



UNITED NATIONS
SAUDI ARABIA



UN COUNTRY RESULTS REPORT

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA 2022



Cover photo by
Mansour Mohsen

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

2030 Agenda	◆ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
AFPs	◆ agencies, funds, and programmes
AGFUND	◆ Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organisations
COP27	◆ 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference
ECD	◆ early childhood development
ESCWA	◆ Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	◆ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
G20	◆ Group of 20
GBV	◆ gender-based violence
GCC	◆ Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	◆ gross domestic product
HRBA	◆ human rights-based approach
ICAO	◆ International Civil Aviation Organisation
IFAD	◆ International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	◆ International Labour Organisation
IMF	◆ International Monetary Fund
IMRF	◆ International Migration Review Forum
IOM	◆ International Organisation for Migration
ITU	◆ International Telecommunication Union
KSA	◆ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
KSA Khair	◆ Balad Al Khair Endowment Fund
KSRelief	◆ King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre
LNOB	◆ leave no one behind
MENA	◆ Middle East and North Africa region
NCVCCD	◆ National Centre for Vegetation Development and Combatting Desertification
NGO	◆ non-governmental organisation
OHCHR	◆ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIC	◆ Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
RCO	◆ Resident Coordinator Office
RCRC	◆ Royal Commission for Riyadh City
SDG	◆ Sustainable Development Goal
SRAD	◆ Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development Programme

STEM	◆ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNCTAD	◆ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	◆ United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	◆ United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	◆ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFCCC	◆ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	◆ United Nations Population Fund
UNGC	◆ United Nations Global Compact
UN-Habitat	◆ United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	◆ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	◆ United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	◆ United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNODC	◆ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSDCF	◆ United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNV	◆ United Nations Volunteers programme
UN Women	◆ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNWTO	◆ World Tourism Organisation
VNR	◆ Voluntary National Review
WBG	◆ World Bank Group
WFP	◆ World Food Programme
WHO	◆ World Health Organisation
WTO	◆ World Trade Organisation

➤ FOREWORD

2022 was a milestone year for the United Nations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) with the signature of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) in June and the establishment of the United Nations–Government Joint Cooperation Framework Committee in the latter part of the year. The UNSDCF, strongly rooted in Government priorities, provides the foundation for more coherent, cohesive United Nations support to achieving the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its 17 attendant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In recognition of the critical importance of data in shaping priorities for achieving sustainable development, the United Nations in the KSA, the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO), and the Ministry of Economy and Planning developed a National SDG Data Webinar Series focusing on key aspects of data availability. Launched by the Minister of Economy and Planning and the United Nations Resident Coordinator, the SDG Data Webinar Series fostered dialogue on resolving SDG data-related challenges and contributed to accelerating progress on SDG data.

The United Nations in the KSA continued to strengthen and broaden partnerships for sustainable development by investing in the KSA's United Nations Global Compact Local Network, engaging with academia, and strengthening its cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The United Nations in the KSA developed a paper on 'The Role of Saudi Universities in Advancing the

SDGs and Saudi Vision 2030,' which will be the basis for establishing the Academia Network in KSA.

We continued to expand strategic engagement with the Government of the KSA beyond traditional ministries, particularly on support and advocacy for vulnerable groups and on migration and human rights issues. In partnership with the Ministry of Interior, we continued our efforts to localise the SDGs in the KSA. The Resident Coordinator and members of the United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes (AFPs) in the KSA visited the Saudi regions of Northern Governorates and Al Jawf, meeting with local authorities, academics, chambers of commerce, and private sector actors as well as youth and women's committees. The United Nations team also visited an FAO project in the Northern Governorates.

Throughout the year, the United Nations continued to support Government contributions to critical global fora such as the Food Systems Summit, the United Nations Ocean Conference, and the Transforming Education Summit. In addition to supporting engagement on a wide range of development issues at these fora, the RCO and the United Nations in the KSA celebrated key international days, including International Women's Day, International Day for Biodiversity, and Human Rights Day. For United Nations Day 2022, which focused on SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, we held a series of round-table discussions with the Government, civil society, academia, and private sector on the crucial nature of partnerships in working towards sustainable development.

We are pleased to present the United Nations Country Results Report for 2022, the first year of the UNSDCF 2022–2026. This report is structured to highlight relevant SDG-linked successes in each of the UNSDCF's four Strategic Priority Areas: (1) *People*, (2) *Planet*, (3) *Prosperity*, and (4) *Peace, Partnerships, and Other Cross-Cutting Issues*.

We look forward to the challenges and opportunities that 2023 may present.

Dr. Rita Columbia
*Resident Coordinator at
United Nations
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*



UNITED NATIONS IN THE KSA

The United Nations has been actively working with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) since 1948. Led by the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO), the United Nations presence in the KSA is comprised of 25 members, of which 18 are signatories to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026.

The 18 UNSDCF signatories are the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the World Bank Group (WBG), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) participate in coordination of United Nations activities where relevant to their work with the KSA.

The Government of the KSA actively engages with other United Nations entities on specific issues and collaborations not directly linked to the UNSDCF 2022–2026.





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➤ KEY PARTNERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN THE KSA

The United Nations would like to thank its many partners, without whose support the United Nations would not have been able to achieve its many successes and accomplishments over the course of 2022. Below is a list of some of our partners:

- ◆ Al Ahsa Development Authority
- ◆ Al Aoun Centre | Jeddah
- ◆ Al Fozan Holding Company
- ◆ Al Madinah Region Development Authority
- ◆ Al Mawaddah Society for Family Development
- ◆ Al Nahda Philanthropic Society for Women
- ◆ Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organisations (AGFUND)
- ◆ Balad Al Khair Endowment Foundation (KSA Khair)
- ◆ Beekeepers Cooperative Association | Al Baha
- ◆ Centre for Disease Control | Atlanta
- ◆ Council of Saudi Chambers
- ◆ Deputyship of Urban Planning and Lands
- ◆ Digital Government Authority
- ◆ Embassy of Kenya
- ◆ Embassy of Portugal
- ◆ Environmental Development Foundation | Faseel
- ◆ Family Affairs Council
- ◆ General Authority for Statistics
- ◆ Global Environment Facility
- ◆ Governorate of Jazan
- ◆ Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)
- ◆ International Committee of the Red Cross
- ◆ International Institute of Humanitarian Law
- ◆ King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue
- ◆ King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief)
- ◆ Ministerial Committee of Traffic Safety
- ◆ Ministry of Culture
- ◆ Ministry of Economy and Planning
- ◆ Ministry of Education
- ◆ Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture
- ◆ Ministry of Finance
- ◆ Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ◆ Ministry of Health
- ◆ Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development
- ◆ Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs and Housing
- ◆ Ministry of Transport and Logistic Services
- ◆ Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Foundation (MiSK Foundation)
- ◆ Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol
- ◆ Naif Arab University for Security Sciences
- ◆ Napco National
- ◆ National Centre for Environmental Compliance
- ◆ National Centre for Meteorology
- ◆ National Centre for Vegetation Development and Combatting Desertification (NCVCCD)
- ◆ National Centre for Waste Management
- ◆ National Centre for Wildlife
- ◆ National Family Safety Programme
- ◆ Nokia Saudi Arabia
- ◆ Northern Borders Province
- ◆ Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
- ◆ Prince Mohammad bin Fahd University
- ◆ Prince Mohammad bin Salman College of Business Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Prince Sultan University
- ◆ Princess Al Anoud Foundation
- ◆ Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University
- ◆ Public Health Authority
- ◆ Quality of Life Programme
- ◆ Riyadh Urban Observatory
- ◆ Royal Commission for Al Ula
- ◆ Royal Commission for Riyadh City (RCRC)
- ◆ Saudi Central Board for Accreditation of Healthcare Institutions
- ◆ Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority
- ◆ Saudi Development and Reconstruction Programme for Yemen
- ◆ Saudi Food and Drug Authority
- ◆ Saudi Fund for Development
- ◆ Saudi Health Council
- ◆ Saudi Human Rights Commission
- ◆ Saudi National Committee of Workers' Committees
- ◆ Saudi Patient Safety Centre
- ◆ Saudi Public Health Authority
- ◆ Saudi Telecommunication Company
- ◆ Sustainable Rural Development Programme | Saudi REEF
- ◆ Tanmiah Food Company
- ◆ Warfa Camp
- ◆ WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities
- ◆ WHO Collaborating Centre for Tobacco Plain Packaging
- ◆ WHO Collaborating Centre on the Impact of COVID-19 on Child Protection Services
- ◆ Yanbu Industrial City

As will be seen throughout this document, partnerships do not constitute an isolated piece of the larger sustainable development puzzle. They are not merely a box to be checked. A partnership orientation that seeks out meaningful collaborations and builds synergistic currents informs all of the work occurring across the United Nations development system in the KSA. 2022 was a year full of meaningful, innovative, and ground-breaking partnerships, more of which are detailed

in the following pages. Towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and supporting Saudi Vision 2030, the United Nations in the KSA looks forward to further bolstering its commitment to SDG 17: *Partnerships for the Goals* by continuing to implement the new UNSDCF's Strategic Priority Area 4: *Peace, Partnerships, and Other Cross-Cutting Issues* in 2023.





➤ *Overview of National Developments in the KSA*

➤ OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE KSA

With the gradual abatement of the COVID-19 pandemic over the course of 2022, the KSA was able to intensify its efforts towards the realisation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. In addition to launching significant socioeconomic and legal reforms, the KSA was able to direct meaningful investment towards a broad set of initiatives relating to economic diversification, climate action, and digital transformation.

