

United Nations  
**IRAN**  
**COUNTRY**  
**RESULTS**  
**REPORT**  
FOR 2021



**UNITED NATIONS**  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN







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# Foreword by Resident Coordinator

I am pleased to present this UN Country Results Report on behalf of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This report lays out the UN's collective contribution to Iran's development and humanitarian goals, including under the current United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2017-2022).

In 2021, the United Nations at global level and in countries around the world continued to respond to wave after wave of Covid-19 and its many variants. In Iran, I am pleased that the United Nations was a strong partner of the Government in facilitating access to vaccines. In 2021, the UN facilitated the delivery of some 14 million vaccines to Iran through the COVAX mechanism.

As part of this, the UN successfully ensured that Iran was allocated an amount of 1.6 million vaccines from the Humanitarian Buffer, specifically for the Afghan population in Iran, in line with the principles of global burden sharing. The UN system in Iran and also myself personally worked with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health and the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs to encourage and advocate for bilateral donations of vaccines from international partners. As such, I am proud that the United Nations was able to make an important contribution to the significant level of vaccinations administered in the country. This was complemented by other support to Covid-19 response and recovery, including in the health and socio-economic fields.

Throughout the year the United Nations demonstrated its flexibility and responsiveness to the changing situation in the country, and the impact of regional developments. By the end of 2021, according to preliminary Government estimates, some 500,000 Afghans had arrived in Iran. In August 2021, the UN launched the Afghanistan Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan (RRPRP), an inter-agency plan supporting the host countries of Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This allowed the UN system to substantially upscale its support to the Afghan refugee population in Iran.

Looking ahead, the UN Country Team counts on the continued close collaboration of the Government of the I.R. of Iran and all national and international stakeholders. 2022 will be a foundational year for the United Nations in the country as we will work with national partners to establish the next partnership framework: the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2023-2027.

I would like to thank the Government of the I.R. of Iran and all other partners for their invaluable support and collaboration with the UN System that have made possible the development and humanitarian results outlined in this report. I look forward to further deepening the UN – Government – development partner cooperation in the country for the benefit of the people of Iran.



**Stefan Priesner**

United Nations Resident Coordinator

# United Nations Country Team Composition

## Development Agencies

1. **APDIM:** Asia-Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management
2. **FAO:** Food and Agriculture Organization
3. **UNAIDS:** Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
4. **UNDP:** United Nations Development Programme
5. **UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
6. **UNFPA:** United Nations Population Fund
7. **UN-Habitat:** United Nations Human Settlements Programme
8. **UNICEF:** United Nations Children's Fund
9. **UNIDO:** United Nations Industrial Development Organization
10. **UNODC:** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
11. **WHO:** World Health Organization

## Humanitarian Agencies

1. **IOM:** International Organization for Migration
2. **UNHCR:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
3. **WFP:** World Food Programme



# Key National Implementing Partners - in 2021

- Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs
- Department of Environment
- Information Technology Organization of Iran
- Iran Customs Administration
- Iran Fisheries Organization
- Iran Meteorological Organization
- Iran National Standards Organization
- Iran University of Medical Sciences
- Iranian National Commission for UNESCO
- Iranian Red Crescent Society
- Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance
- Ministry of Agriculture Jihad
- Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare
- Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts
- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Energy
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Health and Medical Education
- Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade
- Ministry of Information and Communications Technology
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Roads and Urban Development
- Ministry of Science, Research and Technology
- Ministry of Sport and Youth
- National Disaster Management Organization
- Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization
- Plan and Budget Organization
- State Welfare Organization
- Statistical Centre of Iran
- Tehran Municipality
- Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology
- Vice-Presidency for Women and Family Affairs



# 2021 Key Contributors

- Austria
- Australia
- Czech Republic
- China
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Islamic Republic of Iran
- Iceland
- Japan
- Kuwait
- Luxembourg
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Poland
- Republic of Korea
- Russia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- The Netherlands
- United Kingdom
- Global Environment Facility (GEF-SGP)
- United Nations Funds<sup>1</sup>
- UNIQLO
- Global Fund
- Green Climate Fund
- EC European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
- EC Directorate General for International Partnerships (INTPA)
- International Centre on Qanats and Historic Hydraulic Structures (ICQHS)
- Regional Centre on Urban Water Management (RCUWM)
- Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute
- OPEC Fund for International Development
- Qatar Airways
- Montreal Protocol
- World Bank (WB)
- Private entities of Canada & USA

1. United Nations Funds include United Nations core resources, MPTFO managed funds, Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework (UBRAF), among others.





# Chapter I

## KEY DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN THE COUNTRY



Despite declines in some socio-economic development indicators, the Government indicates that 2021 had some positive economic results<sup>1</sup>. This includes preparation of a stimulatory Budget initiative; a 1.5 per cent GDP growth rate; a 4.9 per cent growth in investments; fall in the unemployment rate to 8.9 per cent; prevention of full inflationary costs on production through supports; increased bank credit facilities to production by 59 per cent; and significant support to housing construction.

The impact of the unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States in 2018, compounded by Covid-19, had significant adverse effects on development trends in Iran in 2021 - especially on vulnerable populations, but also heightening existing structural factors such as unemployment (at 9.6 per cent for March 2020 to March 2021)<sup>2</sup>, low GDP growth (on average 1 per cent in 2020 and 2021)<sup>3</sup> but rising to 3.6 per cent for March 2020 to March 2021 (Iranian year 1399), inflation in quarters 3 and 4 of 2021<sup>4</sup>, income inequality (Gini of 0.40)<sup>5</sup> and a high material footprint (circa 1.2 billion tonnes<sup>6</sup> – indicating over-usage of material resources). Sanctions made it difficult for Iran to import and export (both remaining lower than previous years) and limiting technology transfer and foreign direct investment. Further distortions have included falls in labour participation rates and increased investment uncertainty. These have compounded existing structural challenges. Heightened instability in neighboring Afghanistan led to hundreds of thousands of Afghan citizens moving westward into Iran, adding extra pressures on the already huge socio-economic costs of hosting of the Afghan documented refugees and undocumented persons.

Such strains were particularly problematic in 2021 for the most vulnerable population with the share of the food component on of household expenditures rising<sup>7</sup>. These pressures mostly affected vulnerable populations, including 12 million unskilled and semi-skilled workers<sup>8</sup>, 3.5 million female-headed households<sup>9</sup>, 8.5 million elderly<sup>10</sup>, and circa 2.5 million smallholder farmer households<sup>11</sup> in rural areas as well as the circa 1.2 million people living with disabilities<sup>12</sup>.

These development challenges in 2021 prompted the Government to increase both its relief measures addressing vulnerable populations (including cash transfers to both households and firms and -through support-related budgets) and to undertake adjustment measures in reducing reliance on oil/gas revenues with a focus on redirecting investments to encourage productivity improvement and employment generation. The Government also focused on population policy in order to take advantage of the current young population dividend and to provide compensating initiatives for aging.

Social resilience also remained a high priority in 2021, as Iran was significantly affected by Covid-19, with over 100,000 deaths by end of 2021<sup>13</sup> and serious strains on the health care system. Health and social protection support has increased significantly in the national annual Budget (up 100 per cent). In 2021, Iran also passed the new Disaster Management Law, moving from traditional response and relief towards future and risk-informed planning for reducing hazards, vulnerabilities, and exposure to risk with leadership by the National Disaster Management Organization (NDMO).

The impact of the unilateral sanctions and pandemic occurred during a period in which national investments in productive value-added returns had declined – with jobless growth processes prevailing. The Government Leap in Production and regionally-focused development initiatives in 2021 have been the formal response to this. The 6th Plan, the Resilient Economy Policy, and the 2021 Budget recognize the advantages of inclusive growth combining economic development with meaningful employment and social support.

The planning undertaken in 2021 for the 7th Plan and the proposed 1401 (2022) Budget also indicate the same and will be supported by tailored measures and targets, as well as micro, small and medium enterprise development. Area-based development approaches to address targeted inclusive rural livelihoods development and natural resource management are also being planned by the Government.

Bearing in mind the size of the economy, the extraordinary potential of the country and the complexity of its development challenges, although the financial contribution of the United Nations to the country's development trajectory is not significant compared to the Government's spending from public resources, the UN technical and knowledge-based contributions have been very relevant in climate change, refugees, health, natural disasters and poverty reduction. However, there are many areas that international community would benefit should additional assistance and further cooperation be forged. Environment and climate change, refugees, health, natural disasters and drugs are few of such areas that call for extra resources and additional international cooperation. Unilateral sanctions and over-compliance by third parties have impaired cooperation specially on environment and climate change. Drawing on the UN comparative advantages in such fields can bring outcomes favorable to both Iran and the larger beneficiaries around the world.

1. Report on Government Performance in Achieving the 1400 Goals (Secretariat, Presidency High Council for Information, 1401)
2. Statistical Centre of Iran (2021). Labour Census Q3 1400.
3. Statistical Centre of Iran Website. Data and Statistics. National Accounts.
4. Statistical Centre of Iran Website. Data and Statistics. Price Indexes.
5. Statistical Centre of Iran Website. Data and Statistics. Households' Income and Expenditure.
6. UNEP. 12.2.1 Material footprint, material footprint per capita, and material footprint per GDP. Available at: [https://wesr.unep.org/indicator/index/12\\_2\\_1](https://wesr.unep.org/indicator/index/12_2_1) (Accessed: 8 December 2020). Also UNDP HDR 2020
7. Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare – The Face of Poverty Report 2021
8. Statistical Centre of Iran, Statistical Yearbook 1398 (RCO Analysis)
9. Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs Website. Data and Statistics.
10. Statistical Centre of Iran. Statistical Yearbook 1398. Page 131.
11. Statistical Centre of Iran, Statistical Yearbook 1398 – derived from Section 4 Agriculture and Fisheries
12. Social Welfare Organization (2019). Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities.
13. IRNA News Agency (2021). Latest Covid-19 Statistics in the World. (28.12). Available at: <https://www.irna.ir/news/84396006>





## Chapter II

# UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN PRIORITIES

## 2.1 Overview of Results

In 2021, the United Nations Country Team worked closely with its national and international partners contributing to the attainment of the country's national development goals and priorities. Under the United Nations Iran humanitarian support, the United Nations provided administrative, logistical and financial support complementary to the existing governmental assistance in the areas of education, health and livelihoods, including voluntary repatriation of migrants and refugees, sustainable reintegration of refugees and support to the host communities.

In August 2021, UNHCR launched the Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan. For Iran, the plan involved 10 partners, including the United Nations agencies in Iran working on emergency preparedness and response.

The United Nations system in Iran jointly advocated for rapid increase of the supply of Covid-19 vaccines in the country through the COVAX mechanism. In 2021, the United Nations facilitated the delivery of 13,999,110 vaccine doses to Iran through the COVAX mechanism including 1.6 million doses for the Afghan population in Iran.

