the planned results under the implementation of the current strategic framework, focusing on efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and promotion of SSC principles;
- (b) identify contextual, strategic and operational factors that contributed to the delivery of results and document the challenges and lessons learned during implementation;
- (c) conduct a deep-dive evaluation to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of all UNOSSC services, including trust fund management, focusing on processes and results (outcomes and impacts); and
- (d) align with findings and recommendations of the evaluation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on SSC and TrC and provide practical recommendations to inform the development of the next strategic framework.

1.2 Context and history

65. South-South cooperation (SSC) originated at the 1955 Bandung Conference, where newly independent Asian and African countries sought economic and cultural collaboration. That initiative paved the way for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961, which promoted development independent of Cold War power blocs. SSC became institutionalized in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly with the 1974 United Nations General Assembly resolution A/3251 (XXIX), in which the General Assembly endorsed the

⁵ Decisions of the twentieth (2021) and twenty-first (2023) sessions of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation (A/76/39, para. 4, and A/78/39, para. 4).

establishment of a special unit within UNDP to coordinate technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) within UNDP-funded activities (para. 2). The 1978 Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (BAPA) provided a structured framework focused on mutual benefit, non-conditionality and national sovereignty; it also provided the Special Unit with a United Nations system-wide mandate and a global mandate in promoting TCDC in development processes, even beyond those funded by UNDP.

66. Following the end of the Cold War, SSC gained momentum as emerging economies, such as those of Brazil, China and India, took an active role. Regional integration efforts, such as those of the African Union and ASEAN, further expanded SSC. In the early 2000s, triangular cooperation (TrC) emerged, combining traditional donor support with developing-country leadership. In 2003, the UNDP SSC unit was renamed the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, broadening its mandate for policy coordination, advocacy and partnerships.

67. The 2009 Nairobi outcome document reaffirmed SSC as complementary to North-South cooperation. In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 68/230, took note of the decisions of the seventeenth session (2012) of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation including decision 17/1 in which the Committee decided to rename the SSC unit the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), and reaffirmed the mandate and the central role of the Office as the focal point for promoting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation for development on a global and United Nations system-wide basis. Both modalities gained global recognition with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably target 17.9, which highlights the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in capacity-building. The 2019 Buenos Aires second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) reaffirmed SSC principles and called for stronger institutional support.⁶ The significance of SSC is also reflected in frameworks such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the SIDS [Small Island Developing States] Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, the Istanbul Programmes of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, the Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) for the Decade 2024–2034, and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States.

68. In recent United Nations General Assembly resolutions (A/RES/79/226 and A/RES/79/236, December 2024), the General Assembly emphasized the growing role of SSC, urging United Nations entities to integrate SSC into strategic frameworks and allocate sufficient resources. The United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024, endorsed in 2020 and published in 2023, provides a coordinated approach to South-South and triangular cooperation, including an action plan and monitoring framework.

Definitions of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation

69. South-South cooperation is “a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the

⁶ BAPA+40 outcome document (A/RES/73/291, para. 27 (h)).

private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions”⁷ and taking into account the principles of South-South cooperation. “South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation.”⁸

70. Triangular cooperation “involves Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country(ies)/or multilateral organization(s) to implement development cooperation programmes and projects”.⁹ It is “a modality that builds partnerships and trust, between all partners, and that combines diverse resources and capacities, under the ownership of the requesting developing country, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; and that it provides added value by leveraging and mobilizing additional technical and financial resources, sharing a wider range of experiences, promoting new areas of cooperation, and combining affordable and context-based development solutions under flexible arrangements and agreed shared modalities”.¹⁰

1.3 Strategic framework of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 2022-2025, and its implementation

71. UNOSSC designs and implements the strategic framework that guides its work. Every four years, the Office develops a new strategic framework in consultation with key stakeholders, aligning it with the United Nations system-wide planning cycle, including the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR). The strategic framework adapts to evolving development priorities, incorporates lessons learned, and aligns with UNDS reform, SDGs, General Assembly resolutions, and broader South-South and triangular cooperation goals.

72. Stakeholder consultations involved Member States (especially the G-77 and China), intergovernmental bodies, United Nations entities, the HLC on SSC, regional organizations, civil society, academia and private-sector partners. The strategic framework and its IRF undergo a multi-tiered review before finalization. UNOSSC receives policy directives and guidance from the General Assembly and through its subsidiary body, the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. The strategic framework is presented every four years to the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA [United Nations Population Fund]/UNOPS [United Nations Office for Project Services], which takes note of the strategic framework.

1.3.1 Integrated results framework

73. The IRF provides a framework for identifying results to be achieved. To accomplish this, it outlines the outcomes and outputs, along with the indicators for tracking progress towards these outcomes and outputs as well as the targets that the Office aims to meet to enhance South-South and triangular cooperation and accelerate progress towards the SDGs. The current IRF identifies three key outcome areas (see figure):

- (a) advancing SSC and TrC policymaking and implementation;

⁷ The operational definition of SSC is taken from the 2016 framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation (SSC/19/3, para. 10). Available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/081/68/pdf/N1608168.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., para. 11.

¹⁰ A/RES/73/291, para. 28.

- (b) strengthening United Nations capacity to support SSC and TrC; and
- (c) promoting SSC and TrC knowledge exchange, capacity development and technology transfer for sustainable development.

1.3.2 Programmatic development services and cross-cutting issues

74. UNOSSC uses the following five development services to deliver the outcomes:

- (a) **intergovernmental processes facilitation and reporting.** UNOSSC facilitates South-South linkages through research, analysis and policy guidance, supporting intergovernmental bodies such as the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. It advocates for South-South approaches within UNDS and provides technical advice to Member States on integrating SSC and TrC into national and United Nations programmes;
- (b) **capacity development.** UNOSSC strengthens United Nations entities, regional commissions and United Nations country teams (UNCTs) to integrate SSC and TrC into global strategies and country programmes. It supports developing countries in establishing national institutions for SSC and fosters knowledge-sharing through forums such as the South-South and Sustainable Development Directors General Forum;
- (c) **knowledge co-creation and management.** UNOSSC facilitates knowledge exchange to support the 2030 Agenda, leveraging platforms such as South-South Galaxy, South-South Global Thinkers, and Good Practices in SSC and TrC for Sustainable Development;
- (d) **SSC and TrC Solutions Lab.** The Lab accelerates SDG progress by coordinating, incubating and scaling initiatives in renewable energy, fintech, digital skills, technological innovation and food security. Selected projects receive global, regional and country-level support;
- (e) **trust fund management.** UNOSSC manages SSC funds, which provide a dedicated funding source to SSC and TrC projects in programme countries. Those projects are envisaged to raise the visibility and value of SSC and TrC as cooperation modalities to complement North-South flows. In 2025, the trust fund portfolio allocation is \$31.8 million, with 29 projects (including three multi-country projects) in 44 countries. Under the trust fund portfolio, UNOSSC manages the following funds:¹¹
 - (i) Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund (PGTF),
 - (ii) United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation (UNFSSC),
 - (iii) India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund), and
 - (iv) India-UN Development Partnership Fund, which operates within UNFSSC alongside projects such as the Republic of Korea-UNOSSC Facility (2021–2025), the Global South-South Development Centre Project (2019–2024), and the Maritime Continental Silk Road Cities SSC and TrC Project (2019–2023);

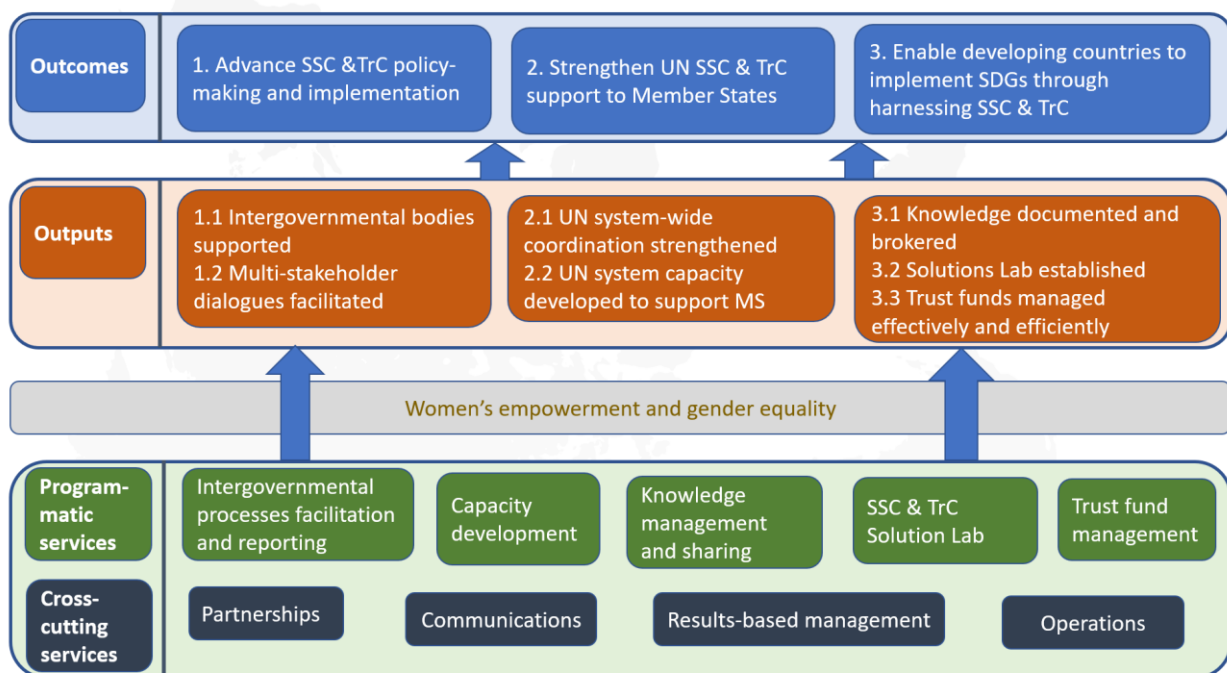
¹¹ <https://unsouthsouth.org/our-work/south-south-trust-fund-management/>.

- (f) UNOSSC also launched a **Triangular Cooperation Window** in 2024 under UNFSSC to institutionalize triangular cooperation, mobilize resources and scale up SSC initiatives. Current funding includes:
- (i) Republic of Korea-UNOSSC Facility (operational for the past 15 years; contributed \$4 million between 2021-2025);
 - (ii) Russian Federation-supported programme (\$4 million, upcoming); and
 - (iii) Portugal-funded Blue Economy initiative (\$200,000).

Cross-cutting services

75. Four cross-cutting services – partnerships, communications, results-based management and operations support – facilitate strategic framework implementation. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are integrated into all work programmes.

Results chain for the UNOSSC strategic framework, 2022–2025



Source: UNOSSC.

1.3.3 Implementation and adaptation to global challenges

76. The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the global development landscape during strategic framework formulation. By the time of implementation, its effects had diminished, prompting UNOSSC to adjust work plans while maintaining service delivery. In July 2022, UNOSSC began organizational restructuring,

consolidating regional offices into its headquarters and organizing its work into three functional teams and a directorate.

1.4 Evaluation approach

1.4.1 Scope

77. This evaluation covers all of the UNOSSC development services and the contribution of UNOSSC to the efforts of United Nations development agencies at the global, regional and country levels to strengthen SSC and TrC. It focuses on efforts to support countries in achieving the 2030 Agenda goals and targets. The period covered by the evaluation is from January 2022 to February 2025.

78. The evaluation assesses UNOSSC programmatic and operational efforts to implement the IRF of the strategic framework, including the results and achievements under the IRF. In addition, it assesses the UNOSSC programmatic services to implement the strategic framework: facilitating and reporting on intergovernmental processes, capacity development, knowledge co-creation and management, a South-South and triangular cooperation Solutions Lab, and trust fund management. It also assesses UNOSSC cross-cutting services – communications, partnerships, RBM and operations – to achieve the planned results. The operational aspects include the extent to which the organization is fit for purpose and the business processes in place.

79. Where feasible, the evaluation includes the impact on the work of UNDS at the regional level and UNCTs at the country level. It also addresses the relationship between UNOSSC and other United Nations development entities at the global, regional and country levels. To promote SSC and TrC, it focuses on brokering knowledge and leveraging partnerships, including with the private sector.