Striving to achieve deep social transformation, the KSA initiated a wave of socioeconomic reform related to Saudi Vision 2030, particularly in the arenas of entrepreneurship, healthcare, and sustainable agri-food systems. In June 2022, the KSA's Council of Ministers approved a new iteration of the country's Companies' Law, which aligns with international best practices to boost entrepreneurship. By increasing flexibility, removing restrictions, and simplifying various requirements and procedures, this reform contributes to fostering an enabling environment for the KSA's private sector to flourish. That same month, as part of the Saudi Vision 2030's Privatisation Programme, the Ministry of Health announced that the newly formed Health Holding Company would take over day-to-day healthcare operations in the KSA. As private service providers improve the quality of healthcare across the country, the Ministry of Health will be focusing on its supervisory and regulatory role. The revamped healthcare system is investing heavily in the expansion of virtual and digital health programmes to benefit the KSA's residents. This reform also instituted a new National Health Insurance Centre, approved by the Saudi Cabinet in June 2022, which ensures that all Saudi citizens and non-Saudi workers in the public sector benefit from free health insurance.

On the level of agri-food systems, this past year witnessed the establishment of the Saudi Authority for Food Security, which underpins the KSA's institutional efforts towards sustainable food systems. The Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture also established a new undersecretariat to further promote the agri-food innovation and

technologies. Other notable policy and legislative initiatives and reforms in this arena include the Cooperative Act, which bolsters agriculture cooperatives under the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture; and the enactment of the Geographic Indicator Law, which promotes Saudi agricultural products with an eye towards gaining geographical indications and increasing global market competitiveness.

Significant reform efforts also characterised changes to the KSA's legal system in 2022, specifically in terms of personal status, labour law, judiciary consistency, and social protections for the elderly. In response to some of the challenges identified by United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies, the KSA implemented a set of modernising reforms aimed at aligning its legal framework with international standards and best practices. A new Personal Status Law that regulates marriage, custody, and inheritance while reducing judges' discretionary powers came into force in June 2022. Building on a series of labour law reforms enacted in 2021, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development also updated the conditions under which domestic workers can change employers without their current employer's consent in July 2022. That same month, a new Evidence Law came into force with the aim of eliminating discrepancies in the Saudi judicial system. In January 2022, the Saudi Cabinet approved a new law designed to protect the rights of elderly people in the country, granting them special privileges, ensuring their prioritisation in the reception of basic services, and setting harsh penalties for those who commit elder abuse.

Throughout the past year, the KSA has also been continuously working to diversify its economy, particularly by bolstering its tourism sector. According to the UNWTO Tourism Barometer, the KSA's tourism sector expanded to reach 121% of pre-pandemic levels. Benefitting from a sharp increase in the number of Umrah and Hajj pilgrims entering the country, the KSA emerged as both the fastest-growing touristic destination in the

G20 and the Arab country that welcomed the most tourists in 2022. In June 2022, the Ministry of Tourism announced its plans to mobilise of \$100m to train 100,000 young people in an ambitious endeavour to develop human capital and build a tourism ecosystem that projects to contribute 10% to GDP by 2030. Notable among several tourism initiatives for its commitment to sustainability is a new green tourism project located in Asir's Sarwat Mountains, which are home to 90% of the KSA's foliage. Announced in November 2022, Soudah Development (an affiliate member of the UNWTO owned by the KSA's Public Investment Fund) intends to invest \$2.93bn to develop the region's tourism infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

Responding to the ongoing and worsening climate crisis, the KSA accelerated its efforts to harmonise its economy with sustainable principles over the course of 2022. In addition to solidifying its public commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 and generate 50% of its energy from renewables by 2030, it initiated a number of projects towards those ends. In terms of energy diversification, the KSA is moving towards green hydrogen: in addition to its plans to build a \$5bn green hydrogen plant in Neom, the Public Investment Fund intends to establish a hydrogen company that will ultimately be responsible for achieving 70% of the KSA's renewable energy target. Saudi Aramco has supported this effort by means of establishing a carbon capture and storage hub in Jubail. It also announced the establishment of a \$1.5bn sustainability fund in October 2022 to finance its carbon capture and hydrogen projects and ultimately facilitate its realisation of a 2050 net-zero target.

At the international level, the KSA committed \$2.5bn over a ten-year period to the Middle East

Green Initiative at the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, towards reducing its carbon emissions and fossil-fuel production by 60%. At the Saudi Green Initiative forum, held on the side-lines of COP27, the KSA also announced its plans to launch a Circular Carbon Economy Knowledge Hub to facilitate regional knowledge-sharing and collaboration to achieve the diverse goals and targets of the Middle East Green Initiative.

The KSA has also been globally recognised as one of the most successful countries in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of its success in this domain can be explained by its innovative development of various mobile applications and digital platforms to facilitate and deliver public services. The Tawakkalna mobile application, for instance, received the 2022 United Nations Public Service Award for its institutional resilience and innovative response to the challenges brought by the pandemic.

Beyond healthcare provision, the KSA advanced 12 places in the United Nations E-Government Development Index and ranked 2nd among G20 members in the 2021 Digital Competitiveness Report, issued by the European Centre for Digital Competitiveness. The digital sphere will only grow in importance as the country continues to drive sustainable development efforts by enhancing government efficiency, improving residents' quality of life, and cultivating a fertile business environment. This is particularly salient in terms of data: in May 2022, the KSA launched its fifth national housing and population census and is in the process of developing a statistical database that will be continuously updated and integrated with administrative data.





Photo by
Najla AlKhalifa

➤ Overview of Results



➤ OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

➤ United Nations 2022 Strategy

The United Nations in the KSA is guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026, which aligns with Saudi Vision 2030 and has at its core the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the promise to ‘leave no one behind’ (LNOB). The UNSDCF has also been articulated into relevant partnerships and communications strategies, which inform how the United Nations supports progress towards sustainable development across the country.

The United Nations in the KSA has prioritised activities and programmes that advance collaboration and the mutual fulfilment of the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda, and Saudi Vision 2030. The work of the United Nations towards achieving the SDGs harmonises with the KSA’s advancement towards its tripartite goal outlined in its Vision 2030: a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation. Throughout 2022, the substantial complementarities and common interests that align

the SDGs and Saudi Vision 2030 were leveraged towards a more sustainable future. Section 2.2: *Cooperation Framework Priorities and Outcomes* will delve deeper into the details of the United Nations’ main results for the year, focusing on relevant highlights. The United Nations’ many successes this year included the strengthening of the KSA’s natural resource management practices, the advancement of food security by adding value to sustainable agri-food systems, and the empowerment of rural youth and women, among others.

➤ Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

It is critical to emphasise the coinciding nature of progress towards the Saudi Vision 2030 and progress towards the SDGs. The table below maps out the synergies between the two strategic frameworks and clarifies where the plans of the United Nations and the Government of the KSA support one another.

◆ SYNERGIES: VISION 2030 (LEVEL 2) AND THE SDGS

<i>Vision 2030, Level 2</i>	<i>SDGs</i>
1.1 Foster Islamic values	10, 16
1.3 Strengthen national identity	4, 5, 8, 11
2.1 Improve healthcare service	2, 3, 10
2.3 Improve livability in Saudi cities	1, 3, 11, 12, 16
2.4 Ensure environmental sustainability	2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
2.5 Promote Culture and Entertainment	4, 8, 11
2.6 Create an empowering environment for Saudis	1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 16
3.1 Grow contribution of the private sector to the economy	16, 17
3.3 Unlock potential of non-oil sectors	4, 8, 17
3.5 Position KSA as a global logistic hub	16
4.1 Develop human capital in line with labour market needs	4, 8
4.2 Ensuring equal access to job opportunities	1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 17
4.3 Enable job creation through SMEs and micro-enterprises	4, 8, 9
4.4 Attract relevant foreign talents for the economy	1, 3, 5, 10, 11, 16
5.1 Balance public budget	8, 11
5.2 Improve performance of government apparatus	1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 17
5.3 Engage effectively with citizens	8, 16
5.4 Protect vital resources of the nation	2, 6, 12, 14
6.1 Enable citizen responsibility	1, 4, 8
6.2 Enable social contribution of businesses	8, 16
6.3 Enable larger impact of non-profit sector	1, 4, 8, 16

UNSDCF 2022–2026

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026,¹ signed in June 2022, is designed to enable the United Nations development system to respond to existing challenges and emerging

opportunities. The agreement supports the United Nations as it supports the country's Sustainable Development Roadmap in a collaborative and innovative way. The Government–United Nations partnership aims to:

- ◆ Accelerate the KSA's path to achieving the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs;
- ◆ Provide clear, strategic direction and prioritise the collective work of participating agencies, funds, and programmes (AFPs) in supporting national priorities and needs; and
- ◆ Create an accountability framework for the inclusive and participatory monitoring of progress towards key milestones and the evaluation of results.