The United Nations organized a series of workshops on the global Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA), a mechanism designed to identify strategic humanitarian priorities during the first weeks following an emergency. With the participation of approximately 100 officials from across national entities such as the National Disaster Management Organization and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they agreed to draft an Iran MIRA, or "IMIRA", localized to the country's context. To further the coordination of disaster management preparedness and response, the United Nations system in Iran formalized its internal coordination mechanism establishing United Nations agencies as Sector Leads under the Disaster Management Taskforce.

In its development programmes with the Islamic Republic of Iran, United Nations support was provided under the chapeau of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017-2022, which is a strategic and programmatic framework of cooperation between the United Nations and the Government of Iran with 15 major development priorities identified in line with Iran's Sixth Economic, Cultural and Social Development Plan 2017-2022.



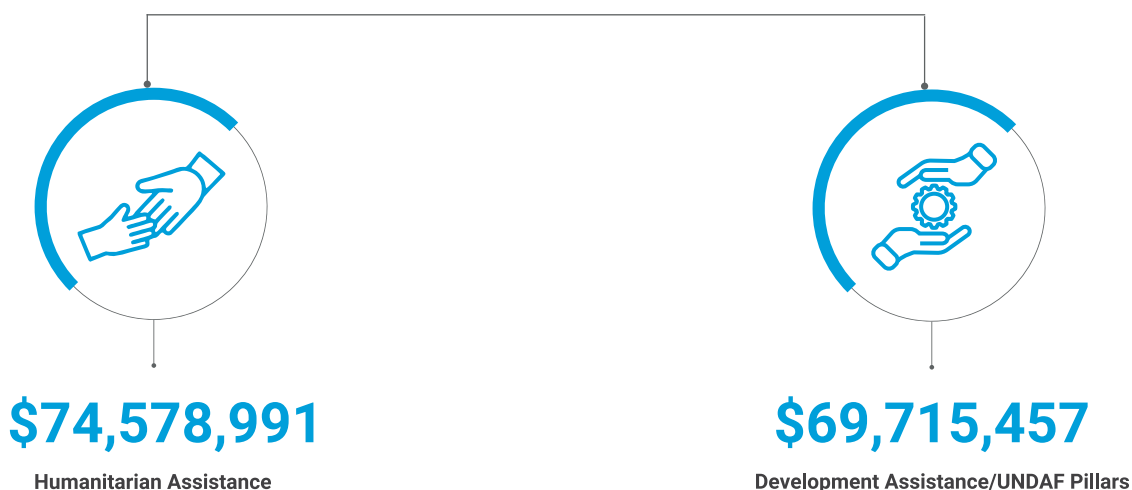


The health, humanitarian and socio-economic response of the United Nations system to Covid-19 was mainstreamed across the four strategic priority pillars of the UNDAF to save lives, protect people and build forward better. The development support provided by the United Nations system was largely channelled through interventions in the areas of capacity development, technical assistance and policy advice, advocacy, knowledge generation, sharing of best practices, and facilitation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

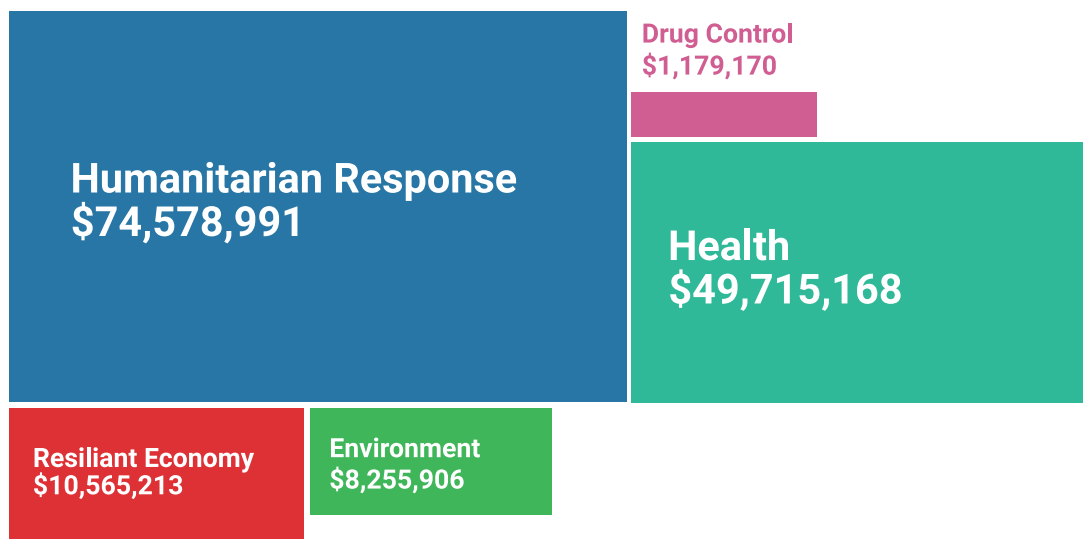
The results during the fifth year of the UNDAF cycle (2017-2022) were achieved through a combined delivery of \$69,715,457 under the UNDAF pillars, representing a more than 230 per cent increase from the previous year. This increase demonstrated the upscaling of interventions by the United Nations system in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Overall, in 2021, the United Nations in Iran spent \$144,294,448 including both humanitarian and development assistance:

### Humanitarian and Development Expenditure in 2021



### Expenditures for 2021



# Challenges

The Covid-19 pandemic remained a key challenge in 2021. It halted some of the planned face-to-face programme interventions with relevant stakeholders, exacerbated limited accessibility to project sites that impeded access to communities and beneficiaries, and delayed implementation of some of the planned activities, in particular incoming, in-country and field missions and programme visits due to travel restrictions. The United Nations in Iran managed to successfully migrate many of its activities to the virtual world.

Another challenge has been the impact of unilateral sanctions on Iran that has affected several areas, such as resource mobilization and funds transfer and access to international markets of goods and supplies, services, and technology as well as procurement and shipment of supplies and equipment to the country.

Additionally, the situation in Afghanistan in 2021 and the arrival of new Afghans in the country have affected some of the project activities by impacting the population of some of the target provinces.



## 2.2 UNDAF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES







# UNDAF STRATEGIC PRIORITY PILLAR I:

## ENVIRONMENT

### Contributing Agencies:



### SDG Supported:



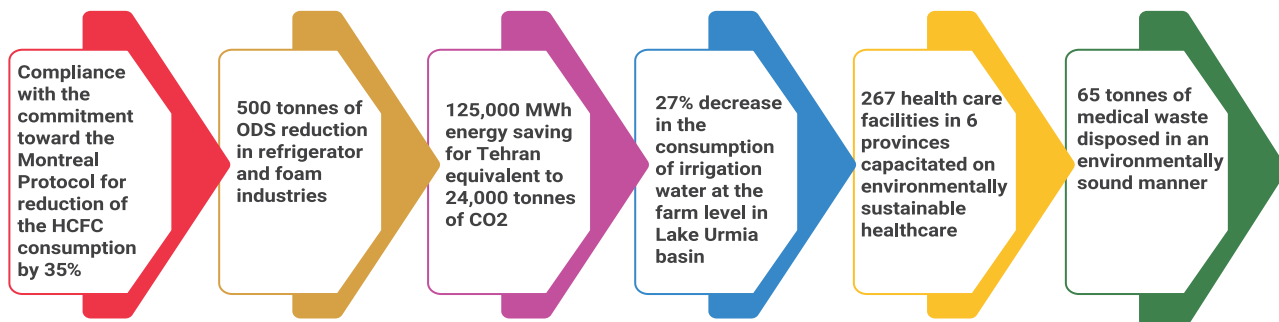
### Expenditure:

**\$8,255,906**

### Alignment with 6th NDP:

Articles 31, 35, 38, 39, 44, 48, 50

### Key Results:





# Highlights

In 2021, the United Nations contributed to national policies and standards in energy efficiency and an environmentally-friendly economy, carbon emission reduction, and climate change adaptation by implementing different projects strengthening waste management systems and adaptation measures. The Government was also supported to address complex and inter-linked issues of sustainable development and natural resources management, ecosystem and biodiversity conservation; to promote sustainable livelihoods; and to build thriving and resilient communities. The key results supported by the United Nations for each of the two outcomes of the UNDAF Environment Strategic Priority Pillar are provided below.

## Integrated Natural Resources Management:

Throughout the year, efforts made by the Government, and supported by the United Nations, to combat desertification and sand and dust storms have increased the resilience of local communities in five provinces of Iran. 23 provinces with an area of 34.6 hectares are affected by the dust phenomenon, and 7 border provinces are affected by external dust storms. In Sistan and Baluchestan province, a comprehensive baseline study and capacity gaps assessment was conducted to identify the priority areas. A grant mechanism was put in place, enabling the local population to implement quick-win projects, resulting in approval of 36 priority project proposals. Jointly with the Government, an innovative platform for socio-economic development of the Sistan region was established to tackle local development challenges focusing on water accounting, constructing underground greenhouses, creating farm shades, developing a value chain for green cumin, rose distilling, and installing windbreakers. By providing water transport and storage tanks, solar panels, and veterinary supplies for Sistani cows the resilience of local communities (46 households) in the Hamoun wetlands basin was improved.

•• **Based on the Environment Performance Index, Iran Branks 61st among 180 countries, including such criteria as conditions of biodiversity (137), protected areas (156), terrestrial biomes (141), which were the most concerning ones, and species habitat (21), biodiversity habitat (50), and tree cover loss (14), which were the most promising<sup>[1]</sup>.**

Through provision of technical support and equipping four wetland centres (Shadegan, Bakhtegan, Nowruzlu, Kanibarazan), the Department of Environment and local wetland stakeholders were capacitated on participatory wetland monitoring in 16 out of 31 provinces of the country. The introduction of a public-private engagement model between the government, farmers, and the private sector for the conservation and rehabilitation of Lake Urmia through more sustainable agriculture practices and reducing the reliance on natural resources, has resulted in a 27 per cent decrease in the use of water for irrigation purposes.

1. <https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/1667925>

A technical proposal was jointly developed by the Atmospheric Science and Meteorological Research Centre of Iran and the United Nations to produce a forecasting system using the Combined Drought Index. Through almost 20 different initiatives in cooperation with national and local authorities, the United Nations assisted the Government in strengthening the capacity for sustainable management of water and natural resources within the biosphere reserves of Iran, as well as increasing public knowledge and awareness of climate change and water scarcity.