1.4.2 Evaluation criteria and questions

Evaluation criteria

80. The evaluation is anchored in the following five of the six internationally recognized evaluation criteria while recognizing the SSC principles involved:

- (a) **relevance:** assessment of how well the strategic framework aligns with the UNOSSC mandate, SSC and TrC principles, United Nations SSC priorities and the 2030 Agenda, and the ability of the Office to remain relevant in the face of rapid contextual changes (such as the COVID-19 pandemic);
- (b) **effectiveness:** assessment of the extent to which the strategic framework results and targets were achieved;
- (c) **efficiency:** assessment of the extent to which results were achieved in a timely and cost-effective manner. This also involves assessing the measures taken and the processes established to manage financial and human resources efficiently, including innovations, agility and institutional changes to ensure that the Office is fit-for-purpose;
- (d) **sustainability:** assessment of the durability of achievements and their contribution to a sustainable environment; and

- (e) **coherence:** assessment of the extent to which UNDS synergistically pursued SSC at all levels in coordination with UNOSSC (internal coherence) and aligned its SSC efforts with the priorities and practices of the programme countries.

Evaluation questions

81. The **overarching evaluation question** is: To what extent did UNOSSC effectively and efficiently contribute to achieving the goals and results of the strategic framework, 2022–2025, and to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

82. The evaluation questions under each criterion are presented in the evaluation matrix (annex IV). The general data collection protocol is described in annex V. Interview questions were tailored to each interlocutor.

1.4.3 Evaluation approach and methodology

83. The evaluation builds on recent assessments (e.g. the midterm review (MTR) of the UNOSSC strategic framework, 2022-2025; the evaluation of the previous strategic framework; and project evaluations) and audit reports.

84. The evaluation methodology was designed to generate robust findings and conclusions. It draws on multiple sources using qualitative and quantitative methods and analytical techniques. It adheres to the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). The design, including the theory of change (TOC), key evaluation questions and methodology, was presented to UNOSSC, the evaluation reference group (see below) and key stakeholders for review and feedback.

85. The evaluation engaged UNOSSC and other key stakeholders to seek information and feedback throughout the process. A reference group comprising key stakeholders was established to strengthen stakeholder engagement and enhance the quality of the report. Emerging findings, conclusions and recommendations, along with the inception report, were shared and discussed with the reference group to facilitate finalizing the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the report. The evaluation follows the UNDP guidelines and adheres to the UNEG norms and standards.

1.4.4 Data collection and information sources

86. Data collection included quantitative analysis of the UNOSSC data, document reviews, focus group discussions, semi-structured key informant interviews and analysis of administrative data. Triangulation was applied using evaluation evidence from multiple sources and data collection methods to ensure that the evidence robustly supported findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Document review

87. All documents relating to SSC and TrC were reviewed. That included all relevant recent evaluations, audit reports, UNOSSC submissions to the United Nations and relevant publications as well as decisions by the United Nations General Assembly and the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. In addition, the strategic framework, the United Nations system-wide strategy on SSC and TrC, guidelines, key knowledge products, trust fund terms of reference, project information (further details under “Deep

dives”) and reports relating to organizational reforms/restructuring in UNOSSC were also reviewed. Monitoring data of the IRF of the strategic framework, 2022–2025, during the cycle were also reviewed.

88. The evaluators interviewed 107 interlocutors, including representatives of Member States, UNOSSC staff, United Nations agencies, the Bureau of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, the Chair of the G-77 and China, select Member States and UNCTs, development partners and select regional bodies. Also included were stakeholders such as contributors, Board members and implementing agencies of all four trust funds (the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, the IBSA Fund, the PGTF and UNFSSC). Additionally, the evaluators collaborated with other ongoing efforts commissioned by the Office (e.g. the evaluation of the United Nations SSC strategy, 2022–2025) and participated in two focus group discussions.

Deep dives

89. Deep dives were conducted to assess the five programmatic development services and four cross-cutting services of UNOSSC. The deep dives were conducted at Headquarters, at three of the five DCO regional offices (Asia-Pacific, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean), and in select countries purposely chosen to gather comprehensive evidence from the evaluation questions, with the following considerations: geographical representation (regions, SIDS, landlocked developing countries, etc.), developmental context (particularly income status, such as low-income countries), collaboration and partnerships (with UNCTs, Governments and other stakeholders), and the existence of strategic SSC activities, such as the trust fund projects. In the selected countries, interviews were conducted with chosen UNCT members, development experts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and partners to document successful instances of SSC and TrC and the contributions of UNOSSC. The participating trust fund countries and United Nations agencies included the International Organization for Migration (IOM) - Palau (IBSA fund), UNICEF - Angola (IBSA Fund), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) - Malawi (India-UN Development Partnership Fund), IFAD - Zambia (IBSA Fund), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) – Republic of Moldova (India-UN Development Partnership Fund), UNICEF - El Salvador (India-UN Development Partnership Fund), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) - Barbados (India-UN Development Partnership Fund) and the International Labour Organization - Saint Lucia (India-UN Development Partnership Fund).

1.5 Limitations

90. The few limitations include the availability and reliability of data relevant for assessing qualitative and quantitative findings. Furthermore, qualitative data can be biased, which can affect their reliability and validity. To address that challenge, multiple sources of information were identified for data and method triangulation.

91. The lack of evaluations of trust fund projects (although 11 evaluations were completed, the team had access to only one) and the inability to conduct interviews with project beneficiaries limited the evaluation team's capacity to assess the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project. Additionally, the sample size (i.e. the number of interviews conducted and projects reviewed per trust fund) was relatively small compared to the total number of trust fund projects.

2. Key findings and discussion

2.1 Relevance and effectiveness

Evaluation question: To what extent were UNOSSC's contributions relevant and effective in achieving the strategic framework, 2022–2025, goals and results and supporting the 2030 Agenda (EQs 1-6)?

92. This section covers the relevance and effectiveness of the three strategic framework outcomes and the Office interventions, including the five programmatic development services and four cross-cutting services to implement and achieve these outcomes.

Overarching finding: relevance and effectiveness

Finding 1. The strategic framework and UNOSSC efforts to implement it are well-aligned with the United Nations mandate and priority to strengthen the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation in supporting countries in achieving the 2030 Agenda, and the Office is on track to achieve the majority of the outcome and output targets.

2.1.1 Outcome 1. Policies to advance South-South and triangular cooperation are strengthened through effective, evidence-based support to intergovernmental processes, multi-stakeholder dialogues and reporting.

93. UNOSSC continued to provide secretariat support to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, the main policymaking body on SSC in the United Nations system and a subsidiary body of the General Assembly. It provided technical and policy support for the resolution on SSC of the Second Committee that was unanimously adopted by the General Assembly in 2024 (A/RES/79/236).¹² The Office also supports the annual Second Committee resolution on SSC processes. It contributes to the Secretary-General's report, presented to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation every two years, on the measures taken by United Nations entities to mainstream SSC and TrC in their policies and strategies while strengthening the capacities of Member States to engage in effective SSC and TrC. The report presents recommendations, and the Office monitors their implementation within the United Nations system, as reported in the subsequent report. The Office also provides support for the report of the UNDP Administrator to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, which documents the progress made every two years (the last report was for 2023 and 2024) in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the new directions strategy for South-South cooperation, the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, and the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. The Office also provides substantive support to the Office of the Chair of the G-77 and China and policy and technical support to intergovernmental processes, multi-stakeholder dialogues, reporting on and implementing relevant

¹² The Office also provided similar support for the resolutions in 2022 and 2023, which were adopted by the General Assembly.

recommendations in the United Nations Secretary-General's reports on the state of SSC. This support to intergovernmental processes is one of the five programmatic development services envisaged in the strategic framework, and the Office has a unit dedicated to providing this support, along with a Senior Policy Adviser dedicated to supporting the G-77 and China.

94. In 2024, the Office supported the integration of SSC and TrC into 39 General Assembly resolutions, declarations and outcome documents. It reinforced SSC and TrC by producing and disseminating seven analytical reports, supporting six policy forums, co-convening 12 thematic policy dialogues, and conducting five case studies relating to SSC and TrC experiences of landlocked developing countries. As the lead author, UNOSSC also reported on the progress achieved in SSC and TrC through the Secretary-General's biennial report on the progress achieved by the United Nations organizations in implementing the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation decisions, recommendations and proposals of SSC/21/2, and it contributed to the UNDP Administrator's report reviewing the progress in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the new directions strategy for SSC, and the outcome documents of the high-level conferences on SSC held in Nairobi and in Buenos Aires.

95. UNOSSC provided policy and technical support to intergovernmental bodies to identify and develop policies addressing critical emerging priorities of the Global South that could benefit from SSC and TrC. For instance, the Third South Summit of the Group of 77/China in January 2024 reaffirmed SSC and TrC as crucial drivers of sustainable development, particularly in trade, investment, climate action, poverty eradication and the digital economy. Available evidence reiterates the importance of these priorities for achieving the 2030 Agenda goals and targets.¹³ These priorities are closely linked to some of the intergovernmental work supported by the Office. For instance:

- (a) General Assembly resolution 79/236, mentioned earlier, recognized the role of SSC and TrC in enhancing connectivity and digital transformation, and the General Assembly invited UNOSSC and the United Nations system to support efforts to develop policies to bridge the digital divide and fast-track digital transformation to improve the delivery of public services in the South.
- (b) As the substantive secretariat for the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, the Office provided research support to identify common and emerging priorities for discussion, such as revitalizing development financing and leveraging science, technology and innovation.
- (c) The Office co-convened 12 thematic policy dialogues, including one on “exchanges of innovative solutions for debt relief”, as part of the high-level political forum, organized with the High-level Committee Bureau, and another on “just, equitable financing and solidarity for climate action: South-South and triangular cooperation pathways to the SDGs” during the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly, organized with the High-level Committee Bureau and the OPEC Fund for International Development.

¹³ Developing countries are facing a significant debt crisis. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that over half of the 68 low-income countries face debt distress, more than double the number in 2015. In 2023, developing countries paid \$847 billion in net interest, nearly four times the total ODA of \$223 billion in 2023 and a 26 per cent increase from 2021. The 2025 evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, refers to the estimate that the cost of climate damages was over \$200 billion in 2024, which is close to the total ODA for that year. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimates that 2.6 billion people (close to a third of the world population) remain digitally disconnected.

96. The Office provided technical support to 10 global and regional policy forums and policy processes to advance SSC and TrC policymaking, such as the Second Committee of the General Assembly, the Third South Summit, the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States and the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries. The technical support to the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries included producing five case studies (on Ethiopia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Paraguay, Rwanda and Tajikistan), which explored the critical development challenges, innovative solutions and recommendations regarding the role of SSC and TrC, providing a substantive evidence base for discussions.

97. In addition to supporting specific priorities relating to the 2030 Agenda, UNOSSC continued to support policies reinforcing SSC and TrC in UNDS. For example, it provided technical support to General Assembly resolution 79/226, in which the General Assembly called for the UNDS entities to further integrate SSC and TrC into their strategic frameworks and planning instruments. It also provided an evidence base, with its South-South Galaxy platform, to support the United Nations policymaking, as discussed under outcome 3.

98. **The monitored data show that the Office is on track or has achieved a majority of the targets under outcome 1.** It is on track to meet the targets of both outcome indicators and two of the four output indicators by the end of 2025. The indicators unlikely to be achieved are the number of forums supported to assist Member States and the number of evidence-based thematic policy briefs prepared to inform dialogues. A sub-indicator, the number of new thematic policy dialogues convened at the subregional level, is also not expected to be met. Preliminary analysis suggests that these targets were unrealistic, considering the size and expertise of the Office. Interlocutors noted that these targets might have been achievable if the Office had collaborated with other United Nations agencies and had drawn on the expertise and experience of relevant United Nations entities.

Outcome 1: relevance and effectiveness

Finding 2. Member States interviewed expressed appreciation of the quality of the contributions of UNOSSC to intergovernmental processes and its responsiveness.

Finding 3. Interviews with UNCT members indicated limited awareness of intergovernmental processes and their significance. As a result, they undervalue the contributions of the Office.

2.1.2 Outcome 2. The capacity of United Nations entities to respond to requests by developing countries to address specific development challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda through South-South and triangular cooperation is strengthened.

99. **Evidence and interviews show the direct relevance of this outcome to the needs of programme countries.** United Nations entities face increasing demands from developing countries for support of SSC and TrC. The 2024 survey conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) as part of the QCPR shows that the share of programme countries requesting SSC and TrC support from the United

Nations system increased from 53 per cent in 2021 to 61 per cent in 2024. This increase calls for strengthened United Nations system capacities to integrate SSC and TrC into their programming (planning, designing and implementing support).

100. The 2025 QCPR survey¹⁴ also provides some indications for strengthening SSC and TrC capacities and focus on the United Nations system. Over three-quarters of United Nations entities responding to the survey were integrating SSC and TrC into their strategic plans/programming instruments and corporate-results reporting. Over half the responding entities (54 per cent) had a unit dedicated to SSC at the entity headquarters. More importantly, nearly two-thirds of the RCOs (65 per cent, or 73 of the 113 respondents) reported that their common country analyses (CCAs) and UNSDCFs had integrated SSC and TrC as modalities to achieve national priorities and SDGs.