The development of the UNSDCF was primarily informed by three elements: (1) the sustainable development priorities articulated in Saudi Vision 2030, (2) the KSA's ongoing efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, and (3) the United Nations Secretary-General's reform of the United

Nations development system.² The UNSDCF 2022–2026 is organised into four Strategic Priority Areas that draw from the 2030 Agenda, its SDGs, and the five Ps: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership. The four Strategic Priority Areas are the following:



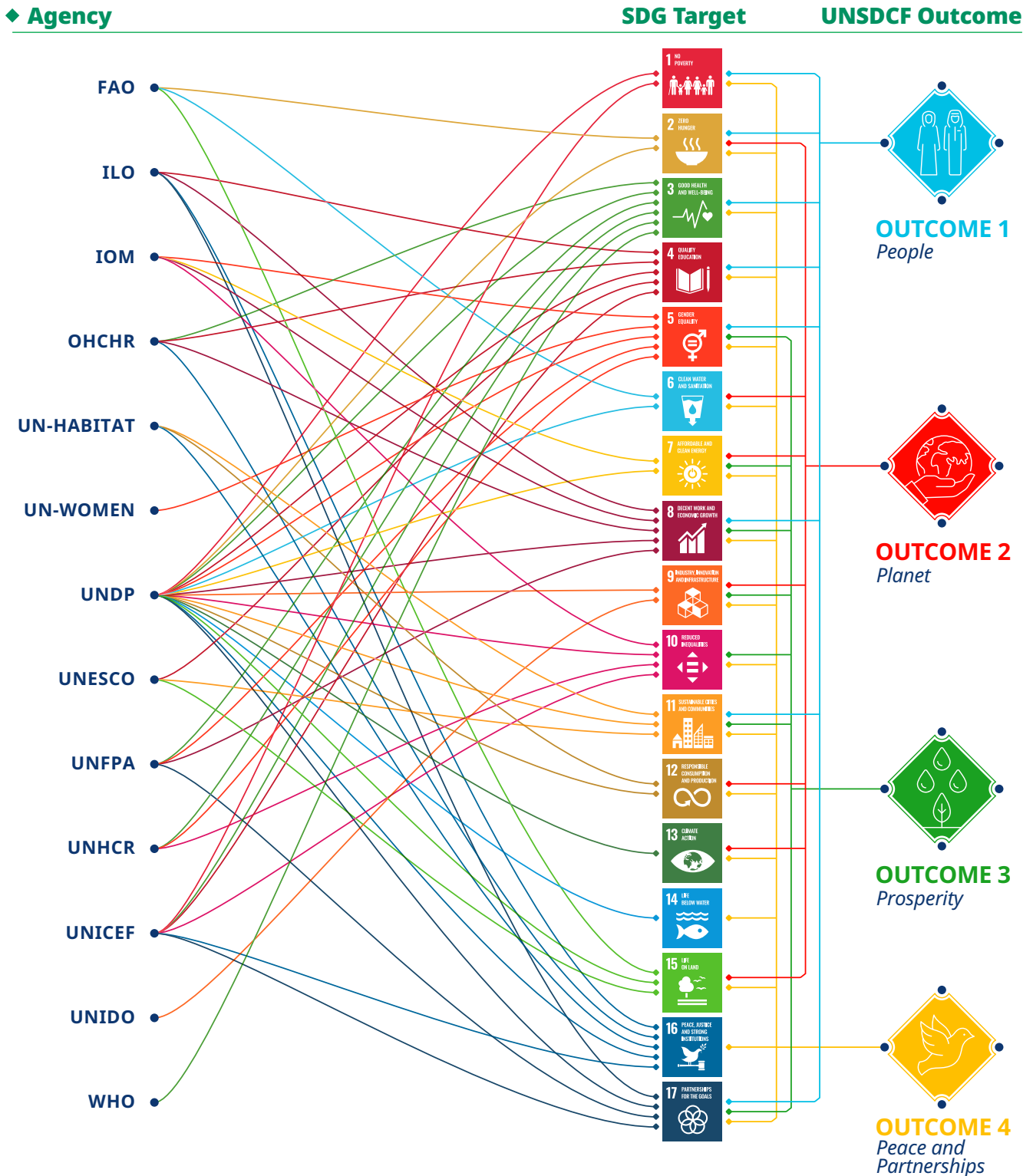
¹ https://saudiarabia.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UNSDCF%20KSA%20en_0.pdf

² <https://reform.un.org/content/un-development-system-reform-101>

These Strategic Priority Areas inform the structure of Section 2.2: *Cooperation Framework Priorities and Outcomes*, below.

Significantly, the UNSDCF 2022–2026 moves towards the greater integration of the 2030 Agenda

and its 17 SDGs by explicitly noting which SDGs are associated with each Strategic Priority Area. The Sankey diagram below visualises the relationship between the UNSDCF Strategic Priority Areas, the SDGs, and United Nations AFPs in the KSA.



The realisation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs in the KSA necessarily requires the involvement of, and significant collaboration across, all societal sectors. The promotion of multi-stakeholder partnerships between government and non-government actors is crucial to the shared mission of the United Nations and the Government of the KSA, as well as that of the UNSDCF 2022–2026. Results and achievements under various SDGs and the first three Strategic Priority Areas of the UNSDCF were made possible through existing and new partnerships, which links them to Strategic Priority Area 4: *Peace, Partnerships, and Other Cross-Cutting Issues*, and particularly to SDG 17: *Partnerships for the Goals*. Consequently, many United Nations projects addressed multiple SDGs and more than one Strategic Priority Area. For purposes of this United Nations Country Results Report, a selection of partnership-enabled projects with links to other SDGs and Strategic Priority Areas are detailed under Strategic Priority Area 4: *Peace, Partnerships, and Other Cross-Cutting Issues*, as will be seen below in Section 2.2: *Cooperation Framework Priorities and Outcomes*.

› Leaving No One Behind

Throughout 2022, the United Nations in the KSA continued to place the ‘leave no one behind’ (LNOB) principle at the centre of its actions and interventions. In collaboration with key partners, LNOB efforts across the country ranged from provision of policy and technical support, financial assistance, legal services, and medical care to LNOB-focused trainings, technical assistance, and capacity-building programmes.

In terms of direct assistance, IOM and UNHCR led the United Nations efforts to combat human trafficking in the KSA and ensure the protection of vulnerable refugee populations. In partnership with IOM, the Saudi Human Rights Commission continued to utilise the Victims Assistance Fund (launched in early 2021) to assist nine potential victims of human trafficking over the course of 2022. Providing necessary protection services associated with any outcome (continued settlement in the KSA, return to country of origin, or resettlement in a third country), the IOM assisted these individuals by offering voluntary return and reintegration packages through its missions abroad. The Saudi Human Rights Commission and IOM signed a second-phase agreement of a project on ‘Strengthening Mechanisms to Combat Human Trafficking in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’ to reinforce the KSA’s ability to protect victims of human trafficking. The agreement includes a joint mechanism to support victims in a way that guarantees their

rehabilitation and either integration in the KSA or reintegration in their country of origin. Together with the Saudi Human Rights Commission, IOM organised three trainings between November and December 2022 that reached over 270 employees of recruitment offices and agencies in the KSA. The objective of the trainings was to enhance participants’ understanding of human trafficking and its indicators while familiarising them with ethical recruitment principles and the IRIS Standard³ to improve referral of potential victims of human trafficking to specialised assistance and care.

With the support of medical partners, UNHCR provided medical treatment to over 40 individuals, mostly from Syria and Yemen, with serious medical conditions who were otherwise unable to access public medical facilities due to their irregular migratory status. In partnership with the Aoun Centre in Jeddah, UNHCR also secured education and medical care for a number of children of concern with mental disabilities. Striving to respond to gender-based violence (GBV), UNHCR supported eight women with legal services on custody-related matters and the issuance of documents. Towards mending the significant psychological and social stress faced by women survivors of GBV and their families, UNHCR in partnership with Al Anoud Foundation established a mental health and psychosocial support group. At a preventative level, UNHCR issued cash grants to 16 women at risk of GBV and their children in order to support their socioeconomic stabilisation.

Towards ensuring that individuals and institutions are familiar with the struggles faced by vulnerable communities in the KSA, United Nations advocacy and capacity-building work to mainstream the LNOB perspective has been critical. In this regard, UNHCR directed its efforts towards engaging the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Government entities in dialogues to advocate on behalf of vulnerable populations (children of refugees, asylum seekers, individuals with irregular migratory status, etc.) to afford them access to basic services. In terms of technical cooperation, training sessions, and capacity-building initiatives that address LNOB concerns, IOM, OHCHR, UNICEF, and WHO conducted targeted efforts to protect the human rights of prisoners, address violence against women, improve care for older people, and ensure the rights of migrant children. By means of a technical cooperation programme between OHCHR and the Saudi Human Rights Commission, February and March 2022 witnessed a week-long training-of-trainers workshop to inform Saudi prison staff of international human rights standards and empower

them to mainstream them into their respective institutional cultures.

Part of the advocacy programme of UNHCR in 2022 entailed presenting proposals to support the Government of the KSA as it works to address challenges related to the legal status of people of concern (including the Rohingya population and stateless persons), particularly in terms of guaranteeing their protection from deportation and their access to essential public social services. UNHCR has been engaging with key national entities in order to establish a referral mechanism whereby vulnerable people—including survivors of GBV, persons with mental and physical disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, and—can receive essential services.

WHO also broadened its LNOB commitment by conducting a training on 'Integrated Care for Older People' and working with the WHO Collaborating Centre on the Impact of COVID-19 on Child Protection Services to promote child welfare in the KSA. The rights and welfare of children were also addressed by means of joint advocacy efforts from IOM, OHCHR, and UNICEF in terms of applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the context of humanitarian border management and armed conflict. Part of this effort entailed capacity-building initiatives to support border management personnel and other relevant functionaries.

➤ Challenges in UNSDCF Implementation

While 2022 was undoubtedly a year of significant global challenges, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and various geopolitical conflicts, the Government of the KSA was able to effectively mitigate the impact of these challenges, avoid a potential recession and maintain economic stability. Part of ensuring continued progress towards sustainable development in the KSA entails looking towards upcoming challenges in implementing the new UNSDCF, which marks the beginning of a new phase of United Nations work in the country.