Technical support was also provided to the national authorities on the sustainable management of the 13 existing biosphere reserves of Iran. A project on the quality and quantity of Tehran metropolitan rivers and water effects on community health during the Covid-19 pandemic was developed by the University of Tehran with the technical support of the United Nations. The negative effects and consequences of the Kan River on the health of urban communities were investigated, and appropriate solutions to improve the existing conditions were provided. Ocean and coast monitoring, including simultaneous measurement at four points in the north and south of Iran, and monitoring the health status of coral reefs in Chabahar Bay were carried out jointly with the Iranian National Institute for Oceanography and Atmospheric Science.

## Environment Friendly Economy and Climate Change

The United Nations continued to support the Government in meeting the requirements of under the Montreal Protocol on substances leading to the regeneration of the ozone layer, protection of human health, significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency and industry innovation.

In 2021, Iran reported a 57 per cent reduction from the baseline, which is 33 per cent lower than the

control limit in 2020 and is continuously enforcing the quota and licensing system for hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs).

Several capacity-building workshops for over 200 refrigeration and air-conditioning (RAC) servicing technicians were organized, resulting in enhanced skill certification of the RAC technicians. Technical specifications of equipment for enterprises was defined, and 18 beneficiaries were supported with technology upgrades. Through United Nations-facilitated technology transfer, knowledge building, and financial support on refrigeration and polyurethane industries, there was an estimated reduction of 500 tonnes of ozone depleting substances (ODS) in the refrigeration and foam industries. According to the Customs Administration of Iran, from January to September 2021, 86.56 tonnes of HCFCs were imported into the country which is 22 per cent less than the control target of 123.84 tonnes set for 2021.

Institutional capacities of government partners to effectively implement the Minamata Convention were enhanced, and knowledge

●● Iran is among the top 10 countries carbon emitters and ranks 74 among 180 countries regarding its climate change performance [1]. The increase in energy consumption in the country is about five times more than the worldwide average. Improving energy efficiency is vital to the country's progress and can contribute to environmental and economic sustainability.

1. <https://epi.yale.edu/epi-results/2020/country/irn>



and capacity among different national stakeholders on replacement of mercury-containing lamps increased through the development of a comprehensive mercury inventory in Iran. National, regional and oil sector inventories to identify chemicals, pollution and waste sources were conducted, and a course of action to fulfill the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions and encourage cleaner production practices was implemented.

The establishment of a national platform of integrated building data monitoring with support from the United Nations has enabled an effective monitoring of the energy consumption in the building sector as one of the major energy-consuming sectors of the country.

Demonstration of energy efficiency measures in 541 pilot buildings, including 362 residential buildings with 3 million m<sup>2</sup> and 179 non-residential buildings with 723,000 m<sup>2</sup> across Tehran, resulted in an annual energy saving of over 125,000 MWh, equivalent to 52,000 barrels of oil. Final annual energy savings were equivalent to 7.3 million NM<sup>3</sup> of natural gas, 12,500 MWh of electricity and 24,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> (CO<sub>2</sub> teq/yr).

Under the first Green Climate Fund (GCF) readiness project, the United Nations supported the establishment of an empowered National Designated Authority (NDA) system.

A guidance for climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable healthcare

facilities was piloted in 267 facilities in six provinces. A climate-based model was developed with United Nations support following improved data compilation and analysis of the health system, climate vulnerability and impact of climate change on non-communicable diseases; communicable diseases; air quality diseases; water, food, and nutrition diseases; disasters; and emergencies in six provinces.

65 tonnes of medical waste were disposed of in an environmentally sound manner as a result of procurement and installation of two sets of autoclave equipment in Firoozgar and Imam Khomeini hospitals within the framework of the United Nations project “Emergency response assistance to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease in the I.R. of Iran” funded by China and covered by the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund and the Government of Iran co-financing.

Trainings on best practices of medical waste management were conducted jointly by the United Nations and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME) for 223 participants and a guidebook on best practices of managing medical waste was developed for staff handling medical waste in hospitals.



## WATER AND DROUGHT

### Sustainable Water Resources Management had been a challenge for years

Using satellite images, an advanced water-accounting system helps manage water flows and water consumption. In 2021, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) transferred the results of a major educational project to a team of multi-disciplinary national experts. They are now able to monitor the Lake Urmia in order to save as much water as possible while still tapping into the resource. Moving forward with the project, now known as Water Accounting Plus, Iranian experts are identifying hotspots where the water disappears and are tracking EvapoTranspiration (ET).

Another FAO tool used in the same area is monitoring droughts to learn how to respond when crops are not getting enough water. Using advanced satellite technology, images detect areas at risk and by combining these images with data from a sensing system, results are turned into a simplified map for farmers. The system warns about water stress periods for specific crops. This project was also turned over to Iranian experts, who can now manage the Agricultural Stress Index System, with the possibility of expanding the monitoring across Iran.







# UNDAF STRATEGIC PRIORITY PILLAR II:

## HEALTH

### Contributing Agencies:



### SDG Supported:



### Expenditure:

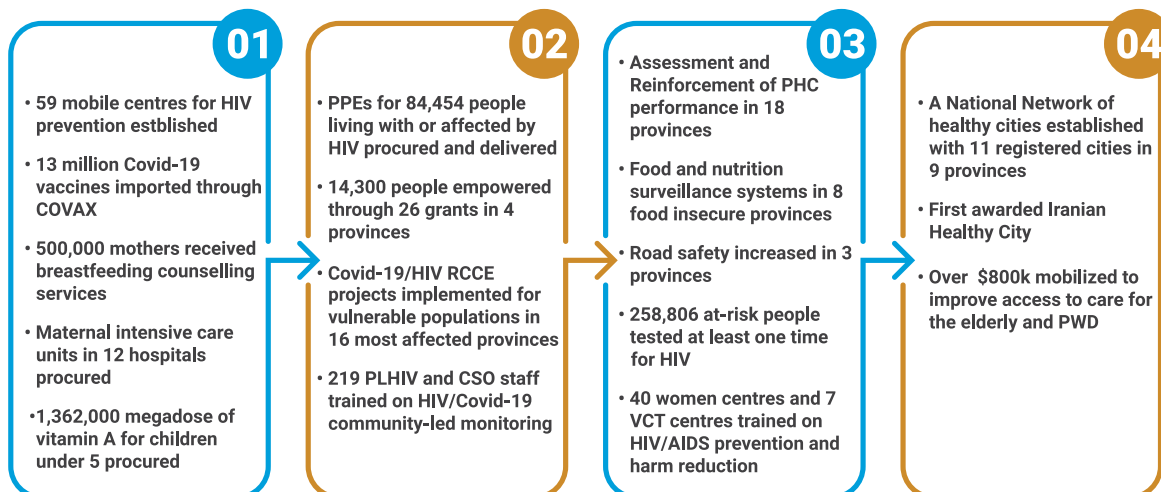
**\$49,715,168**

### Alignment with 6th NDP:

Articles 70, 73, 74, 76, 80, 108

### Key Results:

1. Improved equitable access to quality health services, essential medicines and diagnostics
2. Health-empowered and resilient populations
3. Enhanced capacity building and development of standards
4. Fostered multi-sectoral cooperation and community engagement



# Highlights

During the second year of the pandemic, UNCT efforts were focused on the Covid-19 pandemic and other health emergency response. These were led by the UNDAF Health Group and its Pro-Health sub-group while drawing on the expertise of both United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in a coherent and integrated manner. The United Nations supported the Government's efforts to ensure continuity of essential health services and to strengthen the public health system with particular focus on resilience and the most vulnerable populations by advancing universal health coverage (UHC) and promoting people-centred primary health care.

## Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

As a result of the joint work of the Ministry of Health and the Radboud University Medical Centre in the Netherlands, supported by the United Nations as a Triangular Cooperation initiative, the UHC benefit package for multiple sclerosis patients was revised, which has improved its financial accessibility with zero budget impact on the national Health Insurance Organization.

The primary health care (PHC) measurement and improvement programme was successfully implemented at both national and sub-national levels covering 20 medical universities. Through development of an electronic dashboard with 36 indicators supported by the United Nations, national policymakers are now able to assess PHC performance, identify gaps, and reinforce the PHC strengths in 18 out of 31 provinces of the country.

In 2021, the national health system capacity was strengthened for scaling up non-communicable disease interventions in the PHC system with a focus on the IraPEN mechanism through production of the country profile on non-communicable disease services in PHC, a policy brief with recommendations to improve them, and an online dashboard for sharing progress of NCD interventions at the primary health care level.

## Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases

The United Nations helped the Government to accelerate efforts towards enhancement of road safety in the country and achieving the national target of a 20 per cent reduction in road fatalities by 2025. In line with strengthening national capacity, a Road Safety Action Plan until 2030, focusing on speed management, was developed. Implementation of the speed management project in three provinces is ongoing, where approval and implementation of the Safe System Approach were recommended by the joint United Nations and governmental Iran Road Safety Partnership.





With United Nations technical support, two situation assessments were conducted to analyse the status of the mental health of pregnant women during the Covid-19 pandemic, and 11 “hot zones” were identified for more specific interventions to protect pregnant women’s mental health.

Children under five, as one of the most vulnerable populations, are now better protected thanks to the food and nutrition surveillance system established with United Nations support with the purpose of monitoring their nutritional status, food security and dietary patterns in eight food insecure provinces.

- **R**oad traffic injuries in Iran account for 4.42 per cent of deaths and are in 5th place among the leading causes of death. The current road fatality rate is 20.3 per 100,000 population and a total of 16,946 persons were killed in 2019 on Iran’s roads.

## Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and other Communicable Diseases

- **A**ccording to the latest official data for 2021, knowledge of HIV status stands at 42 per cent (42 per cent men, 43 per cent women), and anti-retroviral therapy (ART) coverage at 29 per cent of all people estimated to be living with HIV (PLHIV) stands at 27 per cent for men and 35 per cent for women. When taken as a proportion of PLHIV who know their status, ART coverage increases to 69 per cent overall (63 per cent men, 83 per cent women)[1].

1. Global AIDS Monitoring 2021. Iran (Islamic Republic of) submission page.  
<https://aidsreportingtool.unaids.org/>



## Strengthening HIV Prevention and Control

The National AIDS Programme and the United Nations partnered to mitigate the impact of the HIV/Covid-19 syndemic on people living with or affected by HIV, through the procurement and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) (1.8 million masks; 61,500 litres of hand and surface sanitizer; 2 million latex gloves) among 680 civil society organizations, reaching 84,454 beneficiaries across the country. Twenty-six small grants were awarded to 10 NGOs in four provinces, reaching 14,300 beneficiaries (9,200 men and 5,100 women) with innovative Risk Communication and Community Engagement projects (RCCE). Other RCCE projects were also implemented in 16 of the most affected provinces targeting people living with and affected by HIV. Several important studies were conducted with United Nations support: a comprehensive review of the HIV surveillance system, an assessment of the prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 and its co-factors among people living with HIV, a revision of the country's

HIV estimates, completion of the Global AIDS monitoring exercise, and the Stigma Index 2.0 study.