101. UNOSSC undertook the following initiatives to strengthen the SSC and TrC capacities of the United Nations entities to support developing countries so as to achieve the 2030 Agenda goals and targets and outcome 1: (a) inter-agency coordination and knowledge-sharing; (b) development of guidelines and tools for mainstreaming SSC and TrC; (c) integration of SSC and TrC into United Nations planning and frameworks; (d) strengthening regional engagement; and (e) support for voluntary national reviews (VNRs).

Inter-agency coordination and knowledge-sharing

102. UNOSSC regularly convenes and serves as the secretariat for the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (IAM), which comprises over 40 United Nations entities. The quarterly meetings provide a forum to promote SSC and TrC knowledge exchange, coordination, joint advocacy and other joint activities to strengthen SSC and TrC capacities of members. IAM also serves as a platform for implementing, reviewing progress and sharing lessons learned in implementing the United Nations system-wide strategy for SSC and TrC. **However, interlocutors noted that the platform is underutilized and lacks a dynamic exchange of ideas, experiences and innovations.**

103. The Office collaborated with members to develop and disseminate SSC and TrC knowledge products. For example, **of the 960 SSC and TrC solutions** in the South-South Galaxy knowledge platform curated by the Office, **363 were contributed by IAM members. In addition, 338 good practices were submitted by United Nations entities.**

104. UNOSSC established and implemented a collaboration framework with UNDP that covers areas such as the following:

- (a) intergovernmental processes (e.g. preparation of the report of the UNDP Administrator to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation);
- (b) United Nations system-wide engagement (e.g. provision of SSC- and TrC-related inputs to the IRF of the UNDP Strategic Plan); and
- (c) knowledge management (e.g. joint work on South-South Global Thinkers, research and publications).

¹⁴ Care should be exercised when comparing two different QCPR surveys, particularly when the number of responses is low.

Guidelines and tools for mainstreaming SSC and TrC

105. The General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/76/221, called for UNDS to support the mainstreaming of SSC in UNSDCF. In response, UNOSSC, in collaboration with DCO, developed and disseminated guidelines for integrating SSC and TrC into the work of the United Nations at the global, regional and country levels.¹⁵ It should be noted that some United Nations entities have developed their own guidelines to suit the needs of the sectors in which they work: IFAD, UNDP, UNICEF and UNIDO, to name a few. **Regional DCOs and interviewed UNCT members affirmed that many United Nations entities valued the UNOSSC guidelines on integrating SSC and TrC into the UNSDCF.**

106. In collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College and taking into account inputs from over 20 United Nations entities, the Office developed an e-learning module¹⁶ to train UNCTs on those guidelines. The e-learning module includes case studies of successful SSC and TrC integration and examples of innovative SSC and TrC applications. Further improvements were made to the user interface using artificial intelligence (AI) technology to make searching and accessing information easier. The related training provided by UNOSSC was valued in regions, including the Asia-Pacific Region.

Integrating SSC and TrC into United Nations planning and frameworks

107. The strategic framework presents the integration of SSC and TrC into United Nations planning and frameworks as essential to developing the capacity of the United Nations system. The percentage of United Nations entities integrating SSC and TrC as implementation modalities into their strategic plans and programming instruments was designated as one of the two indicators of outcome 2.

108. UNOSSC collaborated with various United Nations entities, particularly DCO, to strengthen the capacity of UNCTs and regional UNDS entities to harness SSC and TrC in assisting countries. Through the peer-support-group mechanisms in the Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions, UNOSSC offered guidance on embedding SSC and TrC into key strategic frameworks, including the common country analysis (CCA) and the UNSDCF, across seven countries – China, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Mexico, Rwanda, Timor-Leste and Uruguay – as well as within the Caribbean Multi-country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

109. To further this effort, the Office hosted webinars aimed at RCOs, UNCTs, peer-support-group members and regional commissions in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa, ensuring that SSC and TrC perspectives were effectively integrated into critical United Nations planning documents at the national and regional levels. Additionally, the Office facilitated webinars and provided technical support to enhance the incorporation of SSC and TrC into initiatives designed or executed by over 20 United Nations entities.

110. The related outcome indicator (percentage of entities incorporating SSC and TrC into their strategic plans and programming instruments) has targets for global and regional levels of entities. IRF data show that at the corporate (global) level, 77 per cent of the United Nations entities have integrated SSC and TrC into their plans, and the 2025 target of 80 per cent is well on the way to being achieved. However, the

¹⁵ Guidelines for the Integration of South-South and Triangular Cooperation into the Country- and Regional-level Work of the United Nations Development System (October 2023). Available at <https://unsouthsouth.org/guidelines-for-the-integration-of-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-into-the-country-and-regional-level-work-of-the-united-nations-development-system/>.

¹⁶ <https://unsouthsouth.org/our-work/capacity-development/sstc-e-module/>.

progress is much lower at the regional level, with 65 per cent of regional entities having integrated SSC and TrC into their strategic plans, and the 2025 target of 85 per cent is not likely to be achieved.

Support for integrating SSC and TrC into voluntary national reviews

111. The support for VNRs is an essential dimension of capacity development efforts under outcome 2 of the strategic framework. One of the two indicators for this outcome is the percentage of new VNRs submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development that integrate SSC and TrC perspectives.

112. UNOSSC, in partnership with the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of the VNRs (the Permanent Missions of Morocco and the Philippines to the United Nations), Member States and United Nations entities, developed the Handbook on Integrating South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the Voluntary National Reviews.¹⁷ This resource assisted Member States in incorporating SSC and TrC into the preparation and presentation of their VNRs.

113. Working with the Co-Chairs, UNOSSC provided insights into the strategic significance and technical aspects of integrating SSC and TrC, delivering presentations at ambassadorial and technical-level meetings for countries presenting their VNRs in 2024. In collaboration with DESA, the Office facilitated knowledge-sharing and step-by-step guidance on this integration process. It also partnered with the Economic Commission for Africa to promote the use of handbooks during the tenth Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

114. The UNOSSC handbook on VNRs has now been incorporated into the DESA global handbook on VNRs, further consolidating its role as a key reference for Member States.

115. Monitored data on this outcome indicator show that 50 per cent of the newly submitted VNRs integrated SSC and TrC perspectives in 2024, already exceeding the 2025 target of 33 per cent.

Outcome 2: relevance and effectiveness

Finding 4. Overall, this outcome is highly relevant to the mandate of UNOSSC and the United Nations system, aligning with the 2030 Agenda. The Office has achieved a majority of the targets associated with this outcome. The monitored data for the two outcome targets show that one has already been achieved, and the other is on track to be achieved by the end of this cycle (December 2025). Three of the four output targets associated with this outcome will likely be achieved by the end of the cycle.

¹⁷ <https://unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Handbook-on-Integrating-South-South-and-Triangular-Cooperation-in-the-VNRs-2023.pdf>.

Outcome 2: relevance and effectiveness (cont'd.)

Finding 5. Despite these achievements, a recent MTR survey revealed that only half of the respondents found UNOSSC to be effective or highly effective in strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to meet the needs of programme countries.

Finding 6. Analysis and interviews showed that coordination with United Nations agencies is equally or more important at the regional and country levels. IAM would benefit from the presence of UNCT members who have demonstrated innovative South-South and triangular cooperation practices.

Finding 7. IAM members saw it as a valuable platform. However, it could become more valuable if it became more dynamic and vibrant in sharing and exploring innovations and good practices. Convening ad hoc meetings to discuss innovations and new solutions would be a step in the right direction.

Finding 8. A few IAM members expressed concern that coordinating South-South and triangular cooperation efforts would interfere with the ongoing work of their agency, pointing to the need for the Office to better clarify its role.

2.1.3 Outcome 3. Developing countries are enabled to implement the 2030 Agenda through harnessing South-South and triangular cooperation knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and facilitation of technology development and transfer.

116. UNOSSC delivers outcome 3 through three of its five programmatic development services, namely, SSC and TrC knowledge mapping, co-creation and sharing, through its South-South Galaxy knowledge platform, the SSC and TrC Solutions Lab to incubate innovative SSC and TrC solutions and eventually to scale them, and the management of South-South trust funds to promote knowledge exchange and the transfer of good practices to alleviate poverty.

117. The design of the strategic framework in articulating this outcome and the outputs through which this outcome is to be achieved does not appear to be based on a theory of change but rather is an attempt to fit the existing services of the Office into a results framework. It would not be realistic to assume that an office that is the size of UNOSSC and with its resources would impact how countries integrate SSC and TrC into their national efforts towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It would have been better to have the strategic framework identify an intermediate development result in countries to which the results of the knowledge management services and SSC trust fund management could contribute.

Outcome 3: relevance and effectiveness

Finding 9. Most of the output indicators will not be achieved by the end of the strategic framework cycle in December 2025. However, a 2023 survey conducted by the MTR of the UNOSSC strategic framework, 2022–2025, found that more than 70 per cent of the respondents saw UNOSSC as an effective knowledge broker and valued its contributions to knowledge creation and dissemination in the field of SSC and TrC.

118. Given this limitation, the following section focuses on analysing the three outputs that correspond to the three UNOSSC development services.

Output 1. Knowledge co-creation and management

119. UNOSSC contributed to knowledge co-creation and research on SSC and TrC through a number of activities.

120. South-South Galaxy is the primary UNOSSC platform for knowledge management and partnership brokering, housing 960 solutions from 190 countries.¹⁸ The solutions cover all 17 SDGs and thematic areas such as digital transformation (42 solutions) and climate change/natural resource management/sustainability (65 solutions). The majority of the solutions are drawn from recently completed or ongoing interventions. South-South Galaxy is more than a platform for SSC and TrC solutions, however; it also offers links to other SSC and TrC platforms, data sets, hubs and thematic pages.

121. Embedding AI tools, the platform is designed to address the needs of developing countries by facilitating connections, knowledge exchange and collaboration with potential partners. It is a unified hub for South-South solutions within the United Nations system; rather than duplicating the efforts of numerous United Nations entities that have South-South solutions based on their own experiences, this platform offers a centralized space for engagement by Southern partners. Of the 960 solutions in the platform, 760 are from external stakeholders involving 616 registered organizations.

122. UNOSSC has engaged think tanks, academic institutions, the private sector and experts from the Global South in the co-creation of knowledge and research on SSC and TrC. Interviewees highlighted several initiatives that exemplify this approach, including the Global Coalition of Think Tank Networks for SSC, which has produced research papers and policy briefs on critical topics such as COVID-19 recovery, digitalization and climate change. Other efforts include the South-South Ideas series, featuring research by scholars from the Global South, and collaborative research projects with United Nations entities and other partners. The South-South Galaxy platform has provided a space for Southern partners to exchange good practices, lessons learned and innovative solutions. At the same time, UNOSSC flagship publications, such as the Good Practices series, have been disseminated to Southern countries. By working with Southern partners, UNOSSC has ensured that its knowledge products reflect local realities, priorities and perspectives, effectively shaping policy and practice in developing countries. For instance, its partnership

¹⁸ <https://southsouth-galaxy.org/>.

with the African Union led to tailored recovery strategies addressing the economic impacts of COVID-19 on African economies.

123. To maintain the quality, relevance and impact of its knowledge products, UNOSSC has developed and implemented several tools and mechanisms. These include a peer review process for major publications, editorial and design guidelines, a user-feedback and impact-assessment system, and a knowledge-product planning and monitoring tool. The peer-review process and criteria for selecting and documenting good practices in SSC and TrC were introduced in the Good Practices series, which has featured impactful initiatives such as a renewable energy project in the Caribbean that significantly reduced energy costs.

124. Recently introduced efforts include the following:

- (a) UNOSSC began work to revitalize the South-South Global Thinkers initiative, which aims to focus on knowledge co-creation through research to aid evidence-based policymaking for SSC and TrC. To do so, it will link think tanks, do-tanks and academic institutions across the Global South and North.
- (b) The Office revamped South-South Galaxy to enhance its functionality, user friendliness and security. AI-powered chatbots, trained on the existing South-South solutions and publications of the platform, were also introduced to position it as a platform for global audiences to participate and collaborate in knowledge-sharing.
- (c) UNOSSC initiated a new workstream on data collaboratives, established the Data to Policy Network for policymakers (with UNDP and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)), and explored partnerships with the Digital Cooperation Organization and the European Space Agency.
- (d) The Office has developed a knowledge management and engagement strategy through a lengthy consultative process, assisted by an external consultant. This strategy, which will be implemented in 2025, aims to enhance UNOSSC support across its five service lines by improving the documentation and dissemination of good practices, particularly those emerging from trust fund projects. The primary goal of the strategy is to connect “knowledge nodes” – those who possess knowledge and those seeking it – to ultimately strengthen capacities for SSC and TrC.
- (e) UNOSSC is expected to launch the global report on SSC and TrC in 2025, covering thematic areas such as the impact of climate change on the Global South, financing for development, poverty, multi-dimensional vulnerability, science, technology and innovation.