To effectively translate the UNSDCF into action and achieve sustainable development in the KSA, the United Nations and the Government of the KSA must work together to overcome various jointly identified challenges that may arise during its implementation relating to:

- ◆ *The development of the UNSDCF results framework, which will tie together United Nations activities across the SDGs and help identify gaps to be addressed in the medium and long term.*
- ◆ *The development of clear, cross-cutting strategies for United Nations normative areas—human rights, youth, gender, persons with disabilities, and environment—which will form the starting points for joint-programming between the United Nations and the Government of the KSA.*
- ◆ *The activation of the Programme Support Team, which will drive the development of the results framework and the strategies for United Nations normative areas and joint-programming, implement the monitoring and evaluation plan, and lead research to support action on the SDGs.*
- ◆ *The availability of disaggregated data. While the KSA has made considerable progress in the last few years by substantially improving the accessibility of socio-economic and environmental data, challenges remain regarding proper planning, monitoring, and evaluation of United Nations achievements in the country. Further improvement is needed regarding the availability of quality and desegregated data, particularly for SDGs 1, 2, 10–13, 15, and 16. Moreover, the United Nations should work with the Government of the KSA on expanding the availability of regional statistics and strengthening data disaggregation, especially at the levels of sex, age, disability, and nationality.*
- ◆ *The streamlining of the United Nations coordination structure to ensure successful implementation of the UNSDCF that strikes a balance between the need for workflow coordination and United Nations members' investment.*

In spite of the challenges faced by the global community in 2022, the successful efforts of the Government of the KSA to mitigate difficulties and maintain economic stability serve as a positive example of effective crisis management. The UNSDCF 2022–2026 provides the United Nations and the KSA with a strong framework to support sustainable development in the country; although challenges may arise during its implementation, concerted efforts on the part of both the United Nations and the Government of KSA can ensure its successful realisation.

COOPERATION FRAMEWORK PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES



STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 1 People



According to the principles of 'Leave No One Behind' (LNOB), ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity, equity, and equality in a healthy environment (SDGs 1–5)

In 2022, the United Nations implemented various programmes in alignment with SDGs 1–5 and the LNOB principle to support people in the KSA towards achieving their potential in a nourishing and empowering environment, particularly through initiatives related to health and well-being, education, and gender equality.



• Zero Hunger

Throughout 2022, the United Nations in the KSA worked to address food waste in line with SDG 2: *Zero Hunger*, particularly by means of innovative FAO programming. The ongoing FAO project 'Strengthening Capacity of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture to implement its Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development Programme' continued to address food security issues in the KSA by promoting the sustainable management of natural resources and smallholder prosperity through small-scale rural agricultural development. FAO bolstered rural agricultural productivity by focusing on value addition strategies (capacity development, farm system management, marketing, cooperatives, and extension services) to support the smallholders and farmers of key commodities, including coffee, rose, beekeeping, sub-tropical fruits, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, and rain-fed cereals. The project identified 32 technologies and best practices to be piloted, demonstrated, and promoted through various means including demonstration farms, for which 109 potential sites were identified and 30



were established in 2022. Some 1,402 individuals were trained in 56 training courses organised on various technical topics; of the participants, 42 percent were smallholders. Additionally, FAO in the KSA developed and disseminated a range of knowledge products (including assessments, guidelines, and manuals) through participation in over 25 international and national festivals and conferences. Partnerships were also initiated with the Organisation for an International Geographical Indications Network and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics towards strengthening rain-fed cereal productivity in the country and creating new opportunities for agri-food systems and rural transformation.

In addition to the critical activities of FAO towards the achievement of SDG 2: *Zero Hunger* in the KSA, in October 2022, WBG, WFP, and WTO participated in an event hosted jointly by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the KSA's Ministry of Finance entitled 'Coming Together to Tackle Food Insecurity,' which brought the global community closer to addressing food insecurity in the KSA and beyond. Following up on the publication of an article entitled 'Food for Thought: Why Is Food Waste a Challenge in the KSA?' in February 2022, UNDP's Accelerator Lab initiated a social media campaign to draw attention to the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss

and Waste in September 2022.



• **Good Health & Well-Being**

Throughout 2022, WHO continued its efforts related to combating communicable diseases by leading training workshops, training lab workers and Rapid Response Teams, and monitoring communicable diseases of concern—including tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis, influenza, Polio, mpox, MERS, malaria, measles, rubella, and foodborne disease outbreaks—as well as other diseases with epidemic potential. WHO also provided guidance on international travel and worked to protect the rights of travellers against discrimination. Significantly, in January 2022, WHO validated the KSA as having eliminated trachoma as a public health problem.

Two new Riyadh-based WHO-collaborating centres were officially designated in the KSA in 2022, raising the country's total to nine. The WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities, formalised in January 2022, supports WHO efforts to strengthen the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office Healthy City Network and develop strategies to implement Healthy Cities programmes. The WHO Collaborating Centre for Tobacco Plain Packaging, which opened November 2022, focuses on supporting WHO implement tobacco plain packaging by building and strengthening technical capacities, collecting data, and conducting research. Additionally, in March 2022, WHO officially recommended recognition of the KSA's public health laboratory as a national influenza centre. The recommendation followed a highly successful WHO mission to the KSA that encouraged the public health laboratory to continue its critical work with the WHO Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System, towards which the lab is working to become a formal member. In November 2022, WHO also benchmarked the Saudi Food and Drug Authority as having reached Maturity Level 3, which confirms a stable, well-functioning, and integrated regulatory system is in place.

Another meaningful health-related intervention was UNICEF's advocacy and policy development concerning the KSA's Early Childhood Development (ECD) agenda. In 2022, UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to make solid progress on ECD in the KSA by influencing policies and standards, building institutional capacity, and enhancing the knowledge and practices of parents and caretakers to support their children. For instance, nationwide ECD campaigns promoting positive parenting practices for younger children reached close to two million people in the KSA over the course of

2022. In partnership with the Family Affairs Council, UNICEF also hosted a three-day workshop for national partners focused on applying the science of social and behavioural change to promote positive parenting practices of younger children. With technical guidance from UNICEF, the Ministry of Education launched the ground-breaking national rollout of an advanced training package on children's safety and protection in nurseries and preschool in 2022 by delivering a training-of-trainers workshop to a core national team. The core team will cascade the training to all 47 of the KSA's education districts over the course of 2023. In the domain of social workforce strengthening, UNICEF also convened a workshop that brought together experts in the field to advise the KSA's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development on the creation of a licensing system for social workers in the country.



• **Quality Education**

In alignment with the KSA's commitment to educating the next generation of global leaders, the United Nations has taken an active role in shaping the international education agenda. UNESCO and UNICEF jointly supported the KSA's preparations for the Transforming Education Summit, held in New York City in September 2022, by providing technical expertise regarding national consultations and the formulation of the National Declarations. The KSA was one of five funding partners whose generous contributions enabled the Summit to work towards more responsive and dynamic solutions to global challenges facing the international community as it works towards SDG 4: *Quality Education*.

In addition to supporting innovative approaches to education at the international level, the KSA and the United Nations have collaborated to ensure that the country is prepared for the new and evolving challenges of the 21st century. As part of the innovative four-year Futures Literacy Partnership Agreement signed between UNESCO and the KSA's Prince Mohammad bin Fahd University in 2020, efforts to advance futures literacy at the local, regional, and global level made significant progress in 2022. Aiming to deploy action-learning and collective intelligence to co-create the ever-evolving meanings of sustainability, peace, and inclusion, Prince Mohammad bin Fahd University established a new UNESCO Chair on Transitional and Inter-Generational Anticipation. The KSA's University Innovation Challenge for Sustainable Development, launched by UNDP in partnership with the Prince Mohammad bin Salman College of Business and Entrepreneurship in November

2021, also announced its winners in March 2022, encouraging the next generation's innovative spirit and commitment to sustainability.

At the national level, in February 2022, OHCHR held a high-level consultative meeting with the Saudi Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Education to promote the mainstreaming of a human-rights-based approach (HRBA) in the KSA's education system. Under a HRBA, all aspects of learning, from policy to the classroom, are guided by the human rights principles of non-discrimination and equality, accountability and transparency, participation, empowerment, and the right to education. Talks particularly worked towards achieving universal access to education and realising LNOB principles to overcome discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, working children, children in rural areas, and children belonging to minority communities.



• Gender Equality

This year the United Nations in the KSA continued to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment through all sectors of its work. To this end, a joint United Nations strategy to implement activities related to SDG 5: *Gender Equality* was coordinated by the United Nations Gender Group. UN Women's efforts to develop a model to increase the number of women employed in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) sector in the KSA is among the highlights of 2022. This past year, the partnership between UN Women and Nokia Saudi Arabia expanded in scope to include collaboration with the Saudi Telecommunication Company and empower over 20 women employees through leadership training that focused on women-led business development to better respond to the needs and interests of female consumers. In line with its commitment to the United Nations Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles, Nokia Saudi Arabia updated its human resources processes and launched a new internship programme (with six participants in 2022) to cultivate a more gender-inclusive workplace and attract qualified women professionals. Nokia Saudi Arabia's efforts to increase women's participation in STEM fields were highlighted in March 2022 at ESCWA's Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, co-organised by the United Nations Regional Office for the Arab States. During the plenary session on progress towards SDG 5: *Gender Equality*, Nokia showcased the interim results of its work towards gender empowerment in the KSA and emphasised the value of increasing women's participation in STEM roles.