The capacity of 596 focal points in charge of supervising the implementation of the HIV/AIDS National Strategic Plan, including medical universities, the State Welfare Organization, the Ministry of Sciences, Prison Organizations, the Ministry of Sport and Youth, and the Red Crescent Society, was enhanced by an innovative approach for education on HIV/AIDS through 20 workshops. A total of 1,428 teachers and students from selected universities enhanced their knowledge on risky behaviours leading to HIV/AIDS through a total of 38 workshops.

The United Nations supported the national response to maintain HIV services, including development and implementation of models for differentiated HIV services among people living with and affected by HIV, namely ART and expanding the HIV self-testing pilot. Procurement of 200,000 rapid HIV diagnostic tests was undertaken by the United Nations for provinces with large-scale declines in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission programmes.

The National AIDS Programme procured 1,161,000 ART tablets, meeting the needs of 10,222 beneficiaries for 268 days.

Procurement of 30 PCR/viral load machines, 12 CD4 machines, 4 GeneXpert machines, and 14,500 GeneXpert kits as well as PPE helped the national response to maintain essential health services for people living with and affected by HIV through 2,511 health centres.

Consequently, 474,600 people (PLHIV, people who inject drugs, high-risk behaviour women and men, and prisoners) had access to essential quality services.

A total of 59 mobile centres established with United Nations support have been providing HIV prevention and harm reduction services to people living with and affected by HIV, promoting innovative and cost-effective service provision. In critical situations, including those resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, these centres have enabled the national response to maintain the harm reduction services for high-risk-behaviour women and people who inject drugs.

The capacity of women's centres and voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) centres was enhanced through equipping staff of 40 women centres and seven VCT centres across the

country with new knowledge on prevention and harm reduction through training workshops on 27 educational packages related to STI awareness and prevention, employment generation, outreach services, prevention of abuse, life skills, etc. The acquired knowledge has helped the VCT staff to assist people who use drugs during the pandemic. The monitoring system of the women's centres was strengthened with new indicators, checklists, tools and mechanisms as well as capacity building of monitoring teams. Experts from the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, medical universities, and the State Welfare Organization were trained on monitoring and evaluation of programmes aimed at at-risk women and adolescents. Dignity kits for 40 women centres and 229 VCT centres nationwide were procured by the United Nations.

A model for reaching hard-to-reach pregnant women was developed and piloted in Sistan and Baluchestan, Lorestan, and Golestan provinces, and the relevant standard operating procedures were developed and improved.

## Immunization Supply Chain, Vaccination and Improving Vaccines Cold Chain

The cold chain capacity of the National Vaccination Programme was supported through delivery of 12,000 data loggers, 662 standard refrigerators, 220 cold boxes, 620 vaccine carriers, 2 million syringes and 14 generators for maintaining standard temperatures during power failures. Thirteen million doses of donated and/or allocated Covid-19 vaccine were imported to Iran through the COVAX facility.

Upgrading of the vaccine software of the Centre for Communicable Disease Control with United Nations support has strengthened vaccine distribution and vaccine data management capacities for preparedness for potential future health crises.

The preparedness and response capacities of the public health laboratories and hospitals were enhanced through procurement and delivery of life-saving medical (imaging machines, drugs, ICU equipment) and laboratory items (PCR machines and tests, diagnostic kits). Amid evolution of the SARS-CoV-2, specifically the Omicron variant with a high transmissibility rate, the United Nations built up the diagnostic capacity of public laboratories for genomic sequencing, which enhanced identification of new variants and genomic surveillance. Under emergency response assistance to the outbreak of the coronavirus in Iran and with the



financial and technical support of the Government of China, two sets of autoclave equipment were procured and installed in Firoozgar and Imam Khomeini hospitals, processing 4 tonnes of medical waste per day, which resulted in an improved emergency capacity for waste disposal. Different online and in-person trainings, together with a guidebook on best practices of managing medical waste, were among the tangible results of this South-South Cooperation project.

## Malaria, Tuberculosis, Rotavirus and Brucellosis

The vector-borne diseases programme was supported in conducting self-assessment using the malaria elimination audit tool and in procuring diagnostics and equipment for responding to the resurgence of *Aedes aegypti* in the southern part of the country. Establishment of a rotavirus infection surveillance system and enhancing vaccination coverage monitoring and reporting after measles outbreaks were other achievements. A thorough review of the tuberculosis control programme was conducted, which has paved the way for starting development of a new national strategy for tuberculosis. The United Nations supported development of a national strategic plan for brucellosis as a priority in the country and strengthened capacities for rabies control with vaccines, antisera, and equipment for molecular surveillance. The technical knowledge and skills of 684 hospital managers and staff were enhanced through trainings on hospital infection prevention control and increasing the preparedness of national hospitals against infections, especially during public health emergencies.

In the fight against tuberculosis, 336,165 documented and undocumented refugees were screened for the disease through active-case-finding activities in 10 targeted provinces, and 414 tuberculosis cases were identified among them in Iran against the annual target of 272. The treatment success rate was 86.1 per cent against the annual target of 89 per cent.

## Promoting Health Throughout the Course of Life

Throughout the year, joint Government and United Nations efforts were vested to efficiently meet the health needs of vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and people with disabilities, and to improve maternal, neonatal and child healthcare, which were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.





## Maternal, Neonatal and Early Childhood Health

National capacities in provision of neonatal and early childhood services were enhanced with United Nations technical support. Fourteen continuous positive airway pressure devices were procured to help the ventilation of sick and premature newborns in Sistan and Baluchestan; these devices could help about 3,500 neonates hospitalized for ventilation disorders. A total of 200,000 brochures on healthy eating during Covid-19 for children under age two and 200,000 brochures for those aged two to five were distributed in health facilities to provide caregivers with resources that help them to make healthy food choices and follow a healthy lifestyle.

To tackle vitamin A deficiency, 1,362,000 megadoses of vitamin A supplements were procured for children under age five in eight food-insecure provinces. The newly adopted antenatal care and postnatal care guidelines were digitized for virtual training of service providers.

The results of a study on the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the main neonatal indicators and an assessment of the “helping baby breathe” programme in the delivery rooms of 730 hospitals across the country will be used for further interventions to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

National capacities to provide upgraded maternal healthcare services with a specific focus on deprived areas were further strengthened, and 500,000 mothers in hospitals received counselling services on breastfeeding during the Covid-19 outbreak. Eight action plans to reduce the maternal mortality ratios in Ahvaz, Bandarabbas, Birjand, Bojnourd, Iranshahr, Mashhad, Zabol and Zahedan were developed with United Nations support.

Equipment for maternal intensive care units in 12 hospitals, equipment for Covid-19-free centres and 600 oxygen generators for three hospitals in provinces with the highest needs, Khuzestan, Khorasan Razavi, and Sistan and Baluchestan were procured.

Maternal health programmes and services were scaled up by the development of adapted national practical guidelines for the prevention and management of preeclampsia and eclampsia. A tele-consultancy platform was developed for medical universities to strengthen the health system response to meeting the emergency needs of pregnant women.

The maternal morbidity and mortality surveillance system was reviewed and maternal health protocols, including risk assessment, reduction, and management via risk stratification pathways, were upgraded.



## Health Needs of the Elderly and People with Disabilities

The access of the elderly and people living with disabilities to inclusive healthcare has been improved, and their health needs are being better met. The Ministry of Health and Medical Education now has better capacity and knowledge to protect the elderly, to effectively respond to their needs, and to provide healthcare services to these elderly vulnerable populations during and after the pandemic period through full implementation of the RCCE programme. An enhanced long-term care system (LTC), including insurance schemes for the elderly, was developed and more than 35 officials and senior experts of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education were trained on LTC.

Through multisectoral partnerships and United Nations technical support, a project on improving access to inclusive healthcare in LTC facilities and enhancing the quality of life and dignity of the most vulnerable populations in Iran throughout the Covid-19 pandemic was launched that will increase the infrastructural and operational capacity of LTC facilities in Covid-19 risk reduction, effective isolation, and quality of care; will enhance the technical capacity of service providers to provide tailored care to the target group; and will provide the most needed assistive technologies for the people living with disabilities. A national multisectoral steering committee was established to provide strategic direction to this project with representation from the Government, professional associations, and independent representatives from the elderly and people living with disabilities. Overall, \$800,000 was raised for this project in 2021.

## Healthy Settings

Today, about 75 per cent of the Iranian population lives in cities. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the role of cities in health risk reduction and demonstrated the importance of community engagement for health and wellbeing in pandemic response. The Healthy Cities Programme (HCP) was promoted by the United Nations by giving awards to flagship cities and by establishing the National Healthy Cities Network in Iran through local capacity building, monitoring, and implementation of activities as well as by exchanging experiences. Based on the experience of Sahand city, the first Iranian city that received the 3-year Healthy City Award in 2021, an inter-regional consultation was facilitated to strengthen capacity in Iran, learning from Greece and Turkey in the establishment of a national healthy cities network. The empowerment of women (49.5 per cent of the population) is an important element in Sahand's Healthy City development encompassing community-led initiatives and programmes for the socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable populations, including the elderly, people living with disabilities, female-headed households, and children. A training programme included a cohort of ten cities in nine provinces trained on nine thematic pillars to learn from Sahand's hands-on experiences.

A comprehensive training course was conducted for representatives of health and non-health sectors from registered interested cities. The HCP will be expanded and scaled up through the Iranian National Healthy City Network to cover 100 more cities in Iran.

## EXPLORE PHIJI, BOOM OR ROOBIN TO LEARN

Three technology solutions will make it possible for children and youth to keep learning through Covid-19 lockdowns and beyond.

It is important that the youngest generations are not losing learning opportunities during the pandemic and that the needs of different age groups are met in the aftermath of the pandemic. In May 2021, the United Nations children's agency, UNICEF, in partnership with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology held the 'National Innovations for Children and Adolescents Conference and Award Ceremony' to honour the winners of a 2020 competition. The three most innovative, inclusive, and scalable projects for online learning were given awards, including financial support to



Photo credit: Arsam Robotics

expand access across Iran. Leading up to the event were numerous reviews, assessments, and demonstration days. National innovation experts evaluated more than eighty proposals, all addressing challenges faced by children and adolescents during the pandemic.

At the ceremony, the Iranian Vice President, Dr. Sorena Sattari stressed that the event builds a bridge between experts on the needs of children and the entrepreneurial community, helping to create an innovation ecosystem in Iran. The (former) UNICEF Representative in Iran, Ms. Mandeep O'Brien added: "We believe that frontier technologies can help serve children most in need and that is why investing and supporting innovative solutions for children's issues are more than ever necessary."