Knowledge co-creation and management: relevance and effectiveness

Finding 10. South-South Galaxy houses 960 solutions from 190 countries, generated mainly through external partners (involving 616 registered organizations). The majority of these solutions are drawn from recently completed or ongoing interventions. The solutions cover all 17 SDGs and offer solutions relating to new and emerging technologies (42 solutions on digital transformation) as well as existing challenges (65 solutions on climate change and natural resource management). It provides a user-friendly interface that significantly simplifies query and analysis.

Quality of evidence. Vetting the solutions is the responsibility of those submitting them, and the solutions offer no external validating evidence from independent evaluations. Hence, the quality and validity of the solutions cannot be assessed with the available information.

Finding 11. Evidence of use and impact. The Office is developing metrics to analyse how the South-South Galaxy platform is being used and its impact. At present, the use and impact of its knowledge products cannot be determined.

Finding 12. South-South Galaxy avoids duplicating efforts by other United Nations entities that host a knowledge platform. It also serves as a portal for all United Nations knowledge platforms by providing links to all existing knowledge platforms of United Nations entities.

Finding 13. The Office has developed a knowledge management and engagement strategy to facilitate more effective use of its knowledge products. It will be implemented in 2025.

Finding 14. UNOSSC has established partnerships with think tanks, academic institutions and experts from the Global South and pursues SSC- and TrC-related research (e.g. Global Coalition of Think Tank Networks for SSC and TrC).

Output 2. South-South and Triangular Cooperation Solutions Lab

125. UNOSSC launched the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Solutions Lab in 2024 in response to the mandate of its strategic framework, 2022–2025, to establish a hub for coordination, co-design, incubation and scaling of initiatives that drive knowledge exchange, capacity development and technology transfer to advance the SDGs. The Solutions Lab is envisaged to address complex development challenges that developing countries face by strengthening collaboration among Member States, United Nations entities and partners. By leveraging local, regional and interregional expertise and resources, the Solutions Lab aims to foster innovative and scalable solutions that accelerate progress towards the SDGs and the broader 2030 Agenda.

126. Key partners include the Economic Commission for Europe, the Gulf Organisation for Research and Development (GORD), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment. In 2024, the Office launched the first innovation challenge, inviting proposals to identify and scale solutions in climate resilience, energy transition, digital inclusion, sustainable urban development and agriculture.

127. Interviews with the knowledge team indicated that **21 proposals had been received**, some of which did not request financial assistance. With available resources, the Solutions Lab can provide **up to \$40,000 per project, supporting up to five projects** requiring financial assistance in addition to qualified proposals that do not require funding.

Output 3. Trust fund management

South-South and Triangular Cooperation Solutions Lab: relevance and effectiveness:

Finding 15. The Solutions Lab, launched in 2024 in partnership with United Nations entities such as IAEA, WFP and external actors, conceptually represents a **unique and innovative approach** to promoting SSC and TrC.

Finding 16. While it is too early to assess the likelihood of success, the relatively low investment level (\$40,000 per proposal) may, however, limit the scope of achievement for selected proposals.

128. The trust fund projects enhance the visibility of SSC work, demonstrating its value as a viable development modality that complements North-South flows. Additionally, the trust funds provide a platform for Member States to take a leadership role in SSC, sharing their experiences and expertise with other developing countries.

129. Between 2022 and 2024, the trust funds completed 54 projects with a budget exceeding \$300,000 and a total allocation of \$37 million. The current portfolio comprises 35 similarly sized projects, with allocations totalling \$35 million.

130. The trust fund management envisions replicating the SSC and TrC efforts of other UNDS entities. The guidance provided by the trust fund team outlines the following typology of projects:¹⁹ awareness-raising and advocacy, policy and systems reform, basic infrastructure, capacity development and community-level direct technical support. The guidance provided by UNOSSC to develop project documents requires a clear theory of change, a results framework, and a costed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan. This guidance draws on considerations for SSC design, implementation and documentation from UNDP.²⁰

131. Notwithstanding this vision, there are innovative projects that have the potential to be replicated and scaled in countries and regions. For instance, the India-UN Development Partnership Fund has facilitated the exchange of health robotics expertise from Rwanda to Trinidad and Tobago as well as the transfer of best practices in obstetric surveillance from Romania to Kyrgyzstan. Similarly, the IBSA Fund has supported adapting the condominium sanitation model of Brazil in Angola and replicating the

¹⁹ https://undp.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/teams/UNOSSC/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B76BC2CD8-830F-482F-876A-0F15F11BE61%7D&file=Annex%20%20Typology%20of%20projects.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true.

²⁰ <https://popp.undp.org/document/considerations-south-south-cooperation-design-implementation-and-documentation>.

sustainable agricultural practices of South Africa in the Comoros. The PGTF has fostered economic and technical cooperation among developing countries, strengthening science, technology and innovation partnerships. These examples demonstrate how trust funds enable countries to learn from one another and adapt proven solutions to their unique contexts. UNOSSC trust funds facilitated 44 technical and knowledge exchanges in 2022 and 73 exchanges in 2023.

132. There were examples of trust fund projects²¹ designed to introduce innovations in participating countries. In Trinidad and Tobago, for instance, a project supported by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) was designed to produce the first draft of the policy on the use of digital health technologies in the delivery of health services in the public sector and to introduce **eight health robots** into the healthcare system of the country. In the Republic of Moldova, a trust fund project aimed to advance the **digitalization of national statistical systems**, thereby strengthening data infrastructure in key sectors, including education, national insurance, gender surveys and border management. This initiative sought to reinforce the ability of national institutions to conduct data-driven policymaking and implementation. In Barbados, a UNOPS-implemented project was designed to introduce **a state-of-the-art digital mobile X-ray machine**, integrating AI into mobile radiography for the first time in the country. This innovation aims to improve access to diagnostic services, particularly in remote areas, enhancing the ability of the healthcare system to deliver timely and accurate medical care.

133. The projects also contribute to capacity-building in participating countries. For example, the Global South-South Development Centre (GSSDC) Project (2019–2024) and South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) among Maritime Silk Road Cities for Sustainable Development (Cities Project) (2017–2023), funded by the Government of China through UNFSCC, supported certificate-based online training in disaster risk reduction. The GSSDC Project, conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Global Education and Training Institute, PAHO and the World Health Organization (WHO), trained 1,846 officials in the first four months of 2025, 44.2 per cent of whom were women. A joint MTR in 2023 concluded that both projects generated numerous good practices, success stories, lessons learned and transferable examples.²²

134. Trust fund projects also benefit from triangular cooperation. For example, the ongoing Republic of Korea-UNOSSC Facility, Phase III, funded by the Republic of Korea, supports countries in the Lower Mekong River Basin in developing technical solutions to address the water-food-energy nexus. This initiative leverages expertise from the Republic of Korea while facilitating knowledge exchange among Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam.

135. By channelling trust fund resources through United Nations agencies as implementing partners, UNOSSC has capitalized on the nearly universal country presence of the United Nations system and its technical expertise across various development sectors. To date, 20 United Nations agencies have served as implementing partners for trust fund projects, fostering greater coordination and collaboration within the United Nations system.

Evidence base for trust fund projects: monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

²¹ Analysis of project documents, and the UNDP report of the Administrator for 2024, [Annex 5: Update on results achieved by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation in 2024](#).

²² [Report for the Joint Mid-Term Review of the Global South-South Development Center \(GSSDC\) Project and South-South and Triangular Cooperation \(SSTC\) among Maritime Silk Road Cities for Sustainable Development \(Cities Project\) - April 2023](#).

136. **The trust fund team faces challenges in gathering evidence for the performance of its portfolio.** While this is not a comprehensive evaluation of trust fund management, spot checks of project documents indicate that not all of those documents provide a clear theory of change or an evaluable results framework that demonstrates how inputs will be translated into impact. The Office noted significant difficulties in obtaining periodic progress reports from implementing agencies. While UNOSSC directly implements projects funded by UNFSCC and is responsible for M&E, all other funds delegate this responsibility to the implementing United Nations agency. Interviews with relevant stakeholders and board members underscored the difficulties in having the implementing agencies evaluate completed projects.

137. **There is insufficient oversight of the boards to ensure the timely implementation of the M&E plans of the trust fund projects and the dissemination of data. In addition to the challenges reported by the Office in securing monitored data to track progress, the requirement of timely terminal evaluations of projects is not enforced. Of the 54 (mid- or full-sized) projects completed during 2022–2024, only 11 had submitted evaluation reports to the Office.**

138. **There is no centralized repository of the evaluations of trust fund projects or monitored data.** The evaluations are uploaded onto the platforms of the respective implementing agencies. In addition, no portfolio-level analysis exists to assess the contributions of the projects nor is there a synthesis of evidence emerging from those 11 completed evaluations. This underscores the need for more rigorous documentation, analysis and dissemination of evidence-based achievements. Strengthening **M&E in project designs**, ensuring **closer oversight by UNOSSC and trust fund boards**, and conducting **credible evaluations for all trust fund projects** are essential if the Office is to move forward in managing the trust funds.

Trust fund management: relevance and effectiveness

Finding 17. Trust funds offer valuable opportunities to enhance UNOSSC efforts to integrate the SSC and TrC modalities within the United Nations system and among programme countries. They enhance the visibility of the Office and promote the exchange of technical and practical knowledge among developing countries. The expanding portfolio and diversified funding sources indicate growing interest in SSC and TrC among Southern donors and confidence in UNOSSC.

Finding 18. The Office missed the opportunity to demonstrate its added value by focusing on catalytic impact. Instead, it has replicated regular SSC interventions that are pursued by UNDS in programme countries. Furthermore, it does not guide the projects to align with the work of the UNCT and prioritize synergies, such as projects advocating for policies on which the UNCT is working. Similarly, the guidance does not require aligning the project results framework with the priorities of the strategic framework/IRF (for example, output 3.3 and the three indicators).

Trust fund management: relevance and effectiveness (cont'd.)

Finding 19. The UNOSSC-managed trust fund has experienced rapid expansion in scale and scope over the past few years. At the start of the previous strategic cycle in 2018, the trust fund portfolio site averaged **\$3.5 million to \$4.0 million**. This amount rose sharply during the cycle and has remained at higher levels, **\$17.6 million** in 2025 (UNOSSC Trust Fund Dashboard), for example, more than quadrupling the volume handled.

Finding 20. This rapid expansion necessitates closer alignment with the norms and practices of other major United Nations trust fund managers. With increased funding flows comes the responsibility to identify and mitigate risks while ensuring that the Office meets the development and operational expectations of the funding sources. The Office stands to benefit from the experiences and expertise of other United Nations entities in managing trust funds. In particular, the guidance provided by the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund ([MPTF](#)) Office, and [common management features in the UNDG QCPR Framework](#) (see page 15, indicator 4.5.3, and page 19, footnote 12 for definitions of common management features).

Finding 21. There is a lack of evidence-based analysis to demonstrate the added value of trust fund projects. UNOSSC has established a monitoring and reporting system for its trust fund portfolio and developed guidelines for integrating results-based management (RBM) approaches. However, challenges remain in measuring outcomes and reporting progress. A key issue is that there are very few completed **evaluations of trust fund projects**. The UNOSSC Trust Funds Dashboard indicates only one completed evaluation: the joint mid-term evaluation of the GSSDC Project and the Cities Project (2023). However, communication with the Office indicates that it has received 11 evaluations, which are yet to be analysed.

2.1.4 Cross-cutting issue: gender equality and inclusivity

139. **UNOSSC endeavoured to mainstream gender equality and inclusivity across the intergovernmental processes that it supported.** It organized high-level events and dialogues, emphasizing the role of GEWE in SSC and TrC. For example, the Office co-convened a high-level policy dialogue on the theme of “leveraging South-South cooperation for gender equality” during the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.²³ It supported capacity development and knowledge-sharing initiatives for women-led SSC and TrC institutions and networks,²⁴ integrated gender-related targets into trust fund projects, and highlighted gender-responsive SSC and TrC in publications and events. Additionally, UNOSSC has collaborated with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to advocate for gender equality in SSC and TrC policy dialogues and frameworks; promoted inclusivity by targeting SSC and TrC support to least developed countries (LDCs), LLDCs, SIDS and crisis-affected countries; engaged diverse stakeholders; and championed the

²³ Another example is the side event on “SSC for gender equality and women's empowerment” at the 2021 high-level political forum.

²⁴ Examples include the Forum for Indian Development Cooperation and the Network of Southern Think Tanks.

integration of gender equality into United Nations system-wide SSC and TrC efforts through its coordination and capacity-building roles.