Far from a solely urban or corporate endeavour, the KSA's journey towards gender parity has made significant progress in rural and agricultural spheres as well. In 2022, FAO provided technical advisory assistance to the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture and Saudi REEF as it builds out the country's Sustainable Rural Agriculture Development Programme (SRAD) in terms of women's empowerment. Developing the comprehensive capacity of relevant institutions and stakeholders, FAO has focused on raising the awareness of rural youth and women about agri-entrepreneurship, value chain development, and agri-business opportunities that will simultaneously work to boost the rural economy and food security (in alignment with both SDG 2: *Zero Hunger* and SDG 8: *Decent Work and Economic Growth*). Within this framework, a new initiative aimed to empower rural women 'Warfa Camp' was launched by means of a joint effort between FAO, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Saudi REEF. Aiming to accelerate rural women's economic empowerment and strengthen their livelihood in the agri-food system, the initiative provides access to intensive capacity-building opportunities and encourages their participation and involvement in their respective local economies. The initiative piloted a four-day intensive training camp for 46 women in Abha, in the Asir region, entitled 'Strengthening the role of women in sustainable rural agriculture development in Saudi Arabia.'

In partnership with the Family Affairs Council and ESCWA, UNFPA, and UN Women, UNDP conducted a study on Gender Justice and the Law to provide a comprehensive assessment of laws and policies affecting gender equality and protection against gender-based violence in the Arab states region. The KSA was included among 17 country profiles analyse whether a given country's laws and policies promote or impede equality between women and men before the law, and whether they provide protection against gender-based violence. The report will be a core vehicle to guide future collaboration on Gender Justice in the Kingdom.

• Cultural Heritage Preservation

A critical dimension of UNSDCF Strategic Priority Area 1: *People* is that of recognising the rich diversity and unique practices of the vibrant communities that make up the KSA's cultural tapestry. In the domain of cultural heritage preservation, three Saudi elements were inscribed in UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2022: 'Date palm, knowledge, skills, traditions and practices,' 'Alheda'a, oral traditions of calling

camel flocks,' and 'Knowledge and practices related to cultivating Khawlani coffee beans.'

Manifesting its leadership in cultural affairs at the supranational level, the KSA's Minister of Culture chaired the Regional Consultation of the Arab Region at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT), held in February 2022. Involving 18 member and associate states, 11 non-

governmental organisations (NGOs), six inter-governmental organisations, and two UNESCO chairs, the consultation resulted in fruitful cross-border collaboration towards a common robust and sustainable cultural economy.



Photo by
Al Baraa Hassan Saeed



STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 2 Planet



Protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably manage its natural resources, and take urgent action on climate change (SDGs 6, 12–15)

Together with the Government of the KSA, the United Nations worked steadily towards ensuring that the country's ecosystems and the planet's natural abundance are sustainably protected for future generations. In alignment with SDGs 6 and 12–15, some of the initiatives that proved most effective in the KSA throughout 2022 related to environmental governance and planning, international climate collaboration, and biodiversity and conservation efforts.



• **Clean Water and Sanitation**

Recognising the significant challenges to achieving water security in the KSA, UNDP was particularly active in working to sustainably address water-related concerns throughout 2022. Among its projects were (1) evaluating water conservation technologies for tree nurseries to identify best practices for conserving water while maintaining healthy plant growth; (2) analysing groundwater systems in three dimensions using computer modelling to better inform sustainable management; (3) studying the chemical properties of water—including pH, dissolved minerals, and nutrient levels—to better understand its quality, availability, and potential pollutants; (4) developing a system to monitor and regulate the extraction of water from natural sources to ensure sustainable and efficient use; and (5) collecting additional data about rainfall, meteorology, and other factors affecting water resources in the KSA.



• **Climate Action**

Environmental Governance & Planning

Under the strategic cooperation agreement signed between the KSA's Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture and UNEP in 2019, UNEP supported the implementation of the Saudi Environment Sustainability Programme (2019–2025) throughout 2022. UNEP was particularly



effective at building out the KSA's environmental governance structures: UNEP designed a National Environmental Performance Index dashboard, developed guidelines for drafting the National State of Environment Report, drafted a Roadmap for Environmental Awareness in the KSA, and prepared technical guidance for the establishment and implementation of the National Chemical Safety Initiative while supporting the development of the KSA's National Implementation Plan of persistent organic pollutants. Once completed, the National Environmental Performance Index and National State of Environment Report will provide a validated and trusted baseline for different environmental metrics that will be critical as the KSA develops new policies and sets new environmental targets. In addition to conducting air quality monitoring support at the Formula One event in Jeddah in 2022, UNEP also supported the establishment and enactment of standard operating procedures for the KSA's national air quality centre, which covers over 180 air-quality stations in four regions. UNEP provided technical support to the National Centre for Meteorology in the creation of a Sand and Dust Storm Centre for research, analysis, and early warnings about sand- and dust-storm phenomena.

Striving to bring the KSA's municipal system into better alignment with sustainable practices, UN-Habitat worked with the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs to amend the KSA's municipal system, particularly in terms of taking environmental and climate aspects into greater consideration in urban and municipal planning. UN-Habitat also implemented several capacity-building and training weeks, as well as a study tour, for the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs; regional authorities; and several city authorities to better plan urban systems while considering major environmental threats, particularly in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by moving away from



urban infrastructures that can only be effectively navigated by means of personal vehicles.

Looking to bolster the data-driven component of the KSA's environmental governance and planning, UNDP conducted a detailed analysis of critical ecosystems to assess their levels of loss, damage, and degradation and identify areas for green cover restoration, conservation, and expansion in 2022. It also developed and implemented restoration projects in critical terrestrial and marine ecosystems to test different restoration techniques and gather data to ensure that future efforts are as responsive and effective as possible. Over the course of the year, UNDP created maps and visualisations using geographic information systems (GIS) software to represent and analyse spatial data, including the distribution of natural resources, land degradation, and the impacts of development. Satellite and aerial imaging systems similarly allowed UNDP to gather information about the Earth's surface and features to better identify changes in land cover, monitor ecosystem health, and track desertification in the context of the KSA.

International Climate Collaboration

The KSA has been particularly active in working with the international community towards sustainable and climate-conscious solutions to environmental challenges. To ensure that the voice of the next generation is included in the global climate agenda, two Saudi youth representatives joined the KSA's envoy to the 2022 United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP27) through the joint support of UNDP and the Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Foundation (MiSK Foundation). At the regional level, the KSA's leadership role in the ambitious Middle East Green Initiative stands out as a prime example of the country's commitment to cross-border collaboration on climate action.

Additionally, as of November 2022, the KSA is working with ESCWA to establish a regional centre to accelerate emissions reductions and alignment with the Circular Carbon Economy. The KSA is also working with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to host the next Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Climate Week in 2023 during the lead-up to the next United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Expo City, Dubai, in 2023.



• **Life Below Water**

Towards realising SDG 14: *Life Below Water*, the United Nations organised and contributed to international forums on natural marine resource management. In the lead up to this year's United Nations Ocean Conference, the KSA's Resident Coordinator Office (RCO)—with the support of the UNEP and UNDP—organised the 'Riyadh Blue Talk' in May 2022 to exchange knowledge and work towards solutions to solve the pressing challenges facing the country's marine ecosystems. Co-hosted by the Governments of Kenya and Portugal, the panel was an opportunity for stakeholders from Government institutions, academia, and the private sector to shape a common, climate-conscious vision of the blue economy and attendant conservation practices informed by international experiences.

As part of its involvement in realising the Saudi Environment Sustainability Programme (2019–2025), UNEP continued its efforts to preserve biodiversity in the KSA along various axes. Among UNEP's significant interventions were the development of a national protocol for the Rapid Reef Assessment of the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf and the design a syllabus on marine biology concerning the ecology of coral reef fishes, seagrasses, and mangroves. A technical assessment of the condition of the Red Sea coral reef and seagrasses between Jeddah and

Al Wadji in February 2022 allowed UNEP to collect meaningful data to develop responsive strategies for conservation efforts.

With the support of FAO, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture and its Fisheries Department have accelerated the integration of sustainable principles in the country's marine and fisheries activities, particularly by striving to address illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and its detrimental effect upon fish stocks, marine ecosystems, and the livelihoods of legitimate fishers. Building on the expansion of its marine and coastal protected areas through the designation of the archipelago of Juzur Farasan as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2021, the KSA is in the process of acceding to the Port State Measures Agreement to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and to the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific. Small-scale artisanal fishers and fishers' cooperatives improved their access to marine resources and marketing by benefiting from several programmes of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture in collaboration with FAO, including the delivery of training, equipment, and digital mobile applications. Under the project, fisheries data collection and analysis improved through the establishment a Digital System of Fisheries Statistics, which entails mobile applications, cloud storage of data, and automatic analysis web-portals.



• **Life on Land**

Towards realising SDG 15: *Life on Land*, FAO, UNEP, and UNESCO all contributed meaningfully to protecting the KSA's vibrant landscapes and ecosystems throughout 2022. The efforts of UNEP to ensure that the KSA's natural resources and rich biodiversity are sustainably took various forms: from developing a research document on the density of ungulates in the KSA to recommending avian species to the National Red List of Birds, UNEP was instrumental in the KSA's conservation efforts over the past year.

FAO also contributed to the KSA's efforts to address climate change by means of ensuring that the staff of the Forestry and other departments within the National Centre for Vegetation Development and Combatting Desertification (NCVCCD) are able to mobilise their positions as conservation practitioners and protectors of biodiversity in the context of climate change. The domains of sustainable forest and rangeland management, national park management and development, and combatting desertification have benefitted

from particular attention. In September 2022, FAO together with NCVCCD organised a training in Riyadh that focused on role of the forest in climate change action. The training equipped the staff of the Forestry and other NCVCCD departments to actively engage in regional and international climate forums and negotiations. In addition to emphasising the importance and role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation, the training covered the frameworks, processes, and mechanisms of UNFCCC and REDD+.⁴ Joint work is also ongoing between FAO and NCVCCD relating to the rapid assessments of forests in five regions (Asir, Al Baha, Makkah, Jazan, and Madinah) that are home to over 80% of the KSA's forest and mountain ecosystem. The strong collaboration between FAO, NCVCCD, and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture continues to strengthen the capacity of the KSA to apply nature-based solutions to current and future development challenges as climate emergencies become more extreme.