1- "Phiji" is an artificial intelligence toy mixing virtual and physical environments and targeting young children aged 4–8. Through smartphones, children can play and learn at the same time. Phiji adds to and is part of an interactive microecosystem, such as Robokids, that give real-time feedback to children while playing interactive games. As such, Phiji addresses digital literacy gaps. The toy will be launched in 2022.

2. "Boom" is an inclusive digital library platform developed for 6 to 16-year-olds. As schools and libraries closed during the pandemic, children and youth experienced that access to learning materials disappeared, especially in the less developed areas. Boom is a multi-lingual platform giving access to e-books, audiobooks, videos, etc. It has special features for children with special needs. Boom will also be released in 2022.

3. "Roobin" is a Persian-speaking, programmable robot for 7 to 17-year-olds. Roobin helps children learn about math and algorithmic thinking. As the robot is interactive, it will help children build resilience, learn about risk-taking and problem-solving, and develop creative capacities. Children with different challenges such as autism will be able to use Roobin.



## MEDICAL EQUIPMENT THROUGH WHO-SUPPORTED PROJECT SAVES CRITICALLY ILL COVID-19 PATIENTS

**“It was a nightmare! We did not have a CT scanner, so during the third and fourth peaks of the pandemic, I needed to drive to the neighbouring town 30 kilometres away almost 20 times a day – often on snowy and slippery mountain roads.”**

Moslem Nazarian is a paramedic at the Emam Ali hospital in Azna, Lorestan Province, and while driving patients he worried about their safety. His own hospital did not have the needed equipment to provide them with the right treatment. But one day, a CT scanner was installed at the hospital, and the rather hazardous transport became one worry less.

“You can’t imagine how happy I was when I heard we were about to get a CT scanner—not only for myself but also for everyone whose suffering I was witnessing,” Nazarian said.

As part of the \$50 million provided through the Iran Covid-19 Emergency Response Project (ICERP) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, WHO was able to support the country’s general health care system, improving diagnosis and treatment of Covid-19 as well as other diseases. With the ICERP funds, the United Nations purchased a total of 451 medical devices such as CT scanners, ultrasound and portable x-rays machines, diagnostic laboratory devices and over eight million tests. The equipment was delivered to 137 public hospitals and 45 laboratories across 31 provinces of the country, all caring for Covid-19 patients.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been a challenge for the healthcare system to get the right equipment. Due to unilateral sanctions, the system was already under pressure when the pandemic started in early 2020.

So, the United Nations support meant a lot to hospitals and patients. Mr. Eskandar Mohammadi would often bring his 93-year-old mother to get a scan at Tohid Hospital in Sanandaj Province. Often, the machine would break and they would have to wait for hours at a stretch until Tohid also got a new scanner. “They told me with a big smile to bring in my mother without having to make an appointment days in advance. And the service here is really good now,” Mr. Mohammadi said.



The new CT scanner at Tohid Hospital in Sanandaj



# UNDAF STRATEGIC PRIORITY PILLAR III:

## RESILIENT ECONOMY

### Contributing Agencies:



### SDG Supported:



### Expenditure:

**\$10,565,213**

### Alignment with 6th NDP:

Articles 4, 27, 31, 33, 37, 48, 52, 59, 63, 65, 66, 70, 77, 80, 98, 99

### Key Results:

01

4,625 individuals benefited from 550 training sessions on entrepreneurship and marketing

04

225,653 children safely returned to in-person education

02

5000 job opportunities, including around 3,500 for women and women with disabilities, created

05

79,281 students benefited from hygiene items and assistive devices

03

9000 households, 7222 children and 1000 students benefited from cash transfer and in-kind support social protection schemes



# Highlights

## Social Protection, Inclusion and Empowerment

In 2021, through strong inter-agency collaboration under the UNDAF Resilient Economy Pillar, the United Nations supported the Government to mitigate Covid-19's impact on the poorest, building resilience through conditional in-kind support and cash transfers. Analytical and knowledge products were generated on the impact of the sanctions and Covid-19. The Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) and Statistical Research and Training Centre (SRTC) were supported in the analysis of child-related issues and in designing and conducting the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of Covid-19 on different demographic groups under the thematic pillars of education, economic activities, mortality, childbearing, and marriage, as well as on the mental health of different age groups.

Technical and financial support was provided to design and roll out a cash transfer and in-kind support (cash plus) model in the two Covid-19 impacted and deprived counties of Harsin and Khoramshahr of Kermanshah and Khuzestan provinces. A total of 6,500 households with 7,222 children were registered in the programme as direct beneficiaries. In-person summer schools were established for approximately 4,500 children who were out of school and/or at risk of dropout due to not having resources to access online education. A total of 465 adolescents enjoyed intensive vocational training courses in 25 majors, such as computer visual arts, tailoring, carpentering, graphics, accounting, etc., to facilitate their transition from 'learning' to 'earning'. The Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare (MCLSW) benefited from United Nations technical assistance in developing the Child Poverty Atlas that categorizes the country into five distinct geographical areas based on children's vulnerabilities and household income deciles.

Furthermore, around 2,500 vulnerable households (approximately 10,000 individuals) and 965 students benefited from conditional in-kind support, such as PPE, cash plus, Covid-19 insurance and tablets, clothes and stationery, under conditions that they participate in medical and psychosocial Covid-19 trainings, PCR test schemes, medical scanning, planting trees, village waste management, and provision of vital goods from identified stores. Production of the face masks by recovered tailoring and improved test scores were some of the positive results of this initiative. People with disabilities, female-headed households, pregnant mothers, youth, and students who left school because of Covid-19, were the most important beneficiaries of these job generation/revival and social protection initiatives.

Relevant national authorities were supported to conduct analyses for informed planning and decision-making on child welfare were developed and disseminated. This included documenting MCLSW's best practices in social protection schemes for malnourished pregnant and lactating mothers in Sistan and Baluchestan province, food security schemes for vulnerable households with children, and out-of-school children initiatives. Technical support was provided to reduce child poverty and increase the efficiency of social protection and to move towards integrated, child-centred and responsive social protection. A virtual knowledge exchange between Brazil, China, Austria and Iran on social protection schemes, poverty reduction policies, and entrepreneurship programmes was facilitated by the United Nations.

The safe reopening of schools was supported by the United Nations through procuring PPEs for 225,653 children. The most at-risk children, including children with disabilities, refugee children, and out-of-school children in 3,923 schools nationwide, including 954 regular and 2,969 special schools, now have better access to education. Infrastructure improvement of 17 inclusive schools for children with disabilities in different provinces was supported. Services for children with disabilities were enhanced through equipping 31 provincial distance-learning studios with 4,123 assistive learning devices and 1,266 tablets.

The United Nations supported the National Inclusive Education Initiative reaching 79,281 students. A training package on Positive Parenting was designed with United Nations support for 157 counsellors. A community-based programme for prevention of child maltreatment was piloted jointly with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education in four provinces to address low participation of fathers in parenting and to enhance children's knowledge and awareness of child maltreatment. Two national Protocols on Care Plans and Aftercare were developed. At total of 1,108 children in juvenile correction and rehabilitation centres and 197 incarcerated mothers in women's prisons received personal protective supplies.

As part of the national Child-Friendly Candidate City (CFCl) initiative and partnership with the Ministry of Interior, Isfahan was recognized as the first CFCl in Iran, thus putting into place mechanisms for realizing children's participation in urban decision-making through the Youth Urban Advisory Council, the allocation of a child-specific budget, and the encouragement of partnerships with the private sector.

## **Economic Empowerment, Job Generation and Sustainable Employment**

During the Covid-19 pandemic in Iran, the UNCT supported the Government in mitigating the negative impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable populations and affected businesses in Iran. More than 5,000 job opportunities, including around 3,500 for women, were created with United Nations support. As a result of RASER in three provinces of Hormozgan, Lorestan and Tehran, 3,000 job opportunities (93 per cent women) and around 115 micro, small and medium enterprises and home-based businesses were created through the development of agricultural value chains, providing vocational training and supporting branding and marketing with small businesses, female-headed households, pregnant women, youth, people with disabilities as the main target groups. Fifteen training modules were developed,

and 4,625 individuals benefited from 550 training sessions on entrepreneurship and marketing.

Working jointly with MCLSW, the economic empowerment of youth in Pole-Dokhtar county of Lorestan province was supported through: (a) enhancing entrepreneurial skills of young people through 84 hours of online training courses with participation of 50 young people; (b) innovation challenge sessions with 45 participants resulting in 14 innovative ideas; and (c) 36 young people received tailored coaching on team building and developing a business plan through a mentorship session.

Through the United Nations supported area-based development initiative, 56 small and medium enterprises were empowered

through better participation in value chains; 443 individuals received vocational and skills training on organic tourism, beekeeping, honey production and packaging, food processing, dried fruit production and packaging, and jewellery-making with precious and semi-precious stones. As a result, the livelihoods of 1,722 people (688 women), the businesses of 846 small-scale family farming units, and water provision for 4,523 farmlands were all improved. Around 3,000 women were equipped with skills and knowledge on e-commerce and digital marketing through online trainings.

The UN also supported the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad to improve the livelihoods of the nomadic population in northwestern Iran dependent on the production of Bactrian camels.

In cooperation with the Department of Environment, a small grants mechanism was developed, and 36 priority quick win project proposals benefiting 180 households (40 per cent women) were approved to support agriculture and husbandry, women's economic empowerment, tourism, fisheries, trade and commerce and entrepreneurship in Sistan and Baluchestan province.



*The Iranian Bactrian Camel is on the verge of extinction. Supported by FAO and Ministry of Agriculture, herders economy was stabilised e.g. by learning how to efficiently process and sell camel wool.*



Awareness was raised on inclusive and sustainable fishing practices as well as marine resource management through a training for 47 participants. An environmental and social management plan on the inclusive and sustainable development of the yellowfin tuna value chain in Chabahar port was designed with United Nations support.

1,124 job opportunities were created in the IT, beekeeping and tourism sectors. 30 technology centres in the garment sector were established and 3 collaboration contracts with international partners were brokered.

## Demographics, Population and Development

More than 883 women and youth acquired skills on employability and economic participation as part of the Demographic Dividend programme. The Statistical Centre of Iran was supported on the use of administrative and registry data for census purposes through a knowledge sharing initiative. The capacity of MCLSW was further strengthened to provide cash vouchers and PPE to 5,000 vulnerable female-headed households with a disability or disabilities in the family.

The MCLSW gained further capacity to effectively protect older people and pregnant women against Covid-19 through production and widespread dissemination of approximately 8.4 million sets of PPE in 113 State Welfare Organization centres and 210 MoHME health centres. Nearly 4,038 elderly (2,232 female and 1,806 male), 64,000 pregnant women and 2,700 care providers benefited from the PPE. Nearly 330 female-headed households, including those with disabilities, were trained and employed in production units to produce masks. Circa 14,000 elderly people, including those with disabilities, in nearly 310 State Welfare Organization residential care and rehabilitation centres benefited from the 1,000 portable oxygen concentrators procured by the United Nations.