140. **Interviewees suggested that a more systematic approach could strengthen mainstreaming SSC and TrC across all interventions. This could include leveraging the UNOSSC convening power and normative mandate to facilitate regular, substantive policy dialogues with Member States; developing targeted tools and methodologies to assess the differential impacts of SSC and TrC on women and marginalized groups; identifying and scaling up good practices in gender-transformative and inclusive SSC and TrC; and advocating for greater emphasis on gender equality and inclusivity in SSC and TrC policy dialogues and frameworks at all levels.**

141. **UNOSSC supported United Nations entities in mainstreaming GEWE in their SSC and TrC initiatives.** This included developing guidance materials and tools, such as a checklist on "gender mainstreaming in South-South and triangular cooperation" and case studies showcasing gender-transformative projects. UNOSSC also provided training and capacity-building support to United Nations staff, in collaboration with UN-Women and other partners, through webinars and events. Furthermore, it worked to identify and disseminate good practices and lessons learned on promoting gender equality through SSC and TrC, featuring gender-focused initiatives in its publications and events.

142. **Interviews, data analysis and document review suggest, however, that the Office needs to strengthen its focus on gender mainstreaming and inclusivity. While the United Nations system-wide strategy on SSC and TrC refers to the importance of promoting gender equality, these references are relatively high level and provide little practical guidance or tools for the United Nations entities to operationalize those principles in their work. This evaluation concurs with the finding of the 2023 MTR that "the training sessions tend to be one-offs and ad hoc rather than part of a systematic and more comprehensive capacity development programme".**

143. **The Office included gender analysis and gender-disaggregated data in its research and knowledge products, demonstrated gender-responsive policies and practices in publications and events, and engaged women-led and gender-focused organizations in knowledge co-creation and dissemination. UNOSSC has also developed targeted knowledge products and capacity-building activities on gender and SSC and TrC, such as the initiative that trained women in rural Southeast Asia in information and communications technologies, supporting their economic empowerment and leadership. The mainstreaming guidelines of UNOSSC feature gender-sensitive SSC and TrC integration; however, there is room for improvement. For instance, of the 960 solutions in South-South Galaxy, 13 involve gender considerations.**

144. Addressing this paucity requires developing guidelines and tools for gender-responsive research and knowledge management, setting targets and indicators for women's participation and leadership, establishing partnerships with women's organizations and gender experts, and leveraging knowledge products to inform gender-transformative policies and programmes.

145. **UNOSSC-managed trust funds have made efforts to mainstream gender equality and inclusivity in their projects by promoting the participation and leadership of women and marginalized groups in governance and implementation. A number of projects incorporated gender analysis and gender-responsive indicators into their design and monitoring frameworks, explicitly targeting GEWE. However, this evaluation found that gender equality and inclusion were not systematically mainstreamed across the project cycle, with limited guidance and tools available for gender analysis and inclusive programming.** This aligns with the finding of the MTR, which recommended that the Office "conduct more

rigorous gender and social analysis, set more ambitious and measurable targets and indicators for gender equality and inclusivity, and partner more systematically with women’s organizations” to ensure that projects are responsive to the needs of women.

146. All UNOSSC staff have completed corporate gender training. **Women represent 64 per cent of the Office workforce**, 75 per cent of the general service staff and 63 per cent of the international professionals.

Cross-cutting issue: gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) – relevance and effectiveness

Finding 22. UNOSSC strives to integrate GEWE into its efforts to implement the strategic framework. However, greater focus is needed to effectively mainstream GEWE in SSC and TrC, as indicated by data collected from interviewees, document review and analysis of South-South Galaxy.

Finding 23. Although the Office has taken steps to integrate GEWE into its interventions, the evaluation finds that gender analysis and gender-disaggregated data need to be more systematically incorporated across all knowledge products.

2.1.5 Organizational effectiveness

RBM approaches

147. In quantitative terms, the outcomes, outputs and indicators of the strategic framework are manageable, allowing for efficient and cost-effective tracking. The three outcomes align closely with the United Nations and UNOSSC SSC and TrC mandate.²⁵ However, the IRF was not based on a theory of change that identifies the outputs necessary to achieve the outcomes from the available resources and skill sets and provides indicators to manage the risks and test the assumptions.

148. For instance, outcome 3 (*Developing countries are enabled to implement the 2030 Agenda through harnessing South-South and triangular cooperation knowledge exchange, capacity-building and facilitation of technology development and transfer*) is not set at a level proportionate to the available resources of the Office. Additionally, the indicators for this outcome do not sufficiently define the scope of the intended changes. The relationships between outcomes and their respective outputs and indicators appear to be structured with regard to the services of the Office rather than a theory of change.

149. The IRF **missed the opportunity to establish linkages across outcomes to harness synergies**. The interventions designed to achieve the three outcomes could complement one another. For example, support for intergovernmental processes could benefit from insights gained through trust fund projects and the knowledge management platform, South-South Galaxy, integrating these connections into the

²⁵ See BAPA+40 outcome document (A/RES/73/291).

IRF. While this issue is discussed in detail under “Coherence” (section 2.4), the absence of linkage indicators among outcomes represents a missed opportunity to institutionalize collaboration among teams working on different aspects of implementation. Strengthening these connections within the IRF would enhance coordination and maximize the impact of interventions (see discussion on “Coherence” for more details).

150. Most indicators rely on credible data from reliable sources. However, the strategic framework is not fully evaluable, since some indicators are either not measurable (e.g. data are not available for outcome indicator 3.1) or lack verified data (e.g. data for output indicator 3.3.1 were not validated by an M&E framework).

151. Using data from QCPR surveys across different years presents comparability challenges due to variations in respondent numbers and composition. For example, the baseline for output indicator 2.1.1 (*“Percentage of UN system entities incorporating South-South and triangular cooperation results in their corporate reporting”*) was 89 per cent in 2021. That number dropped to 68 per cent in 2022. It is unlikely that entities reversed their decision to integrate SSC and TrC; a more plausible explanation is that that decline resulted from a lower response rate and a different set of United Nations entities participating in the surveys. This highlights the need to better understand and address discrepancies in data collection.

152. Additionally, **targets were not always set based on feasibility**, as determined from prior Office experience, available resources or contextual changes. For instance, output indicator 1.1.2 (*“Number of fora supported to assist the Member States or groupings, at their request, in advancing South-South and triangular cooperation policymaking at the global, regional and sub-regional levels”*) had a target of seven, with two achieved in 2022; a target of 14, with eight achieved in 2023; a target of 22, with 12 achieved in 2024; and a target of 25 by 2025.

153. While results are tracked, the data are not systematically analysed to identify what is working and what is not. For example, the trust fund dashboard, powered by Power Business Intelligence, is a valuable monitoring tool that supports a user-friendly analysis. **However, the available interface does not provide fundamental insights, such as the thematic focus of the current portfolio:** how many projects address the digital divide, the proportion of designs prioritizing scalability or how the Office can identify catalytic projects. Such analysis is essential not only for RBM but also for supporting intergovernmental processes effectively.

RBM approaches (organizational effectiveness): relevance and effectiveness

Finding 24. The strategic framework provides a relevant framework to track progress and achievements. However, it is not based on a theory of change and did not engender programmatic synergies.

Finding 25. The IRF provides a manageable framework of six outcome indicators and 13 output indicators; however, the framework is not fully evaluable and the chosen targets were not always realistic.

Finding 26. The RBM culture remains weak, despite the prioritization by the Office of tracking progress and a results-oriented approach. While the Office has established measures to regularly collect IRF data, it does not systematically analyse those data to identify strengths, gaps and bottlenecks, which is necessary for course correction. The analysis is not routinized owing to weak demand and a lack of prioritization.

Strategic partnerships

154. The strategic framework highlights strategic partnerships and resource mobilization as core elements of its implementation arrangements. To standardize its engagement and make it results-oriented, UNOSSC developed a partnership strategy for this strategic framework cycle (2022–2025) and rolled out its first partnership engagement plan.

155. The plan focused on the following categories of partners: (a) Global South partners (Member States, regional organizations, Southern academia, CSOs, private sector, etc.); (b) United Nations system partners (United Nations entities, e.g. DCO, DESA, RCOs, UNCTs and regional commissions); (c) triangular cooperation partners (Member States such as Portugal and the Republic of Korea, academia, multilateral development banks, etc.); and (d) other multilateral/intergovernmental organizations, e.g. the Group of 20, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Pacific Islands Development Forum and the Caribbean Community.

156. The objectives of the partnerships were to: (a) influence development policy and agenda to integrate SSC and TrC considerations; (b) position UNOSSC to facilitate strengthening SSC and TrC in the United Nations system; (c) co-create knowledge and solutions; (d) undertake SSC- and TrC-related advocacy and awareness-raising within the United Nations system and globally; and (e) leverage resource mobilization. A brief overview of the Office partnerships, categorized according to its partnership strategy, follows.

157. **Global South partners.** The partnerships with Member States, particularly the G-77 and China, have provided the Office with valuable political support, financial resources, in-kind contributions for its work, and opportunities for policy dialogue and advocacy on SSC and TrC. Continuing the partnership with the Government of China, a statement of intent was signed to support the China-UN Global South-South Development Facility (2025–2030).

158. **Partnerships with Southern think tanks, experts and academia** made thematic research papers and policy briefs possible on topics such as SSC and TrC for climate action, digital transformation and COVID-19 recovery.

159. **United Nations system.** As the secretariat of IAM, the Office dialogues with over 40 United Nations agencies at Headquarters. Partnerships with over 20 United Nations entities have enabled UNOSSC to harness the United Nations system technical expertise, operational capacities and nearly universal country presence to design and implement SSC and TrC trust fund projects and initiatives. The challenges faced by the Office were discussed earlier.

160. **Triangular cooperation.** UNOSSC established the Triangular Cooperation Window, securing contributions from Portugal to support the blue economy in line with the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS. The following partnerships were formalized recently:

- (a) the Gulf Organisation for Research and Development (GORD), a partner of the SSC and TrC Solutions Lab. This triangular cooperation provided technical support to implement the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Solutions Lab);²⁶
- (b) a joint action plan with the OPEC Fund for International Development;
- (c) a joint action plan with the Islamic Development Bank, which co-hosted global advocacy dialogues (a dialogue on the potential of triangular cooperation and another on leveraging the private sector to advance the Global South);
- (d) a joint action plan with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to promote triangular cooperation initiatives; and
- (e) a financing agreement with the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment.

Strategic partnership (organizational effectiveness): relevance and effectiveness

Finding 27. The Office pursues a results-oriented partnership strategy and tracks the performance. For instance, it has 12 costed work plans agreed and implemented to back the signed partnership agreements, exceeding the target set for 2025. It also has implemented 50 per cent of the key actions of the partnership strategy, a level behind the 2024 milestone of 70 per cent (*Source*: UNOSSC database).

²⁶ Other partners included the Economic Commission for Europe, IAEA, WFP, Masdar City and the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment.

Strategic partnership (organizational effectiveness): relevance and effectiveness (cont'd.)

Finding 28. While the Office has successfully established partnerships (e.g. triangular cooperation with the Republic of Korea) and benefited from them (e.g. Solutions Lab), it continues to depend on its in-house capabilities as a default approach rather than capitalizing on these partnerships (e.g. leveraging think tanks to deliver technical policy briefs to support intergovernmental processes).

There is a growing demand from countries interested in promoting TrC and SSC (e.g. Morocco, Portugal) that would like to strengthen their capacities to integrate SSC and TrC into their development support for countries of the South. It is a missed opportunity for the Office not to have leveraged its partnerships to address this emerging need.

Strategic communications

161. The MTR found UNOSSC to be effective in its external communications. UNOSSC has implemented standard operating procedures, launched a new website and social media channels, and expanded its digital presence, currently attracting 200,000 website users and 57,000 social media followers, both showing an upward trend.

162. Additionally, the Office has consolidated its social media accounts and introduced a monthly newsletter, which has led to a 25 per cent increase in social media followers and significant engagement during major events such as United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation. UNOSSC has also organized high-level events that provide platforms for showcasing SSC and TrC solutions, fostering partnerships and shaping policy discussions. However, as discussed earlier, more effort is needed to communicate to raise awareness among the United Nations entities and partners regarding the role and functions of the Office.

Strategic communications (organizational effectiveness): relevance and effectiveness

Finding 29. Given the limited size and resources of UNOSSC, it is essential that the Office clearly define and communicate to its key stakeholders the support and services that it can realistically provide. Interviews indicate that while UNOSSC has successfully raised the visibility and profile of SSC and TrC through various channels, there is a need to enhance its reach and influence, particularly in the Global South. Addressing this challenge requires investment in targeted and user-friendly communication products and platforms, collaboration with Southern media outlets and influencers, and stronger linkages between communications and policy advocacy to maximize impact.