Crystallising the KSA's efforts to sustainably manage its natural resources and diversify its income generation away from the oil revenues by developing its emergent tourism sector, the National Centre for Wildlife developed a management plan for the 2021–2023 period in line with its capacity as the KSA's focal point for the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme. In June 2022, Harrat Uwayrid became the second UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the country. Home to 19 endangered species, 55 kinds of rare plants, and 43 types of birds, Harrat Uwayrid is an irreplaceable site that is now assured to thrive into the future as both an ecosystem and a tourist destination as a consequence of UNESCO's recognition.





STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 3 Prosperity



Ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives (SDGs 7–11)

Over the course of 2022, the United Nations channelled a substantial portion of its resources towards ensuring economic and social prosperity in the KSA, notably prioritising the improvement of its integration of the LNOB principle and environmental ethics. United Nations capacity-building and strengthening efforts associated with SDGs 7–11 were particularly successful in bolstering the KSA's urban planning, entrepreneurial, and agricultural sectors.

• **Decent Work & Economic Growth and Industry, Innovation, & Infrastructure**

In alignment with KSA's intention to cultivate its tourism sector as part of Saudi Vision 2030 and the 2030 Agenda, UNWTO opened its Regional Office in Riyadh in 2021, which has invigorated the development of sustainable tourism in the country. In June 2022, Riyadh hosted the UNWTO Executive Council, which brought together global leaders in the industry with a view towards expediting the KSA's development of the sector. Among the ongoing tourism initiatives in the KSA is UNESCO's continued work in close partnership with the Royal Commission for Al Ula to develop the culturally significant province of Al Ula. This cross-sectoral collaboration aims to develop, protect, and promote the Al Ula site and encompasses a broad range of initiatives across archaeology, tourism, culture, education, and the arts. The memorandum of understanding is being implemented through the UNESCO's 'Memory of the World,' 'Intangible Heritage,' and 'Creative Cities' programmes.

Similarly oriented towards economic diversification away from fossil fuels, the Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development Programme (SRAD) under the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme in the KSA focuses on integrated capacity development across many different agricultural domains, including livestock rearing, beekeeping, and crop cultivation. One initiative attached to SRAD is to strengthen the existing wool and milk value chain

in the Northern Border province by empowering women farmers. The initiative strives to leverage existing production systems in the region towards sustainable sheep and goat production and market products through a comprehensive value chain programme for sheep milk, wool, and live animals. A pilot programme involved some 30 women farmers from the region with the joint participation of the Arar branch of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture. In October 2022, a four-day orientation organised by the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture in collaboration with FAO shared the best practices for running profitable farms. This initiative encourages and attracts women's participation and scales up sustainable rural agricultural development infrastructure across the KSA.

Throughout 2022, SRAD also worked towards increasing the adoption of improved technologies and good beekeeping practices that can improve the honeybee health, honey production, and the income of the smallholder beekeepers. Towards this end, SRAD began establishing and operating demonstration apiaries and providing hands-on training to beekeepers. Projects that demonstrate organic beekeeping practices and introduce modern beekeeping technologies are underway in six regions of the KSA. In collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, an FAO training on best practices of organic beekeeping, honeybee queen rearing, colony multiplication, and honeybee pest and disease prevention methods was held in June–July 2022. Additionally, a beekeeper-to-beekeeper extension was promoted under this initiative: under this approach, model beekeepers are selected to assist their peers by spreading technologies and best practices through training, sharing of experiences, and advisory services. Another aspect of the beekeeping component of SRAD is the generation of public awareness of the great value of bees, beekeeping, and a wide variety of other pollinators: in collaboration with the KSA's Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture and the Al Baha Beekeepers Cooperative Association, FAO celebrated the 2022 World Bee Day. In July 2022, FAO also participated in the 4th International Arab Beekeeping Association Conference, where the FAO team presented three technical papers and conducted a workshop on 'Beekeeping business and marketing management,' attended by 20 participants.

The Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture and FAO set a joint effort to explore the use of cactus pear (*Opuntia ficus-indica*), also known as barshumi in the KSA. Held in August 2022, the



Photo by
Najla AlKhalifa

three-day workshop 'Pear Cactus: Development and Sustainability' brought experts from the international community together to discuss the potential use of cactus pear that would convert it from invasive species into a cash crop. Attended by a variety of stakeholders, particularly from Al Baha and Asir, the event covered the crop's sustainable cultivation, management, development, and marketing. Amongst the recommendations that emerged from the workshop are to conduct a survey study to determine the geographical distribution of the prickly pear in the KSA and to organise field visits in order to map its distribution, assess its environmental impact, and suggest appropriate sustainable agricultural practices.

With strong collaboration between Saudi REEF and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, SRAD organised the first 'National Workshop on Rainfed Cereals Production for Food Security and Sustainable Rural Development' in Riyadh. Increasing the productivity and strengthening the value chain of three targeted crops—namely sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*), pearl millet (*Pennisetum*

glaucum), and sesame (*Sesamum indicum*)—were the main goals of the workshop. Around 70 participants benefitted from conversation with some 14 renowned experts from international research centres, including the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas and the International Corps Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics.

Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and Saudi Vision 2030, FAO is providing technical and advisory services to the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture to scientifically and sustainably address challenges facing the coffee sector. In August 2022, FAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture published the study 'Unveiling Physical and Sensory Quality of Arabica Coffee Produced in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Jazan Region.' Sponsored through SRAD, the study indicates that the Jazan region and, by extension, the KSA have great untapped potential to produce outstanding quality coffee for both local and international markets, which is especially promising as the KSA continues diversifying its

economy away from fossil fuels.



• Sustainable Cities & Communities

UN-Habitat has been supporting the KSA as it builds out its internal institutions and reporting mechanisms to measure and fortify urban planning efforts across the country. In response to a request for support from the Deputyship of Urban Planning and Lands, a feasibility study advocating for the establishment of an Urban Economy Unit at the Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs and Housing was developed by UN-Habitat and published in November 2022. By exploring international case studies and reviewing organisational structures in different countries, the study provides a roadmap detailing how an Urban Economy Unit can be operationalised. It also includes a diagnostic assessment of the state of urban economy within the KSA, including interviews with a number of key urban development stakeholders at the national, regional, and local levels, as well as an exploration of the value that would be added by establishing an Urban Economy Unit at the Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs and Housing. Since November 2022, UN-Habitat has also been working with the KSA's Quality of Life Programme in a technical and advisory capacity to design, develop, and promote a global Quality of Life Index. Striving to provide coherence and alignment for all development partners, including those across the United Nations system, the Index will feature a universal, standardised methodology. It will be used as a much-needed tool to raise awareness, provide data and information, and support policy and programmatic actions geared towards improving living conditions in cities across the world.

Over the course of 2022, UN-Habitat supported the Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs and Housing with the preparation of the 'Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda.' Significantly, this report is the first that the KSA has prepared about urban issues since 2018. As part of a rigorous stakeholder engagement process, two working groups were organised: a Government Working Group (which included appropriate ministries and representatives from national, regional, and local governments) and a Non-Government Working Group (which included civil society, academia, foundations, and the private sector). To further elevate the role of local governments in the process and to share local success stories, an additional consultation session was organised with the mayors of the 17 largest municipalities in the KSA. These processes helped strengthen relationships between the Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs and Housing and other important urban development stakeholders in the KSA. The final report was submitted by the Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs

and Housing to the Royal Court in December 2022.

In June 2022, the city of Al Ahsa signed a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF to join the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative, exemplifying the KSA's commitment to the intersection of urban planning and childhood development policy. This ground-breaking partnership establishes a multi-stage joint programme, starting with an in-depth analysis of the situation of child rights in Al Ahsa, to develop and implement an action plan to ensure that children in Al Ahsa can access services in a healthy, safe environment and feel safe to play, learn, and grow. In a similar vein, the Al Madinah Regional Development Authority signed a letter of intent with UN-Habitat in October 2022 to join its global SDG Cities initiative that strives to unleash the potential of cities to accelerate sustainable development and improve quality of life for all.

In terms of international knowledge exchange, UN-Habitat facilitated the participation of the KSA in the World Urban Forum, held in Katowice, Poland, in June 2022. The KSA envoy led more than 10 events and offered two presentations (from the Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs and Housing and the Ministry of Culture). A total of 100 participants from more than 20 ministries, agencies, regional authorities, and city authorities increased their knowledge of new urban trends and shared the Saudi experience of urban reform.

UNDP and UN-Habitat jointly launched a capacity-building programme for the Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs and Housing; regions; and city authorities. Conducted between June and November 2022, this capacity-building programme entailed two components: (1) a Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Development Training Programme, developed and delivered by UN-Habitat and (2) an Urban Efficiency and Productivity Training Programme, developed and delivered by UNDP. The training gathered 27 representatives of municipalities, regional development authorities, and royal commissions from across the KSA, in addition to representatives from the Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs and Housing. Concerned with sustainable urban planning, the training focused on 'Integrated Urban Spatial Planning' and 'Inclusive Interactive Planning Processes.' The second phase of capacity-building took place in Barcelona, where UNDP and UN-Habitat organised a study tour for 25 participants to engage with best practices in sustainable urban planning to complement the knowledge that participants received during the first phase. The study tour also helped build relationships and joint work programmes between city authorities and their corresponding regional authorities in the KSA.