The capacity and knowledge of MoHME staff were enhanced to protect older people and effectively respond to their needs and provide healthcare services through full implementation of the RCCE programme. A total of 280 professionals in the area of health and social care of elderly were trained through the learning management system on various health and social care topics related to older people. MoHME capacity was strengthened to develop an enhanced long-term care system, including insurance schemes.

A community-driven development (CDD) and age-friendly environment model was developed and piloted in a few urban and suburban areas to support older people associations and communities to identify challenges at the community level and to propose solutions to improve the welfare and well-being of older persons. The capacity of more than 90 experts from municipalities was strengthened on the principles, indicators and models of age-friendly environments through technical workshops and trainings.



Photo credit: Kamyar Minoukadeh

## SUPPORTING WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN IRAN

**The Covid-19 pandemic took a heavy toll on many families, making it hard for the most vulnerable to cope.**

Iran has a large number of female-headed households. According to the Statistical Centre of Iran, three million of the country's twenty-two million families are headed by a woman. Female-headed households, in particular those with single female breadwinners, were heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a government priority, UNDP targeted support for 5,500 of the most vulnerable families to help them get through the pandemic. An example is Sarvegol, a single mother and the only person in her family making an income.

In the past, she ran a small bakery, but the pandemic forced her to stop. With support from UNDP, which co-led a programme supporting women in rural Iran, Sarvegol was given an opportunity to revive her small business. The Rapid Socio-Economic Response (RASER) initiative helped women entrepreneurs establish or recover and then grow small enterprises. With technical and financial support, Sarvegol was able to reopen her bakery in Fial, her village in Lorestan Province. Today she has a thriving business and eight women employed to help her meet demand: "We are baking local bread and we have good customers. We take orders from local restaurants, too. The residents of the villages also shop from us. The passers-by who come for a walk or a hike are our customers as well. "The ladies working in a nearby sewing workshop, sew cotton bags for us as we have stopped the use of plastic bags in our bakery", Sarvegol says. "I want to thank UNDP for their assistance. Now I am at work, and I am happy. I am also giving an opportunity to the local community by hiring people and working with other women who are involved in other sectors. We are supporting one another," Sarvegol added.

The RASER initiative reached a total of 2,790 women. With support, the women could focus on building their businesses, attend trainings, and buy needed equipment. Some of them produced masks to protect against Covid-19; others are delivering eco-friendly or non-plastic packaging for agricultural produce and bakeries. Products are sold at marketplaces, but UNDP also empowered the local community and, as a result, some items are being sold on Iran's main digital platform, Digikala.

This project is implemented in cooperation with three main government agencies – Vice-Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, and Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare. Going forward, UNDP will support the Government in scaling up the RASER initiative to support socio-economic recovery.



# UNDAF STRATEGIC PILLAR IV:

## Drug Control

### Contributing Agencies:



### SDG Supported:



### Expenditure:

**\$1,179,170**

### Alignment with 6th NDP:

Articles 18, 28, 29, 78, 80, 101, 105, 106, 108, 113, 116

### Key Results:

**01**

1004 health care staff and social workers from 31 provinces capacitated through trainings

**02**

333 NGOs and CSOs assisted and 1,125 people reached with job creation and entrepreneurship skills trainings

**03**

150 police and customs officers with increased capacity on drugs and precursors information and intelligence sharing

**04**

200 kg of various types of drugs seized with the use of an upgraded body scanner at the IKIA

**05**

Estimated 3,000 homeless people in Tehran received 190k masks, 500k needles and syringes



# Highlights

In 2021, the United Nations continued its support to the Government in expanding the quality of existing programmes on drug prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and HIV care, as well as introducing new drug demand reduction programmes tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable populations exposed to risks of drug abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The United Nations also supported strengthening national capacities to combat drugs and the trafficking of illicit chemical precursors while promoting drug supply reduction policies and programmes and enhancing regional and international drug control partnerships.

The United Nations support to address drug control issues was largely channelled through capacity development, followed by technical assistance, knowledge products, advocacy, support for policy-making and South-South and Technical Cooperation.

Iran is responsible for 90% of the world's opium seizures, 71% of the world's morphine and 18% of heroine seizures.

- Worlds Drug Report, 2021

## Drug Abuse Prevention, Rehabilitation and Treatment

The capacity of technical staff in adolescent centres in addressing drug use prevention for girls was enhanced through the United Nations assistance in establishing an adolescent well-being centre contributing to reducing drug use and risky behaviours among adolescent girls in Khorasan Razavi province. A rapid needs assessment of the emerging needs for harm reduction of women drug users, studies for treatment of concurrent drug use disorder and mental health disorders, and a study of selected harm reduction centres in Tehran have contributed to improving the national harm reduction services and expanding access to hard-to-reach drug users. Proposals on parenting, life skills trainings, counselling and psychosocial support, producing medical products with focus on drug use prevention among the most vulnerable children and adolescents were developed and used in prisons and juvenile correction centres. Counselors and psychologists from six provinces enhanced their skills on family-based treatment of young people with drug use disorders. A total of 110 mental health experts across 31 provinces further developed their capacities on "Tele-counselling: Remote Stepped Psychosocial Care" with a focus on drug use prevention among adolescents, youth and families.

An estimated 3,000 homeless people were reached with 190,000 3-layer masks and half a million needles and syringes. As part of the capacity building in prisons, a training on Buprenorphine substitution therapy was conducted for 75 medical staff of prisons from 22 cities.

Analysis was conducted on the needs of young inmates in order to improve protection, psychosocial and drug prevention interventions for children in correction centres and aftercare centres.

National capacities for evidence-based drug prevention programmes for target populations were strengthened through developing packages, translating guidelines for treatment of substance use disorders in children and adolescents, adopting booklets, organizing trainings on a variety of topics related to drug use prevention for 468 mental health experts, school teachers, counsellors and 320 social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists from 31 provinces.

Awareness on drug prevention during the Covid-19 pandemic was raised through production of four short videos and seven animations on parenting skills produced for the prevention of drug use among young people together with posters and labels of CDs for wide dissemination. Evaluation of the pilot “Strengthening Families Programme” was completed for further scale-up in the country.

## Drug Supply Reduction and Alternative Livelihood Initiatives

In full coordination with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the UN fostered networking, communications, and coordinated planning and operations in the border areas between Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan through a Joint Planning Cell in Tehran comprising of their Permanent Liaison Officers and Country Focal Points.

Officers from the Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police enhanced their skills on the investigation of drug-related crimes and shared their experience with their Russian law enforcement peers during a specialized workshop in Moscow facilitated by the United Nations. The operational capacity of police in Imam Khomeini International Airport was increased through upgrading the scanner donated by the United Nations. As a direct result, airport police reported screening and seizure of over 38 kilograms of different types of drugs from drug couriers in 2021<sup>1</sup>. The skills of 150 anti-narcotics police and customs officers on different types of drug interceptions and seizures were enhanced through on-line trainings on drugs, precursors information and intelligence sharing, controlled delivery, backtracking, and regional and international drug control cooperation. Three national forensic laboratories strengthened their scientific and analytical capacities and knowledge through the United Nations exercises. A total of 600 youth and management staff of 157 NGOs and civil society organizations (333 female and 267 male) from across the country benefited from 20 online sessions on entrepreneurship, job creation, and start-ups. The participants were trained and increased their knowledge on creativity and ideation, teamwork and resilience, daily challenges and problem discovery and solutions, designing business models, market analysis, and entry and growth strategy. Forty groups received after-workshop training and started their businesses and start-ups with reported success.

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1. I.R. of Iran Drug Control Headquarters

## E-TRAININGS ON DETECTION OF CLANDESTINE LABS

One positive outcome from the Covid-19 pandemic, was the demonstration of the indomitable ability to keep going, and the insistence on finding new ways of overcoming challenges.

Among other activities, UNODC together with the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ), organized two important e-learning sessions for 15 officers from the Iran's Anti-Narcotics Police, the Iranian Customs, and the country's Drug Control Headquarters. An important result was to know how to conduct investigations for and identify precursors of illegal drug production and clandestine laboratories.

"As an organization, we have global experience to share. People in the illegal drug sectors are often acting in the same ways, and we collect and communicate best practices from all over the world at these e-learning sessions," said Alexander Fedulov, UNODC Representative in Iran.

When setting up or running these laboratories, there are several specific activities and behavioural patterns to identify if authorities are trying to track illegal shipments and several key items that are needed for illegal drug manufacturing. Both activities and purchased items are important indicators to monitor criminal activities. For law enforcement it is a must to recognize these indicators to be able to initiate timely investigation and dismantling of laboratories.

The training was delivered through UNODC's Global e-learning platform, which is used for both online and offline trainings to United Nations Member States across the world.



Scanner donated by UN and installed in Imam Khomeini International Airport



## 2.3 Support to Refugees and Undocumented Persons

The Islamic Republic of Iran has hosted Afghans for over forty years. Despite its own deepening economic challenges, arising from the impact of sanctions and made worse by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, Iran has maintained its exemplary services for refugees and asylum-seekers, notably through access to health care, education, and livelihoods opportunities in the national system. Iran remains a transit and a destination country for people on the move, due to its context and geographic location.

Following the occurrence of new security and humanitarian deterioration in Afghanistan in 2021, according to preliminary government estimates, by the end of 2021, approximately 500,000 Afghans arrived in Iran, adding to the in situ population of some 3.5 million Afghans in the country. Given the instability in Afghanistan, UNHCR issued a Non-Return Advisory on 16 August 2021<sup>1</sup>, calling on all states to halt the return of Afghans to their country, even those whose asylum claims may have been rejected. The refugee response in Iran continues to be conceptualized along the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), a regional framework launched in 2012 with the Governments of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and UNHCR, which seeks to bolster international support to rebuild Afghanistan, assist refugee-hosting countries and facilitate voluntary repatriation.

On 16 July, UNHCR declared a level 2 emergency covering Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey, to facilitate the agency's ability to scale up its operational responses. In Iran, this was followed by the activation of the Refugee Coordination Model, which provides a framework for inter-agency coordination. In August 2021, the United Nations launched the Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan (RRPRP). For Iran, the plan involved ten partners, including all United Nations agencies in Iran whose focus included emergency preparedness and response. The budget requirement for Iran was \$135.9 million.

In the area of food and nutrition, the United Nations strengthened its Emergency Preparedness and Response mechanism to be able to meet the needs of newly arrived Afghan refugees in Iran. The United Nations locally procured and delivered ready-to-eat food rations catering to the immediate food and nutritional needs of more than 20,000 persons for six days. In addition, the United Nations prepositioned dry food rations to cater to the food needs of at least 10,000 people for three months. These rations were dispatched to government warehouses in border regions.