Key findings: relevance and effectiveness

Finding 30. The **low visibility of UNOSSC will likely adversely affect its role and contributions to the United Nations system.** UNOSSC has the mandate and central role as the focal point for promoting and facilitating SSC and TrC for development within the United Nations system and beyond. The United Nations has continued to emphasize SSC and TrC as an organizational priority. UNOSSC has achieved most of its IRF targets. Despite these facts, the visibility of the Office remains low among intergovernmental bodies and the United Nations system, particularly at the regional and country levels. This is a cause for concern, since the low visibility will likely lower the demand for its services.

Finding 31. **UNOSSC has primarily engaged with Member States to promote SSC and TrC at the Headquarters level, with limited capacity for systematic outreach and support at regional and country levels.** During the current strategic framework cycle, the Office contributed to **23 global policy dialogues** to reinforce SSC and TrC, while its involvement in **regional dialogues was limited to nine.** This is concerning, since evidence indicates that awareness and understanding of SSC and TrC are lower at the regional and national levels, necessitating greater outreach and engagement. To address this gap, UNOSSC must strengthen partnerships with UNCTs, regional hubs of United Nations agencies, regional organizations and local stakeholders. Additionally, it should facilitate multi-stakeholder policy dialogues at the regional and country levels to enhance SSC and TrC promotion and implementation.

In 2024, UNOSSC developed and launched a regional engagement plan in collaboration with regional commissions, regional DCOs, UNDP regional bureaux, IAM for SSC and TrC, and other key stakeholders. The plan outlines the priority partnerships to enhance SSC and TrC support at the regional level. While it is too early to assess the impact of this initiative, it represents a positive step towards expanding engagement and strengthening SSC and TrC implementation beyond Headquarters.

Key findings: relevance and effectiveness (cont'd.)

Finding 32. UNOSSC has yet to establish measures to assess the value added by its contributions. The lack of robust data and evidence on the impact and effectiveness of SSC and TrC initiatives makes it difficult to learn from successes and failures and to make informed decisions about future investments and policies. The document reviews highlighted gaps in the tools and methodologies currently used to measure SSC and TrC contributions, indicating that strengthening the evidence base on SSC and TrC impacts and effectiveness remains a priority. In this area, UNOSSC has supported UNCTAD, the co-custodian of SDG indicator 17.3.1, in building capacity to measure SSC and TrC using the new conceptual framework adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2022.

UNOSSC could further address the methodological gap by developing and promoting standardized methodologies and tools for measuring and reporting on SSC and TrC in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities, international organizations, academia and think tanks. Additionally, the Office could work to strengthen the capacities of SSC and TrC institutions, including United Nations agencies, to conduct rigorous M&E, ultimately improving their programmes and policies.

Finding 33. UNOSSC has not sufficiently leveraged the expertise and experience of United Nations entities to enhance the quality and quantity of its deliverables. Many United Nations agencies have a strong track record of integrating SSC and TrC into their interventions. For instance, UNDP facilitated 700 South-South cooperation projects during 2023–2024, addressing key development priorities such as poverty eradication, biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, governance enhancement, gender equality, fiscal and financial management, and digital transformation. This wealth of experience could be harnessed to collaborate on producing policy briefs that inform dialogues and intergovernmental processes focused on SSC and TrC. Output indicator 1.2.1 (*“Number of evidence-based thematic policy briefs prepared – building on research and analysis - to inform dialogues at global, regional and sub-regional levels focusing on South-South and triangular cooperation policymaking and its implementation”*) shows that the Office produced five briefs in 2024, falling well short of the target of 17, and is unlikely to meet the 2025 target of 25. Strengthening partnerships with relevant United Nations agencies and drawing on their expertise would improve the quality of its evidence-based proposals, enabling the Office to produce more briefs and meet its targets more effectively.

2.2 Efficiency

163. **An assessment of efficiency** looks at the extent to which the results were achieved in a timely, cost-effective manner using the five programmatic development services and the four cross-cutting services.

This also involves assessing the measures taken and processes in place to manage financial and human resources efficiently, such as innovations, agility and institutional changes to be fit for purpose.

164. The efficiency assessment focuses on the extent to which the organization is fit for purpose, operational innovations and trust fund management. The previous section addressed the extent to which partnerships are leveraged to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

2.2.1 A fit-for-purpose organization in the face of a rapidly evolving South-South and triangular cooperation landscape

Finding 34. SSC and TrC are evolving rapidly, increasing in scale and complexity. UNOSSC and the United Nations system will need to evolve to remain fit for purpose.

165. Stakeholders interviewed appreciated the contributions of UNOSSC, highlighting its strong engagement and responsiveness, especially given its broad mandate and limited resources. They also noted the **growing scale and complexity of SSC and TrC in the global arena (outside the United Nations programming)**. For instance, a 2022 UNCTAD report shows that SSC accounted for 12–15 per cent of global development finance, more than double the share in 2000 (5 per cent); in 2000, the SSC of India in digital technologies involved providing information-technology training through the India Pan-African e-network, while at present, the digital public infrastructure technology of India has informed the development of the digital identity system, the Modular Open Source Identity Platform, in Ethiopia and Nigeria. Many expressed concerns about the ability of **the Office and UNDS to be fully equipped to meet the emerging SSC and TrC needs**.

2.2.2 Operational innovations and proactive engagement

166. Respondents commended UNOSSC for its agility in engaging with a variety of actors at different levels on a range of often-complex topics. They cited recent initiatives, such as the formation of the Triangular Cooperation Window, the Solutions Lab and the use of Power Business Intelligence to generate reports, as examples of innovation.

167. The leadership has taken proactive steps to address critical gaps, such as seeking results and action-oriented partnerships, a collaboration agreement with UNDP to leverage its SSC experience and expertise, and developing a regional engagement strategy.

168. Despite these steps, the Office is perceived as task-oriented and reactive rather than proactive and strategic. This perception arises largely from a lack of shared purpose, focus and direction among the Office units. Consequently, their efforts focus on addressing immediate needs instead of pursuing a cohesive strategic vision. Indeed, while individuals and teams may excel at responding to demands and completing tasks and deliverables promptly, this does not necessarily help the Office as a whole to achieve high-impact goals and thereby contributes to its low visibility.

Finding 35. The Office is perceived as delivering ad hoc, stand-alone services in response to requests from Member States. It has yet to position itself by leveraging its knowledge and partnerships to shape the discussions of the Member States and influence their agenda.

2.2.3 Efficiency considerations in managing trust funds

169. The **trust fund stakeholders interviewed, including Member States, United Nations agencies, resident coordinators, and representatives from the Boards of Directors of the trust funds, all expressed appreciation for the efficiency, responsiveness and flexibility of the trust fund team.** UNOSSC serves as the trust fund manager and secretariat for the Boards of Directors. This section highlights the challenges and opportunities relating to efficiently achieving the desired UNOSSC goals and results through its engagement with the trust funds.

170. **UNOSSC dedicates 5.5 of its 23 staff positions to managing the trust funds.** In addition, the team has 5.5 dedicated non-staff personnel (consultants, United Nations Volunteers) supporting the trust fund management. Hence, a closer examination of the alignment of trust fund management with the UNOSSC value proposition, the comparative advantage of the Office over other United Nations trust fund managers and the optimal role that UNOSSC could assume in managing the trust funds is warranted.

171. The deep dive into trust fund management conducted as part of this evaluation reveals numerous limitations, some of which were discussed in the previous section. This analysis also found that the project design and approval process did not follow internationally accepted practices. For instance, the design processes (selection of themes and locations) were not transparent, and, in most cases, the implementing United Nations agency was not involved in the design. Consequently, the technical design, time frame and costing often proved to be unrealistic. **Nearly all seven projects reviewed for this evaluation encountered design issues during implementation and required extensions.**²⁷

172. It is also unclear which design standards or guidelines were followed to ensure catalytic effects or a high impact, or whether the Office can enhance the quality of the projects. As noted in the prior section, trust funds lack a mechanism for ongoing project oversight and accountability. Without credible evidence to assess the value added by these projects, it will not be feasible to learn lessons and transfer knowledge beyond the project boundaries, rendering it of little relevance to the other four development services of the Office. **These limitations may be beyond the trust fund team's control. However, failing to address these issues means that the Office is pursuing a "pass-through" model of trust fund management:** the Office is undertaking trust fund administration only to collect management fees without adding any value.

Absorption capacity

173. Annex III presents the trends in annual inflows and expenditures of trust funds for this strategic framework cycle and the previous one. According to the table, first, inflows and disbursements are volatile, with annual disbursements ranging from a high of \$16.96 million in 2021 to \$8.65 million in 2024.

²⁷ Some delays are also attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Second, the Office has not programmed all its inflows, except in 2023; the average annual inflow for both strategic framework cycles is \$18.8 million, while the corresponding average disbursement is \$11.8 million. This gap could be due to external or internal conditions. The internal constraints, such as limited capacities, frequent leadership changes or restructuring, reflect the UNOSSC absorption capacity relating to trust funds. The persistent inability to fully programme the received resources needs further scrutiny.

Findings: efficiency and managing trust funds

Finding 36. In preparation for the pending United Nations restructuring, the Office should reconsider the business model of engagement with trust funds, using staff positions more efficiently and addressing the concerns and aspirations of Member States. For instance, it could provide substantive oversight – quality assurance of designs, monitoring, and evaluations of trust fund projects.

Finding 37. During this and the previous strategic framework cycle, the average annual inflow of trust fund resources is \$18.8 million, while the corresponding average disbursement is \$11.8 million. This persistent inability to fully programme the received resources needs further scrutiny.

Finding 38. The **fragmentation of the trust fund portfolio** incurs high transaction costs and operational inefficiencies. UNOSSC-managed trust funds operate under multiple governance structures, including the Board of Directors for the India-United Nations Fund and the IBSA Fund as well as the Committee of Experts for the PGTF. Separate governance frameworks and reporting requirements contribute to high transaction costs and missed opportunities for economies of scale and synergies. Addressing this issue requires strengthening, streamlining and harmonizing business processes, including refining project approval mechanisms, revision procedures and administrative workflows to enhance efficiency and reduce operational complexities.

2.3 Sustainability

174. This section presents an assessment of the durability of the benefits of UNOSSC interventions in the three outcome areas of the strategic framework, with a focus on the likelihood of continued long-term positive impacts and the resilience of underlying systems to potential risks. It describes the sustainability of achievements in the three outcome areas.

2.3.1 Outcome 1

175. As noted earlier, UNOSSC efforts to advocate for integrating SSC and TrC into key United Nations policy frameworks and processes resulted in the adoption, by the General Assembly, of 90 resolutions between 2022 and 2024 that integrated SSC and TrC perspectives. In the years to come, these resolutions will continue to provide an enabling environment and legitimacy for the United Nations development system to prioritize integrating SSC and TrC into its interventions and support programme countries to achieve their 2030 Agenda goals.

2.3.2 Outcome 2

176. IAM, established by UNOSSC in 2018,²⁸ aims to institutionalize the strengthening of SSC and TrC within the United Nations development system. As discussed in the section on effectiveness, interviewed members affirmed the continued functioning of the mechanism as a platform for improved coordination of SSC and TrC among the entities of the United Nations development system at the Headquarters level. Regional offices of DCO and members of the UNCTs interviewed confirmed the utility of guidance published by UNOSSC to mainstream SSC and TrC in the UNSDCF as well as the training provided to selected countries to operationalize that guidance. The sustained effects of IAM as well as the guidance and related training have yet to be assessed; however, these measures will likely continue to strengthen the mainstreaming of SSC and TrC in United Nations interventions in programme countries.

2.3.3 Outcome 3

177. As discussed earlier, the benefits of South-South Galaxy have yet to be tracked. This evaluation found no body of independent evidence of scaling or replication resulting from SSC and TrC interventions relating to the four trust funds. Therefore, this evaluation cannot assess the sustainability of efforts aimed at achieving this outcome.

178. The ongoing paradigm shift in the multilateral development assistance poses a significant challenge to the financial sustainability of the United Nations system, including that of UNOSSC. It is likely that, to address the significant shortfalls in traditional ODA, SSC and TrC will become even more critical, including the efforts currently under way. The results of outcomes 1 and 2 discussed earlier are likely to become more beneficial in sustaining ongoing and future SSC and TrC interventions, thereby enhancing the sustainability of those results.

²⁸ In response to General Assembly resolution 72/237 of 20 December 2017.

Findings: Sustainability

Finding 39. An assessment of the sustainability of UNOSSC achievements shows a mixed performance. UNOSSC efforts to advocate for integrating SSC and TrC into key United Nations policy frameworks (outcome 1) provide an enabling environment and legitimacy for the UNDS to prioritize integrating SSC and TrC into its interventions, thereby providing a durable impact. IAM provides a platform for improved coordination of SSC and TrC among the entities of UNDS at the Headquarters level. Meanwhile, the guidance published by UNOSSC to mainstream SSC and TrC in the UNSDCFs, along with the training provided to operationalize that guidance, is likely to yield durable results in strengthening the mainstreaming of SSC and TC in United Nations interventions in programme countries (outcome 2). However, there is insufficient independent evidence to demonstrate that the knowledge products, South-South Galaxy and the trust fund projects (outcome 3) have a lasting impact.