Photo by
Amer Ali Khubrani



STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 4

*Peace, Partnership, and
Other Cross-Cutting Issues*



Foster peaceful, just, and inclusive societies and mobilize the means required for implementation (SDGs 16–17)

The United Nations is committed to cultivating social environments that benefit from peaceful, just, and inclusive institutional spaces and mobilise partnerships towards sustainable development. In terms of SDG 16: *Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions* and SDG 17: *Partnerships for the Goals*, the United Nations supported the KSA's efforts to fortify its institutions, forge new and strengthen existing partnerships, find durable solutions for peace and security, and generate a robust data ecosystem.



- **Peace, Justice, & Strong Institutions**

Peace and Justice

In the KSA, UNHCR undertakes asylum procedures and works to identify durable solutions for vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers. According to Government records, KSA hosts more than one million Syrian and Yemeni refugees. UNHCR provides multi-purpose cash assistance for refugees and asylum-seekers in the KSA while continuing to advocate for strengthened protections and unconditional access to basic public services for people of concern, regardless of their legal status. Through engagement with communities of concern (particularly those with irregular legal status who cannot access public social services), a total of 1,285 individuals belonging to 239 families across the KSA benefited from cash-based interventions and food/clothes vouchers in 2022. The purpose of this assistance is to empower them to become self-reliant until a durable solution is found, such as the regularisation of their status or a third-country solution that UNHCR offers through its resettlement programme. In 2022, UNHCR processed resettlement applications for 184 individuals. In parallel, UNHCR also engaged in high-level meetings with Government of the KSA to ensure increased protections for people of concern in the country.

UNHCR continues to forge strategic partnerships in KSA with Government counterparts, national institutions, and the private sector to provide protection and support to vulnerable displaced persons. In 2022, UNHCR participated in the capacity development for over 100 border guards in the KSA on the notion of international protection and sensitisation to the principle of non-refoulement as part of international customary law. Furthermore, UNHCR delivered a tailored programme on humanitarian principles and disaster risk management to 15 participants from various NGOs working under the umbrella of KSRelief. Simultaneously, UNHCR laid the groundwork to formalise a number of additional collaborations with the Saudi Human Rights Commission and key national entities, including capacity development relating to international human rights laws and the provision of technical support for the KSA's preparation of the Universal Periodic Review.

Bringing the United Nations development system together to engage with the Government of the KSA on migration-related issues, the United Nations Network on Migration supports the KSA's implementation of the Global Compact on Safe Orderly and Regular Migration, which is grounded in the 2030 Agenda. In May 2022, the KSA participated in the first International Migration Review Forum, which aimed to take stock of the global implementation of the Compact's 23 objectives.

At the level of peace and security, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism signed a memorandum of understanding with Naif Arab University for Security Studies in December 2022 to enhance cooperation in combating terrorism. Naif Arab University for Security Studies also signed an agreement with UNODC to support a new Centre on Crime Prevention and Drug Control Strategies in November 2022. With a view towards enhancing the security capacities of the KSA and the wider region, a technical cooperation agreement between the two entities was also signed with the goal of establishing a Regional Centre of Excellence on Combatting Drugs and Crime.

Ensuring alignment with the Convention on Rights of the Child and global standards and benchmarks, UNICEF provided technical advice over the course of 2022 to support the KSA's development of key strategic policy documents, including the first National Child Online Safety Framework, the National Policy for Anti-Bullying, and the National Schools Well-Being Framework. These three documents will be reviewed for endorsement in 2023.

Strong Institutions

In 2022, the United Nations supported the KSA's efforts to work towards more effective, transparent, and human-rights-focused institutions across the Government landscape. A meaningful example of United Nations efforts to bring the KSA into alignment with international human rights standards and practices was OHCHR's December 2022 workshop on transparency and the right to access information attended by the KSA's United Nations Global Compact Local Network and the Saudi Human Rights Commission.

Supporting and strengthening the KSA's institutional apparatus also involved supporting the planning and reporting processes, an endeavour largely undertaken by UNDP in 2022. In addition to beginning the drafting process of the KSA's second SDG Progress Report throughout 2022, the Government of the KSA, buttressed by United Nations support, launched the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process. The 2023 VNR will serve as opportunity for reflection at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda timeline that will also capture the KSA's significant social and economic progress since its last VNR in 2018. In addition to supporting the generation of an evidence-based VNR to accurately convey the KSA's sustainable development, UNDP also supported the Ministry of Economy and Planning in the formulation and implementation of KSA's Roadmap for the Implementation of the SDGs and cooperated with the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue to produce a National Cohesion Index.



Partnerships for the Goals

Throughout 2022, the OCHA and the KSA (through KSRelief) partnered to prepare for the Riyadh launch of the 2023 Global Humanitarian Overview. With the support of the KSA's United Nations Global Compact Local Network, OCHA took the event as an opportunity to convey the humanitarian perspective to diverse segments of Saudi society, including members of the private sector and executives dedicated to corporate social responsibility. OCHA continues to engage with the Saudi Fund for Development, Gulf Cooperation Council, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Saudi Development and Reconstruction Programme for Yemen, the Saudi diplomatic corps, and other Government counterparts to sensitise them to humanitarian needs and collective responsibilities and ultimately forge meaningful partnerships to support the 2030 Agenda and the realisation of the SDGs.

Cross-Cutting Issue: Data

Data emerged as a fertile ground for United Nations partnerships in the KSA in 2022. Open data provides critical information on natural resources, governance operations, public services, and population demographics; these insights inform national priorities and help determine the most effective action pathways to address national issues. As a result of the United Nations advocacy work to clarify the link between data and SDG achievement, the Government of the KSA devoted energy and resources in data-related initiatives. Over the course of 2022 in the KSA, investment in open data was key to (1) fostering economic growth and job creation in post-COVID-19 era, (2) improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public services, and (3) increasing transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. The availability of the data from the fifth housing and population census and household surveys were also critical in improving governance by exposing and preventing mismanagement and corruption.

Data Availability

Through joint United Nations–Government efforts, significant progress was made on the availability of internationally comparable data on the SDGs in 2022. With the support of the KSA, the number of indicators included in the global SDG database increased from 115 to 211 between 2016 and 2021. While the KSA does not yet report on all indicators, the Government's commitment to improving the country's data infrastructure ensure that the KSA is on the right path.

Striving to address data availability issues—one of the most significant challenges facing the KSA in its efforts to improve its global SDG ranking⁵—the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) and the Ministry of Economy and Planning partnered to deliver a highly effective 'National SDG Data Webinar' to individuals from over 70 Government entities in August 2022. Ahead of the KSA's next VNR in July 2023, the United Nations has joined forces with the Government to ensure that critical data is available and accurately reported in global data repositories so that the KSA's progress can be meaningfully shared with the international community. Focusing on building out data streams in the United Nations Statistics Division SDG Repository and data used by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network's 2022 Sustainable Development Report, the webinar facilitated interconnectedness between the KSA and relevant data custodians while empowering the Government to better share its developmental successes in a quantitative format. Framed as a

natural baseline project, this project has successfully improved the sometimes-challenging aspiration for the United Nations to 'Deliver as One.'⁶ The RCO has highlighted this project and encouraged its replication in other RCOs in the region.

Along the same vein, UNICEF supported the development and publication of a comprehensive report on Data Availability and Gaps in the KSA, specifically in terms of the child-related SDG indicators. This report was developed alongside a

data policy document on data governance and a strategic data action plan, also released in 2022. As a result of this analytical contribution, a technical committee will be convened in 2023 to coordinate the implementation of the strategic data action plan and advocate for child rights and related data requirements. The results of the study have reinforced ongoing discussions with the KSA to define the budget and timeline for conducting a multiple indicator cluster survey⁷ in 2024.



2022 Census

A critical moment for data in the KSA, May 2022 witnessed the KSA's fifth housing and population census. With the support of the United Nations development system and thanks to the KSA's significant investment in census development, the 2022 census aligned with the highest international standards and provided critical data as the country continues to build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic. In cooperation with UNDP under an agency-to-agency agreement, the UNFPA Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Area Office provided technical assistance to the KSA as it conducted its population and housing census. Prior to its launch,

a training was conducted for selected staff at the General Authority for Statistics in the domain of population estimates and projections—in particular, on substantive aspects (demographic transition, projection scenarios, life-table models, component trends, etc.) and on the use of available software. In addition to building out its public communication and advocacy capacities, the UNFPA GCC Area Office assisted the General Authority for Statistics in census development and data collection and continues to support its analysis and efforts to publish gender-disaggregated data.

➤ SUPPORT TO PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As has been reiterated throughout this document, SDG 17: *Partnerships for the Goals* continues to be central to the KSA's adoption of the 2030 Agenda. In order to effectively realise the other 16 SDGs, partnerships are critical: only through collaborative action and local engagement can the KSA sustainably meet the challenges of the 21st century. The United Nations' Partnerships Working Group, which works closely with the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) in the KSA, was particularly instrumental in cultivating an institutional environment that allowed the United Nations to meaningfully build out its commitment to forging new and bolstering existing partnerships in the KSA in 2022. This section provides insight into a mere portion of the United Nations' extensive partnership developments and financial mobilisation towards the achievement of the SDGs in the KSA.