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1. In February 2022, UNHCR issued a Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan, superseding the previously issued non-return advisory in August 2021”<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/61d851cd4.pdf>

In the spirit of responsibility- and burden-sharing, in 2021 the United Nations continued its long-standing humanitarian support to refugees living in settlements, thanks to which close to three out of four refugee households, despite their situation of vulnerability, maintained acceptable food consumption.

As the situation in Afghanistan remains volatile, prospects for large-scale voluntary repatriation of Afghans remain limited. Opportunities for resettlement to third countries also remained inadequate, with UNHCR receiving no quotas for refugees in Iran in 2021. With possibilities for durable solutions for Afghans in Iran thus limited, it remains important to ensure that the humanitarian efforts of the Government of Iran are supported strongly and in par with other host countries. The United Nations continues to advocate with the Government to provide adequate screening, registration and documentation to newly arriving Afghans, so that those in need of international protection can get it. Massive influx of Afghan citizens into the country has increased pressure on the host local community coupled with the insufficient international assistance to provide adequate infrastructure.

The United Nations has been able to provide limited emergency cash assistance to new arrivals in urban settings, while referring the most vulnerable cases to local charities to receive further support. UNHCR is also working with BAFIA, its main government counterpart, to build and/or renovate facilities in border regions to be able to temporarily host new arrivals.



Photo credit: UNHCR

# Achievements in 2021:

## Education

All children in Iran have access to primary and secondary education regardless of their documentation status. Refugee, undocumented and foreign children study side-by-side with Iranian students, while following the same national curriculum. Higher education can also be accessed by Afghans and Iraqis if they obtain a student visa in Iran.

According to the Government of Iran, some **500,080 foreign students** (out of which 470,000 are Afghans) have been enrolled in the 2021-2022 academic year in Iran, including some 185,000 undocumented Afghans.

The United Nations co-funded the construction of **seven schools**, in partnership with the Ministry of Education :

- **1,380 refugees** were **enrolled in literacy courses**.
- **581 refugee students** received scholarship support through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) programme.

## Health

The United Nations estimates that **90 per cent of refugees** in Iran have access to **primary health care**. Refugees also have access to universal public health insurance (UPHI) to cover secondary and tertiary health care, on par with nationals. In 2021, 120,000 vulnerable refugees had their insurance premiums covered by the United Nations – 20,000 more than in 2020.

The United Nations renovated and constructed eight health posts.

- **200 refugees** received **social counseling and therapeutic services**.
- **2,752 refugees** benefited from **harm reduction activities**.
- **Five** health posts were constructed and **one** was rehabilitated by the United Nations.
- **More than 2.5 million Afghans were vaccinated**.

## Livelihoods

- **276 refugees** were supported through income-generating activities such as **business workshops** or **home-based enterprises**.
- **Three vocational schools** were equipped, benefiting **237 refugees**.
- **1,968 refugees** were enrolled in vocational training courses.
- **70,401 refugees** also benefited from cash-based interventions, which helps the most vulnerable in meeting their immediate protection and basic needs, with choice and dignity.
- **280 women and 100 men** were supported through income-generating activities in tailoring workshops, greenhouse operations, welding, mask making, tailoring training centre, farming, bag making, fishery and mushroom cultivation.



## Food Security

- **30,600 refugees** in **20 settlements** received cash and food assistance
- **8,500 schoolchildren** and teachers received healthy school snacks.
- **3,000 girl students** were provided with education incentives.

The United Nations provided administrative, logistical and financial support, including reintegration assistance to those who decided to return to their country of origin. The United Nations in Iran, in collaboration with its national and international partners, assisted two groups of migrants including Iranian migrants stranded in other countries and stranded migrants of other nationalities in Iran who needed to be assisted for return and reintegration.

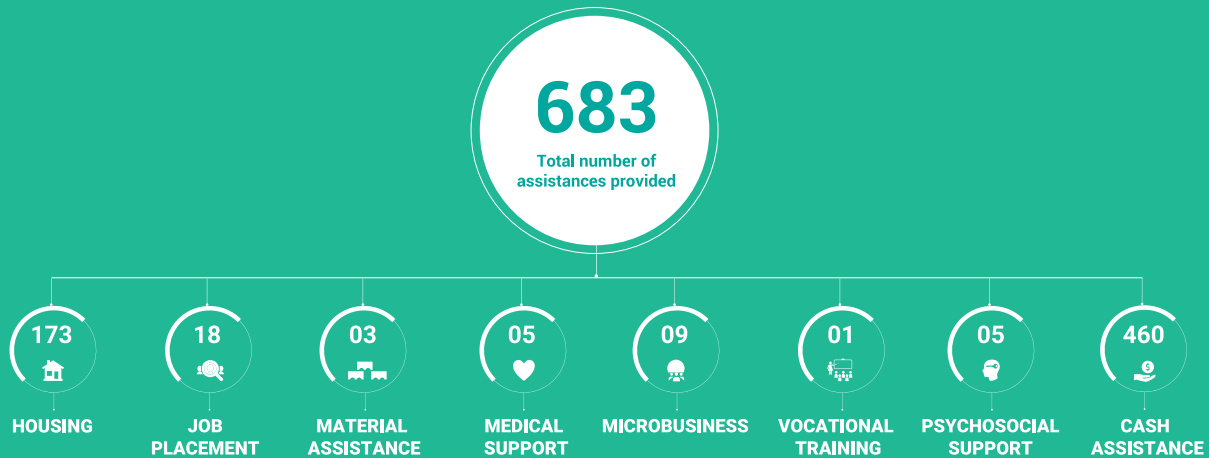
## Voluntary Repatriation

The United Nations facilitated the voluntary repatriation of **876 refugees** to their countries of origin, of which **865 returned to Afghanistan**, although given the developments in Afghanistan, voluntary repatriation is currently at its lowest rate since 2002. Of the refugee returnees, 57 per cent are Afghan university students who have to go back to Afghanistan to get a national passport with which to apply for an Iranian student visa.



## Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

To facilitate and sustain reintegration of returning Iranian migrants into their communities, the United Nations with close coordination and collaboration with the Iranian Government, provided a multifaceted response to address different economic, psychosocial, and social aspects of their lives at the individual level. In 2021, **315 applicants** were referred to the United Nations in Iran (257 men and 58 women).



The United Nations also provided assistance, at the request of the Government to **19** highly vulnerable non-Iranian migrants, including **seven** victims of human trafficking. The United Nations facilitated their return to their home countries in a safe and dignified manner.

## Resettlement and Operations

In 2021, IOM Iran managed to assist 518 cases (192 male – 326 female) of whom the predominant number of cases were Afghans. To assist them to leave Iran successfully, IOM provided them with 180 pre-embarkation checks, 262 medical examinations, 252 vaccinations, 248 referrals to laboratories, 239 referrals to radiology centres, three referrals for tuberculosis screening, 39 cultural orientation classes, two children-friendly services, one medical and two operational escorts, as well as surface transportation and accommodation services for 248 people. IOM made 135 flight bookings for this caseload, and 392 people received departure assistance from IOM to ensure their smooth departure from Iran to their final destinations, namely the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Canada, Finland, New Zealand, Australia, Gambia, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone and Hungary.

It should be noted that out of 518 cases assisted in 2021, a total of 413 cases departed Iran in coordination and collaboration with different Iranian Government counterparts including BAFIA, Immigration Police, NAJA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Consular Department, and several embassies. From 413 cases who successfully left Iran in 2021, 102 cases were referred to IOM by UNHCR, and these cases were successfully settled into the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Finland, New Zealand and Australia. Six cases (out of 102) were included in the 2020 caseload that was carried over to 2021. After consistent follow-ups and engagement of IOM with related authorities and receiving Governments, the six cases were able to leave Iran to start their new lives.

## 2.4 Financing Support and Cooperation

In 2021, the United Nations worked with a broad range of partners to advance sustainable development in the country. The key partner of the United Nations System in Iran in the implementation of development and humanitarian programs has been the Government of Iran. Development partners, private sector, as well as national and international NGOs also contributed to achieve impactful results in support of the most vulnerable in Iran.

**The following visual depicts some partnerships forged in 2021 by United Nations Iran with different stakeholders.**



Photo credit: UNDP/Sirous Zare

In recent years and through multi-stakeholder collaboration between Iran's Department of Environment (DOE), the European Commission, the Government of Japan, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations has been working on conserving Iran's wetlands. In 2021, with the support of the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme, United Nations Iran rehabilitated the Kamjan international wetland through the participation of local communities and a local group of revivalists. A wide range of different plant species and about 125 birds were revived, including the endangered Spoonbill species. In addition, several awareness sessions on the significance of wetlands were held in 30 schools with about 15,000 students attending.



Photo credit: UNIDO

Through a public-private partnership with the Information Technology Organization of Iran's Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, the United Nations significantly contributed to strengthening small and medium ICT enterprises in Iran, promoting economic growth and fostering innovation. Through a nine-day workshop, a total of 130 participants including government officials, start-ups and private and public sector representatives, discussed and exchanged knowledge about how to reduce the existing development gaps in the ICT sector, raise Iran's profile as a knowledge-driven economy, and scale up development efforts in the country.



Photo credit: Ministry of Interior of I.R of Iran

Through a tripartite partnership between Iran's Ministry of Interior, the United Nations system, and Unilever, the health of vulnerable children and their families in Sistan and Baluchestan province, one of the most deprived areas in the country, was improved during the Covid-19 pandemic with increased access to hygiene facilities. Forty thousand bottles of bleach were donated to the medical universities of Iranshahr and Zabol cities to target the most disadvantaged families through local health networks. This partnership paved the way for future United Nations collaborations with the private sector on promoting sustainable access to water and sanitation for all.