Finding 40. The anticipated changes to multilateral development assistance are likely to strengthen the durability of the existing UNOSSC achievements.

2.4 Coherence

179. “Coherence” refers to how well the policies, practices and interventions of the United Nations system, including those of UNOSSC, work together to achieve the goals and priorities of the strategic framework while aligning with the priorities of the programme countries. This evaluation focuses on both internal and external coherence. An evaluation of **internal coherence** assesses the synergies among the five UNOSSC programmatic development services in achieving the three strategic framework outcomes and addresses programmatic (e.g. IRF, results) and operational (e.g. synergies among office units) aspects. It also examines **external coherence** within the broader United Nations system, including intergovernmental processes and the efforts of UNDS interventions at the global, regional and country levels in advancing the strategic framework and the United Nations SSC strategy.

2.4.1 Internal coherence

180. **The design of the strategic framework did not fulfil its potential to promote programmatic coherence within UNOSSC efforts.** As noted, the strategic framework provides a relevant and comprehensive framework to link the development services offered by the Office to the desired outcomes and outputs. However, it lacks an operational theory of change, which would help to increase understanding of how to translate the Office resources and expertise into optimal outputs and outcomes. Such a theory would aid in identifying the necessary outputs to achieve the outcomes and the most suitable indicators for tracking progress while also recognizing and addressing the risks and assumptions involved in attaining those results. A significant risk facing implementation efforts is the lack of synergy among interventions, which could also constrain the quality of products and the efficiency with which results are delivered. For instance, the development services intended to strengthen SSC and TrC in intergovernmental processes would be significantly enriched by input from knowledge services, trust fund

management and capacity strengthening efforts by the Office; in other words, the outputs and indicators under outcome 1 should reflect the ongoing efforts in outcomes 2 and 3.

181. **Even without interlinkages within the strategic framework, the Office has strived to foster linkages among the workstreams.** For instance, the partnership team collaborates with the trust fund team on visibility campaigns and donor engagement; the communications team supports the dissemination of trust-fund-related materials; the Programme Support Unit provides essential operational assistance; and the knowledge team helps to share information on trust fund events and outputs on internal platforms, such as South-South Galaxy. These efforts provide a foundation for more systematic collaboration.

182. The UNOSSC-managed trust funds enhance the visibility of UNOSSC and SSC and TrC, play a valuable role in sustaining and expanding partnerships, and foster multi-stakeholder collaboration with Member States, United Nations entities and a wide range of actors at the global, regional, national and local levels. Trust funds also offer opportunities to test innovative ideas, generate scalable results and produce knowledge that can inform policy dialogues, research and technical guidance.

183. This potential for cross-fertilization of the workstreams remains significantly underutilized, and the Office is unable to institutionalize these linkages. For instance, the Programme Support Unit draws on the trust fund experience when needed but there is little evidence to suggest that systematic efforts are under way to leverage the trust fund experience and influence the agenda and discussions of intergovernmental processes.

184. The Office has taken several steps to break down silos, such as uniting teams by forming task forces focused on key contributions of the Office. Despite these efforts, collaboration among the units remains ad hoc and focused on specific deliverables rather than being part of a strategy to position the Office as a prominent player within the United Nations system with high visibility.

Findings: internal coherence

Finding 41. The strategic framework was not based on an operational theory of change. Instead, the three outcomes were linked to outputs (and indicators) based on the activities of the Office. The risks and assumptions associated with achieving results from inputs and activities were not identified or tracked.

Finding 42. One of the consequences of this approach was that interventions aimed at achieving the three outcomes and the five programmatic development services did not adequately leverage one another.

Findings: internal coherence (cont'd.)

Finding 43. The lack of linkages among the interventions across the three outcomes further cemented the operation of the Office teams in silos. For instance, the Programme Support Unit draws on the trust fund experience when needed but there is little evidence to suggest that systematic efforts are under way to leverage the trust fund experience and influence the agendas and discussions of intergovernmental processes. This silo approach has survived the efforts by the Office management to bring together the teams, for instance in task forces to deliver the key contributions of the Office.

Finding 44. This weak internal coherence reflects the lack of a shared understanding of, and commitment to, the Office goals among the teams.

2.4.2 External coherence

185. UNOSSC has established good working relationships with relevant intergovernmental bodies and UNDS. For instance, the Office serves as the substantive secretariat for the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. It continues to provide technical support to the Chair of the G-77 and China.²⁹ The specific contributions of the Office were discussed earlier, along with observations of key stakeholders on their satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of the support provided by the Office and its responsiveness.

186. As noted earlier, IAM, established in 2018, is a forum to promote and coordinate the SSC and TrC efforts of over 40 United Nations entities. The Office serves as the secretariat for, and convenes quarterly meetings of, IAM. **This is a step in the right direction but it is underutilized.** For instance, as the trust fund manager, the Office uses 20 IAM member agencies to implement its projects in programme countries. It continues to encounter difficulties obtaining monitored data and evaluating completed projects, since these are the responsibilities of the implementing United Nations agency/ies in the project countries. IAM should have been a suitable platform to resolve the bottlenecks and ensure that the United Nations system benefits from evidence – based on impactful SSC and TrC interventions.

187. The Office also leveraged its relationship with DCO and some of its regional offices to strengthen its collaboration with RCOs, integrate the SSC and TrC perspective into the United Nations country-level planning processes, and disseminate its guidelines for that integration. As noted, the Office recognized the challenges that it faces in collaborating with regional entities to understand the regional SSC and TrC priorities, and it plans to implement the action plan of its **engagement strategy with regional bodies** when resources become available.

²⁹ Responding to the recommendation of the IEO evaluation of UNOSSC support to the G-77/China (2023), the Office developed an engagement plan with the G-77/China in consultation with that entity and began more structured support organized into key engagement pillars.

188. UNOSSC also established a collaboration framework with UNDP. This strategic move aims to leverage the extensive experience of UNDP in integrating SSC and TrC into its programmes and its global country presence. The Office should consider similar collaboration frameworks with other key United Nations entities that have a history of pursuing SSC in different sectors (e.g. FAO, UNICEF). An analysis of the Action Plan to implement this collaboration framework highlights efforts such as active participation in IAM and collaboration on the report of the Administrator to the HLC in support of intergovernmental processes. Nonetheless, the Office overlooks a valuable opportunity to leverage UNDP experience. For example, it could jointly produce policy briefs supporting intergovernmental processes or the Office could use the country presence of UNDP to map global SSC and TrC priorities and identify high-impact SSC and TrC solutions.

189. As noted, programme countries increasingly demand the SSC and TrC support of the United Nations, and two-thirds of the RCOs indicated that they had integrated SSC and TrC considerations into their CCA and UNSDCF.³⁰ At the same time, the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council adopted 66 resolutions, declarations and outcome documents to integrate SSC and TrC perspectives during 2023–2024.³¹ It is envisaged that these will assist United Nations entities in identifying SSC and TrC priorities and providing legitimacy to their efforts to strengthen SSC and TrC. However, interviews with UNCT members show a significant lack of awareness of the policies and decisions of the intergovernmental bodies, and those members felt that UNOSSC support would have been more beneficial if it had been directed at supporting the country-level work of the United Nations system.

Findings: external coherence

Finding 45. The Office has developed strong working relationships with relevant intergovernmental bodies at the global level, institutionalized coordination among United Nations entities at Headquarters, and leveraged DCO and its regional offices to engage with UNCTs and RCOs, thereby integrating SSC and TrC perspectives at the country level.

Finding 46. A disconnect exists between intergovernmental processes and country-level United Nations SSC and TrC efforts.

³⁰ QCPR survey 2024.

³¹ Report of the Secretary-General to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, twenty-second session, New York, 27–30 May 2025.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

190. This chapter presents the high-level key findings and recommendations based on the discussion in the previous chapters.

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. South-South and triangular cooperation and multilateral development assistance are undergoing transformative changes.

191. The twenty-first century has witnessed an accelerating evolution in the complexity and volume of SSC and TrC. The applications of digital and information technology, along with AI, continue to permeate all sectors of development, transforming the nature and complexity of SSC and TrC exchanges. In addition to becoming more complex, the share of SSC and TrC in global development finance has more than doubled in this century and continues to expand, attracting an increasing number of actors and countries. Meanwhile, the significant reduction in ODA anticipated in 2026 and beyond has far-reaching consequences for multilateral development cooperation. These changes have already prompted proposals for United Nations reforms to reorganize the United Nations system. They will also further increase the demand for SSC and TrC and necessitate ensuring that the United Nations system and UNOSSC are fit for purpose to deliver SSC and TrC support to programme countries.

Conclusion 2. UNOSSC is favourably regarded by key stakeholders, its services are valued, its efforts are relevant to the Office mandate and United Nations SSC and TrC needs, and it is on course to achieve many of its IRF targets.

192. Member States, intergovernmental bodies, United Nations entities and IAM as well as think tanks and external stakeholders interviewed affirmed the relevance and value of UNOSSC support. They found the Office responsive, with inputs that were timely and of good quality. In particular, they appreciated the new leadership for its professionalism and commitment to promoting SSC and TrC.

193. The three outcome areas of the strategic framework, 2022–2025, were relevant to the SSC mandate of the United Nations system and will continue to be relevant. The majority of the strategic framework targets are likely to be achieved by 2025, and the results for which data are available have been assessed as durable (sustainable). The intergovernmental processes relating to SSC and TrC create an enabling environment and legitimacy for the UNDS SSC and TrC support to programme countries and regional bodies. The SSC and TrC capacities of the UNDS entities are crucial for providing effective support to programme countries. Programme countries must possess the capacity to demand and use SSC and TrC to accelerate development. Consequently, these three pillars will remain essential for UNOSSC to fulfil its mandate in the future.

194. The strategic framework remains relevant to the mandate and priorities of the Office. UNOSSC has taken steps on multiple fronts to strengthen its implementation of the strategic framework. It streamlined its support for intergovernmental processes that promulgate SSC and TrC policies for the United Nations system; convened multilateral dialogues and forums to strengthen SSC and TrC; tracked and reported progress achieved in SSC and TrC in the United Nations system (and globally); strengthened internal collaboration and coordination of the United Nations development system through IAM; and entered into a collaboration agreement with key actors such as UNDP. It has supported intergovernmental processes;

co-created knowledge and established a database for SSC and TrC solutions, including external actors; administered trust fund projects to strengthen SSC and TrC in programme countries; enhanced the capacities of UNCTs to integrate SSC and TrC into their programmes through training and developing guidance; and strategically engaged key external partners, such as multilateral development banks and think tanks, to achieve its goals.

195. An analysis of monitored data confirmed that 80 per cent of the IRF targets for which data are available are likely to be achieved by 2025 despite the fact that the Office faces multiple contextual challenges, including internal restructuring, leadership change in 2023, and delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion 3. Despite the relevance of the strategic framework and achieving the majority of the targets, the visibility of UNOSSC remains low within the United Nations system, particularly at the country level, raising questions regarding the impact of its interventions and results.

196. Part of this low visibility is due to the limited human and financial resources available compared to those of many United Nations entities active in SSC and TrC and based in programme countries. The Office has demonstrated an increasing focus on results in its activities, achieving success in knowledge co-creation, capacity development and trust fund administration; however, it remains unclear how much these results have impacted people's lives. **The insufficient focus on high-impact SSC and TrC interventions also contributes to the low visibility of the Office.**

197. **High-impact SSC and TrC solutions are linked to addressing critical development gaps.** With its nearly universal presence, the United Nations development system is well-positioned to identify emerging and existing development needs in regions and programme countries. Evidence suggests that UNOSSC does not adequately leverage UNDS to analyse and define its priorities and interventions. Engaging with UNDS could also help to identify the priorities that need advocacy for SSC and TrC interventions, generating demand for SSC and TrC where the Office could have a significant impact.

198. **UNOSSC also has not fully capitalized on its access to intergovernmental processes to identify the critical priorities of Member States.** It has provided valuable support to the work of intergovernmental bodies such as the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and the G-77 and China to integrate SSC and TrC considerations into their work. However, the Office missed the opportunity to use discussions on proposed General Assembly resolutions proactively (not only those relating to SSC and TrC) for a better understanding of emerging priorities.

199. **The Office also did not adequately leverage the SSC and TrC experience of the United Nations entities in designing and implementing high-impact SSC and TrC initiatives nor were the initiatives complemented by research involving identifying external SSC and TrC experiences. The Office has yet to develop and implement a strategy to map and prioritize high-impact SSC and TrC initiatives as well as conduct the necessary research and analysis to identify and implement SSC and TrC solutions to achieve high impact.**

Conclusion 4. The United Nations development system is unaware of the value proposition of the Office and lacks clarity regarding its role and function, which hinders demand for high-impact SSC and TrC.