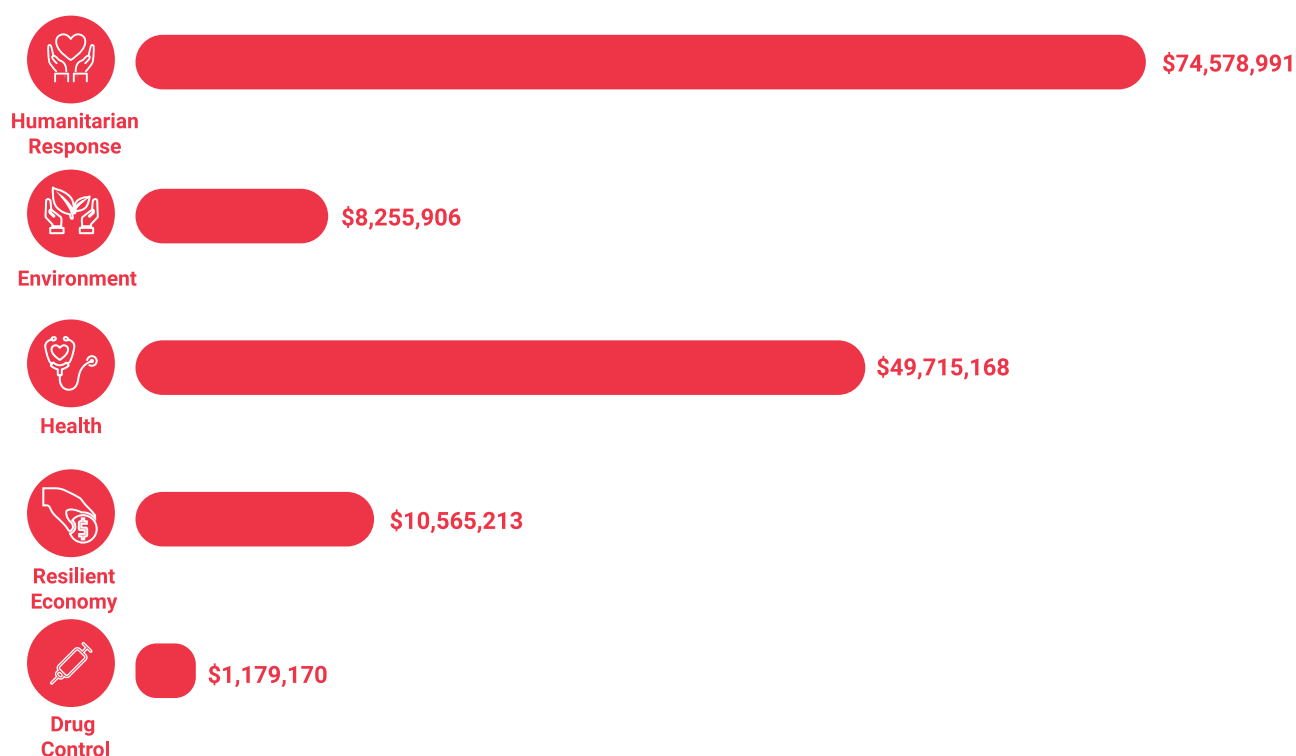


## 2.5 Financial Overview and Resource Mobilization

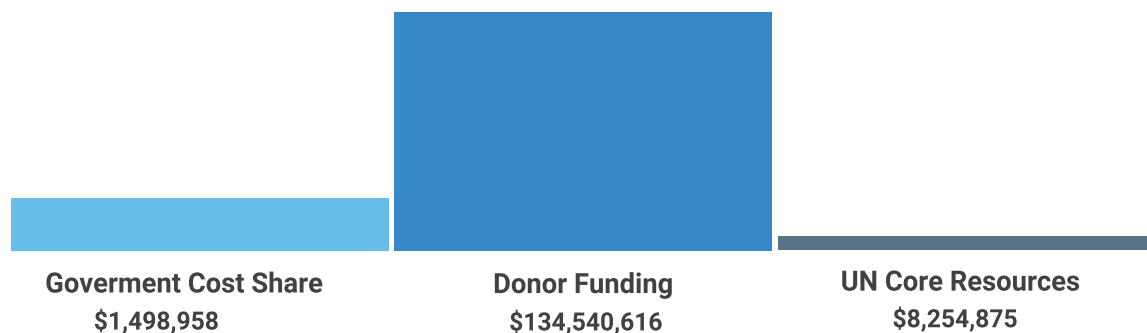
Resource mobilization in 2021 focused on supporting the emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the regional refugee crisis. Overall, in 2021, **\$144,294,448** million was spent across the five pillars of the UNDAF and for humanitarian response. While overall expenditures in 2021 was 4.4 per cent less than in 2020, they were 110 per cent greater than in 2019.

The largest portion of resources was spent on **humanitarian response** (\$74,578,991), followed by the **health** (\$49,715,168) and **resilient economy** (\$10,565,213) pillars.

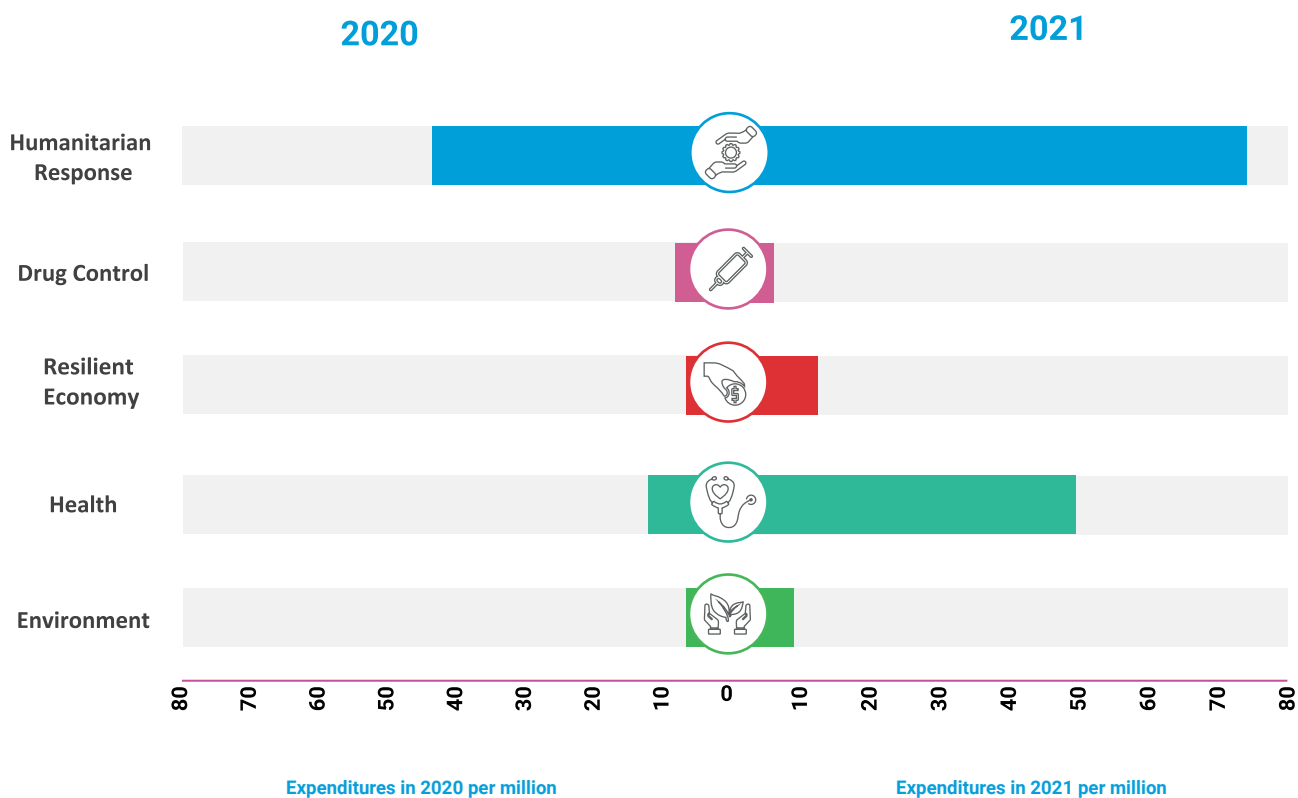
### Expenditures for 2021



## Expenditures by Type in 2021



## Expenditures in the Different Pillars in 2020 and 2021



UNCT in Iran worked closely with a range of partners, including the European Union, Member States, pooled and vertical funds, international financial institutions, and other public and private partners.



1. United Nations Funds include United Nations core resources, MPTFO managed funds, Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework (UBRAF), among others.





## Chapter III

# UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR NEXT YEAR

# 2022

## is a foundational year for the United Nations system in I.R. Iran.

the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for the period 2023-2027 will set the basis for the cooperation in the coming five years. The year will also see the development of two key strategies that will further the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: the resource/mobilization strategy and the communications strategy. The United Nations will build on the interest of many government organizations and entities to expand and deepen cooperation.

In the area of Disaster Risk Management and in the context of the new Disaster Management Law, the United Nations will provide support on preparedness and emergency response in collaboration with the relevant partners. The focus of the UNSDCF will remain on operational development activities in Iran. The United Nations system will continue its support to Afghan refugees and host communities in coordination with the Government.

The UN system will reinvigorate the Technical Assistance Package and South-South initiatives with a view to mitigating the adverse impacts of the unilateral sanctions on the most vulnerable in the country.

Above all, in 2022 and beyond, the United Nations system in Iran remains a firm partner of Iran in achieving sustainable, inclusive and resilient development.

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

|            |                                                                                   |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • AIDS     | Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome                                                |
| • ART      | Antiretroviral Therapy                                                            |
| • BAFIA    | Bureau for Alien and Foreign Immigrants Affairs                                   |
| • CSO      | Civil Society Organization                                                        |
| • CWD      | Children with disabilities                                                        |
| • DG ECHO  | Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations |
| • DG INTPA | The Department for International Partnerships                                     |
| • DoE      | Department of Environment                                                         |
| • EU       | European Union                                                                    |
| • FHH      | Female Headed Households                                                          |
| • GCF      | Green Climate Fund                                                                |
| • GDP      | Gross Domestic Product                                                            |
| • HCFC     | Hydrochlorofluorocarbon                                                           |
| • HCP      | Health City Programme                                                             |
| • HIRB     | Health Insurance Benefit Package                                                  |
| • HIV/AIDS | Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome                   |
| • IFI      | International Financial Institution                                               |
| • IHR      | International Health Regulation                                                   |
| • IKIA     | Imam Khomeini International Airport                                               |
| • MoJA     | Ministry of Jihad Agriculture                                                     |
| • MCLSW    | Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare                               |
| • MFA      | Ministry of Foreign Affairs                                                       |
| • MoHME    | Ministry of Health and Medical Education                                          |
| • MoI      | Ministry of Interior                                                              |
| • NCD      | Non-Communicable Disease                                                          |
| • NGO      | Non-Governmental Organization                                                     |
| • ODS      | Ozone Depleting Substances                                                        |
| • PHC      | Primary Health Care                                                               |
| • PLHIV    | People Living With HIV                                                            |
| • PMTCT    | Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission                                        |
| • PPE      | Personal Protective Equipment                                                     |
| • PWD      | People With Disabilities                                                          |
| • RCCE     | Risk Communication and Community Engagement                                       |
| • RCO      | Office of the Resident Coordinator                                                |
| • SCI      | Statistical Centre of Iran                                                        |
| • SDGs     | Sustainable Development Goals                                                     |
| • SME      | Small and Medium Enterprise                                                       |
| • SRTC     | Statistical Research and Training Centre                                          |
| • SSTC     | South-South and Triangular Cooperation                                            |
| • SWO      | State Welfare Organization of Iran                                                |
| • TB       | Tuberculosis                                                                      |