200. Many United Nations entities do not fully understand the role and added value of UNOSSC. Given the magnitude and scope of the ongoing United Nations reforms, clarity on the value proposition of the

Office has become particularly crucial. To clarify a value proposition that acknowledges the limited human and financial resources alongside the broad mandate of the Office, the following observations would be relevant:

- (a) The Office **has yet to undertake a systematic effort to identify and maximize the value that it adds to the ongoing SSC and TrC efforts within the United Nations system.** This is particularly important as several United Nations agencies are increasingly devoting considerable human and financial resources to SSC and TrC whether with or without the assistance of UNOSSC, and, for the most part, they operate in silos. The Office acknowledges that it is essential to facilitate inter-agency learning, promote synergies among the SSC and TrC efforts of United Nations entities, catalyse innovations through demonstrations, broker external partnerships to strengthen United Nations-wide SSC and TrC efforts, and leverage the collective SSC and TrC experiences of United Nations entities to fulfil its mandate. However, this recognition does not come with a systematic approach to pursue these initiatives with a focus on outcomes. For example, the Office convenes IAM regularly but has not yet fully realized the IAM potential to promote substantive exchanges of experiences, collective learning and the proliferation of innovative practices. Similarly, in providing technical support to intergovernmental processes, it has relied primarily on its in-house capacity rather than leveraging the expertise of relevant United Nations entities, which has resulted in the Office not meeting the related IRF targets.
- (b) The **trust fund projects missed the opportunity to showcase the value proposition of UNOSSC.** Those projects improved the visibility of the Office and mobilized significant resources from the Global South to promote SSC and TrC while addressing the needs of programme countries and fulfilling the UNOSSC mandate. However, they have not adequately demonstrated the catalytic nature of their support or their added value compared to other ongoing SSC and TrC efforts in the country undertaken by UNCT members. Furthermore, there is little evidence to show that trust fund projects fostered synergies at the country level with the SSC and TrC efforts of UNCT members (e.g. scaling UNSDCF results or promoting policy dialogue) or took such synergies into account in their design. As a result, they risk duplicating the efforts of other United Nations entities in the SSC and TrC. Equally important, the trust fund portfolio displayed limited synergies with the other programmatic development services of the Office.
- (c) **The Office has strengthened its external partnerships but has not fully leveraged them to benefit the United Nations system.** By implementing its results-oriented partnership strategy, the Office has consolidated its existing external partnerships and expanded them to include think tanks from the Global South, academia and actors involved in implementing SSC and TrC initiatives. It has used these partnerships to fulfil its key commitments (e.g. South-South Galaxy, the Solutions Lab and various multilateral events relating to SSC and TrC). However, these partnerships are underutilized in brokering the exchange of knowledge and technical expertise to support the ongoing SSC and TrC work of the UNCTs and intergovernmental processes or to aid in developing alternatives to critical existing arrangements. Such partnerships could also have been used to address the increasing demand from national actors to enhance their capacities for promoting SSC and TrC in the South. Similarly, these partnerships have yet to be used to provide global alternatives for existing and emerging development priorities of the South (such as financial architecture and governance of AI).

Conclusion 5. The weak internal and external coherence of UNOSSC and its interventions is likely to compromise their quality and impact.

201. **There was a lack of shared vision and goals among the Office teams, which generally functioned as silos.** The absence of interlinkages among the results of the three strategic framework outcomes reinforced the silos. The teams were valued for the support that they provided to the stakeholders but the collaboration among those teams was ad hoc. The teams did not recognize the need to strengthen synergies as a shared priority. Team goals, rather than those of the Office, were prioritized by the teams. Consequently, the teams did not realize the maximum possible impact of their results.

202. **In addition, the Office underutilizes the interlinkages and synergies among its SSC and TrC interventions as well as the working relationships that it has established and institutionalized with intergovernmental bodies, UNDS and external partners.** For instance, the support provided for intergovernmental processes has not sufficiently leveraged the collective experience of IAM members at the national, regional and global levels nor its external partnerships. Similarly, the UNOSSC collaboration with the regional DCOs is still a work in progress. While this collaboration has strengthened the efforts of the Office to mainstream SSC and TrC in UNSDCFs and country-level programming of the United Nations agencies, the Office has not sufficiently leveraged the regional DCOs to engage with regional bodies to better understand their regional priorities. **Consequently, the Office misses the opportunity to adapt in an agile manner to address the dynamic context of SSC and TrC needs with its limited financial and human resources.**

203. **Conclusion 6. Weak RBM and an anaemic culture of results hinder learning and course corrections necessary to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Office.**

204. The Office enhanced the monitoring system and data collection; however, the collected data were not always analysed to support managing for results. The Office has yet to establish a set of key performance indicators (intermediate milestones to strategic framework targets) to assist the management in evaluating the health of its development and operational engagement at the desired frequency.

205. **The Office and the United Nations system have yet to develop a measure to determine the added value (impact) of SSC and TrC interventions.** The Office has demonstrated an increasing focus on results in its activities; however, the methodological and implementation challenges in assessing the value added by SSC and TrC interventions remain unresolved. Some United Nations agencies are making efforts to create such measures. Nevertheless, sector-specific measures of added value resulting from UNOSSC interventions have not been established. The United Nations system lacks coordinated, well-resourced, system-wide efforts to establish methodologies for assessing the value added by SSC and TrC.

206. **The design and implementation of the strategic framework were not grounded in a theory of change and failed to identify and manage critical risks as well as validate the assumptions underlying its approach.** The design and implementation of the strategic framework did not consider the interlinkages among these five programmatic development services that could have strengthened results. For instance, outputs under outcome 1 (supporting SSC and TrC policymaking) were not linked to outputs under outcome 3 (relating to SSC and TrC knowledge exchange). Similarly, in the programmatic development services, service 3 (knowledge co-creation and management) was not connected to service

5 (trust fund management). As a result, the Office missed the opportunity to enhance the impact of the results achieved.

3.2 Recommendations

207. **Recommendation 1. Develop and implement a strategy to prioritize high-impact SSC and TrC interventions, enhancing the visibility and relevance of the Office.** This will also address the rapidly changing landscape of international cooperation and the anticipated deep cuts in available ODA resources. UNOSSC should recognize the qualitative and quantitative shifts necessary to plan and implement high-impact SSC and TrC interventions while promoting the research needed to strengthen those efforts. To do so, it should:

- (a) **collaborate with the United Nations entities at Headquarters and UNCTs to map critical existing and emerging country-level demands.** Identify the global SSC and TrC priorities for the Office by aggregating that evidence and analysing the issues that would benefit most from SSC and TrC. For instance, the UNDP-UNOSSC collaboration framework identified the areas of digitalization and AI governance, combating climate change, financing for development and promoting innovations in supporting United Nations SSC interventions as its priority areas;
- (b) **invest in anticipating and understanding the emerging and existing priorities of Member States.** The Director should proactively and strategically engage with Member States through all available means of disseminating information relating to intergovernmental processes. For instance, (i) provide regular briefings on the UNOSSC interventions to the Chair of the Second Committee; (ii) participate in selected monthly ambassadorial meetings of the G-77 and China, briefing them on topics of interest in collaboration with relevant United Nations agencies; and (iii) observe the discussions on G-77 and China resolutions of interest even when they do not pertain to SSC and TrC and offer SSC and TrC considerations as needed. **To facilitate this approach, the Office should develop work plans in close consultation with relevant intergovernmental bodies that identify and prioritize high-impact resolutions to support;**
- (c) **collaborate more with regional** (e.g. African Union, ASEAN, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)) **and subregional bodies** (e.g. Regional Economic Communities of Africa) **to better understand the emerging and existing regional development priorities;**
- (d) **leverage partnerships to advance research and analysis that identify possible solutions to critical SSC and TrC priorities.** Such research will provide the basis for developing effective SSC and TrC interventions aligned with the development priorities of programme countries. This research should also support General Assembly resolutions that offer South-friendly alternative solutions to existing and emerging global development challenges, such as debt restructuring and governance of AI;
- (e) **develop measures to assess the value added by SSC and TrC interventions tailored to the needs of UNOSSC,** demonstrating the impact of such interventions, including non-tangible elements such as enhanced solidarity between countries and co-ownership; and

- (f) strengthen the Office interventions, such as intergovernmental support, capacity development, South-South Galaxy, the Solutions Lab and the trust fund projects, with **solutions that align with the priority focus areas of the Office and have a high impact.**

208. **Recommendation 2. UNOSSC should clarify its value proposition and communicate its role and responsibilities clearly to Member States and the United Nations development system.** The value proposition should be anchored in operationalizing its mandate as the focal point for promoting and facilitating SSC and TrC efforts within the United Nations system and globally. The Office should:

- (a) **identify its priorities based on its role and mandate, addressing critical emerging and existing demands that can be met with the available resources and partnerships;** map all ongoing SSC and TrC work within the United Nations development system and intergovernmental processes; identify gaps to be addressed through the coordination and facilitation of SSC and TrC; broker external partnerships; and advocate for SSC and TrC while avoiding duplication. It should prioritize its modes and areas of engagement through broad internal discussions and consultations with key stakeholders and scope its priorities and contributions in line with its available financial and human resources, recognizing the pending reduction of those resources and potential United Nations reforms, to streamline its activities; and
- (b) **in implementing its agenda, promote innovations and cutting-edge research to deliver high-impact solutions that address key emerging and existing global, regional and national priorities;** ensure that the latest high-impact solutions relating to the priority focal areas of the Office are captured, analysed and widely disseminated through its digital knowledge platforms; and leverage strategic partnerships with the private sector and other relevant actors to achieve this end.

209. **UNOSSC should take the necessary steps to clarify its value proposition to all key stakeholders.** It should establish ongoing efforts to communicate its role of coordinating, tracking and reporting on SSC and TrC efforts among the UNDS entities, convening global forums to discuss policies promoting SSC and TrC, providing catalytic interventions to strengthen integrating SSC and TrC into the development efforts of the United Nations system and Member States, and leveraging strategic partnerships with key actors to achieve these ends.

210. **Recommendation 3. Strengthen the synergies and coherence among the SSC and TrC interventions within the United Nations system, including UNOSSC.** To achieve this, UNOSSC should:

- (a) **ensure programmatic interlinkages in the implementation of the three outcomes,** embed this linkage in the new strategic framework by introducing linkage indicators, and connect the results of these interconnected efforts as part of the performance assessment of staff members;
- (b) **leverage UNDS and external partnerships to institutionalize the integration of SSC and TrC into United Nations intergovernmental efforts as well as strengthen the capacities of national entities that promote SSC and TrC.** This collaboration will serve to reduce the Office workload and amplify its impact as more national actors join in promoting SSC and TrC;
- (c) **enhance the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for SSC and TrC (IAM) and collaboration with regional DCOs and select RCOs to strengthen the UNCT capacity** for integrating SSC and TrC into their interventions; and

- (d) **conduct an independent assessment of the project portfolio under the four trust funds** to enhance its alignment with the UNOSSC value proposition and determine the optimal role for UNOSSC in managing these trust funds. The assessment should evaluate the added value of the portfolio, its catalytic impact, its relevance to country priorities and UNCTs, and interlinkages with the other UNOSSC programmatic work. Based on this evidence, the Office value proposition and its comparative advantage over other United Nations managers of trust funds, UNOSSC should determine its role and team structure for managing trust fund projects.

211. Recommendation 4. Conduct an organizational assessment of the Office to determine an appropriate structure and the capacities needed to ensure that the Office operates as a cohesive unit with a shared vision, fit for purpose in delivering on its future priorities and commitments. The current arrangement has led to the Office teams working in silos, significantly hindering synergies across the five programmatic development services and interventions aimed at achieving the three outcomes. The assessment should address the Office organizational design, capabilities to meet emerging SSC and TrC priorities, and the financial and operational sustainability under the current United Nations reforms and expected reductions to core and non-core resources.

212. Recommendation 5. Strengthen the culture of results and results-based management (RBM) within the Office. To achieve this, UNOSSC should:

- (a) ensure that the future strategic framework is evaluable. Drawing lessons from the current strategic framework, present indicators of impact for outputs and outcomes where feasible, and ensure that reliable, credible data are available for all indicators. Set realistic targets based on experience and empirical evidence of what is feasible with the available resources;
- (b) develop and implement key performance indicators to track progress towards targets relating to development and organizational effectiveness. These indicators will align with the intermediate milestones for achieving strategic framework targets and will be grounded in the relevant theory of change; and
- (c) ensure regular analysis of portfolio performance based on the monitored key performance indicator data to identify any necessary course corrections.

[End]