➤ The KSA's United Nations Global Compact Local Network

Over the course of 2022, the KSA's United Nations Global Compact Local Network matured into a robust institution at the centre of United Nations efforts to deepen private sector engagement with the SDGs and promote long-term sustainable partnerships aligned with both the 2030 Agenda and Saudi Vision 2030. Since its inception in September 2021, the KSA's United Nations Global Compact Local Network has grown to include 46 companies, foundations, small- and medium-sized enterprises, local and global NGOs, and academic institutions that share a common ambition to jointly facilitate balanced and sustainable economic, social, and environmental development in accordance with the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact.⁸ Recognising the critical role to be played by sustainable corporate practices and private sector engagement in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, the Federation of Saudi Chambers solidified its commitment to support the efforts of the United Nations Global Compact by signing an agreement to host the KSA's United Nations Global Compact Local Network in February 2022.

One particularly generative moment occurred in October 2022, when the KSA's United Nations Global Compact Local Network and Prince Sultan University signed a memorandum of understanding to forge a strategic partnership to advance the 2030 Agenda. Bringing the private sector orientation of the KSA's United Nations Global Compact Local Network together with Prince Sultan University's commitment to preparing today's youth for tomorrow's green economy, this partnership strives to narrow the knowledge gap among Saudi youth while instilling in them an understanding of responsible business behaviours, diligent corporate management practices, and a sense of how the private sector can effectively respond to the challenges of globalisation. By exposing students to corporate sustainability and developing their business acumen, this partnership will shape the environmental ethics of tomorrow's corporate citizens. Empowered to think critically about sustainability through these kinds of partnerships, the next generation of Saudi entrepreneurs is poised to organically realise the SDGs in line with Saudi Vision 2030.

➤ Localisation of the SDGs

Working towards the localisation of the SDGs in the KSA throughout 2022, the United Nations' agencies, funds, and programmes (AFPs) supported the Government of the KSA by means of various SDG-oriented capacity-building initiatives. In November and December 2022, ILO hosted a mini skills academy for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) aimed to impart among participants a holistic understanding of skill development and its links with the labour market. Over the course of 2022, UNDP provided training to 2,218 Saudi nationals on local urban indicators as part of its ongoing work with the Royal Commission for Riyadh City. UNEP also conducted four workshops on agricultural waste and clustering, as well as induction trainings for Jeddah's Waste Management Plan. Efforts to implement SDG 5: *Gender Equality* were meaningfully advanced by the OHCHR and WHO

⁸The Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact are separated into four categories: (1) Human Rights, (2) Labour, (3) Environment, and (4) Anti-Corruption. They are derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

through their collaborative organisation of a training in December 2022 for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on the topic of violence against women and girls in the KSA.

Forging partnerships with local and national institutions also resulted in positive SDG implementation across the country. For example, UNHCR signed a plan of action in September 2022 with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Secretariat in Jeddah to collaborate on humanitarian issues around the world, including raising funds to support UNHCR humanitarian programmes in various countries. As part of this partnership, UNHCR delivered a training session to OIC legal staff in Jeddah on the UNHCR mandate to reinforce local capacities in terms of SDG 16: *Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions*. Along a similar vein, the IOM and Naif Arab University for Security Studies signed a partnership agreement in November 2022 to establish the Arab Centre for Technical Cooperation on Migration and Border Management at the latter's Riyadh campus. The Centre will facilitate knowledge-sharing to strengthen immigration and border management and to enhance technical capacity and cooperation in the Arab region and beyond. In addition to establishing a document examination laboratory and developing a six-month curriculum on legal identity, the Centre will produce annual regional policy studies and support high-level international cooperation and dialogue events. True to its name, the Centre will also undertake numerous technical initiatives, including capacity building, training, and technical translation services that will continue the SDG localisation process.

Striving to facilitate similar partnership agreements with universities across the KSA's academic landscape, the RCO published 'The Role of Saudi Universities in Advancing the SDGs and Vision 2030' in December 2022. This research analysed 16 Saudi universities' activities directed towards advancing the SDGs and Saudi Vision 2030 in their local contexts. It identified the SDGs that are most commonly advanced by participating Saudi universities' initiatives as well as those most in need of additional attention. By identifying fertile ground for future partnership opportunities, this research allowed the RCO to develop nine partnerships recommendations tailored to the KSA's unique academic landscape that can robustly respond to both the SDGs and Saudi Vision 2030 as the country strives to further localise its sustainable development.

In October 2022, the UNDP signed a memorandum of understanding with the Balad Al Khair Endowment Fund (KSA Khair), an organisation

devoted to bringing communities together to tackle local development challenges. This partnership has worked to realise the 'Green Circle' initiative, which will raise awareness about developmental issues and offer a forum for diverse local stakeholders in the KSA to come together to cross-pollinate their sustainable intentions upon its launch in 2023.

› Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

As one of the world's major development and humanitarian donors, the Government of the KSA continued its generous financing of the SDGs in the KSA throughout 2022. Mobilisation and dispersal of funding streams have evolved to reflect evolving national priorities and the KSA's commitment to leave no one behind (LNOB). For example, in the domain of supporting a just and sustainable labour market, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development approved the ILO's proposal for a second phase of the ILO-KSA Development Cooperation Programme in late 2022. This phase will seek to (1) improve employment and labour market practices and outcomes, (2) promote foundational principles and workers' rights, (3) strengthen social dialogue institutions and tripartism, and (4) strengthen governance skills for better employment outcomes.

In 2022, the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organisations (AGFUND) financed projects implemented by UNESCO and UNICEF in the KSA. OCHA is working with AGFUND to identify areas ripe for collaboration: in 2022, groundwork was laid for a memorandum of understanding on joint cooperation and a concept note that would unite the two entities as they work to address the humanitarian-development nexus.⁹ This past year, AGFUND financed two country-based pooled funds in Yemen and Syria. UNESCO also mobilised funding from AGFUND to implement an 18-month programme to support the development of personal and professional skills for young people in Yemen. In March 2022, AGFUND and UNICEF celebrated 40 years of partnership in support of children around the world. AGFUND approved a UNICEF project at the level of the League of Arab States in December 2022, ensuring that their collaboration will continue into the future.

Finally, the generosity of the King Salman Humanitarian Relief and Aid Centre (KSRelief) continues to finance the invaluable work of the IOM and WHO as they respond to humanitarian crises in other countries. KSRelief supports IOM and WHO's humanitarian activities in Bangladesh, Djibouti, Lebanon, Somalia, and Yemen, among

other countries. On the side-lines of the World Health Summit in October 2022, KSRelief signed a \$10m agreement with UNICEF and WHO to continue its financial support for these entities' efforts to combat global health challenges. In addition to supporting joint health programmes, KSRelief's partnership with WHO includes capacity building and training in the areas of planning, communication, monitoring and evaluation, and technical support. KSRelief has also contributed more than \$145 million towards IOM Yemen's multi-sector humanitarian response since 2018, allowing IOM support to reach millions of conflict-affected individuals. The humanitarian operations continuously supported by KSRelief contribute to the objectives of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and underscore the KSA's commitment to the Compact. IOM and

KSRelief have also been working closely to share expertise and knowledge to better support ongoing humanitarian operations. It should be noted that throughout 2022, KSRelief and OCHA also laid the groundwork to sign a joint cooperation programme agreement that will bolster their relationship.

Building on earlier efforts from 2021, UNEP continued to support the KSA as it strives to access funding from the Multilateral Fund of the Montreal Protocol to support the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances and from the Global Environment Facility to support the preparation of reports to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).



Photo by
Amer Ali Khubrani

➤ RESULTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS WORKING MORE AND BETTER TOGETHER

In 2022, the United Nations development system in the KSA continued to communicate as one and implement reform efforts with positive results and benefits for the United Nations, the Government of the KSA, and its many partners. The Resident Coordinator continued to pursue a strategy of external engagement and internal coherence to promote a more effective and efficient presence of the United Nations in the country.

➤ Communicating as One

Through its communications group, the United Nations in the KSA worked to advocate for priorities identified in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026 with the aim of accelerating the delivery of programmatic outcomes and increasing awareness around the SDGs. While engaging the public and increase their participation through the various campaigns, events, and activities, the United Nations also partnered with various segments of Saudi society (Government, academia, civil society organisations, and youth) to jointly celebrate key international days, including International Day for Persons with Disabilities and International Day for Biodiversity.

The KSA's 2022 United Nations Day theme, 'Together Towards the Goals,' celebrated 77 years of the constantly evolving partnership between the United Nations and the Government of the KSA, which entered a new stage this year with the signing of the new UNSDCF. Supported by the KSA's United Nations Global Compact Local Network and sponsored by two of its members (Napco National and Tanmiah Food Company), the KSA celebrated United Nations Day by holding three panel discussions on SDG 17: *Partnerships for the Goals*. These discussions—concerning the role of (1) the private sector, moderated by United Nations Global Compact; (2) civil society, moderated by UNICEF; and (3) academic institutions, moderated by UNDP—sought to identify and unlock potential partnerships through sustainable development advocacy and by connecting like-minded local stakeholders inspired to work towards both Saudi Vision 2030 and the 17 SDGs. The panel discussions proved strategically

fruitful, highlighting the need for both the United Nations and the KSA to implement development solutions at the ground level and initiate long-term, sustainable partnerships between local stakeholders and United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes (AFPs).

International Women's Day also offered the United Nations in the KSA an opportunity to both celebrate its achievements in women's empowerment and come together to engage in conversation on how to best advance SDG 5: *Gender Equality*. The theme of the 2022 celebration was 'Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow,' which aimed to recognise the leadership of women and girls in the domain of climate action. The United Nations in the KSA held an event in partnership with Princess Nourah University that entailed a youth dialogue moderated by UNICEF and a subsequent high-level dialogue with senior United Nations officials and prominent policy leaders across the Government, academia, and civil society with a mind towards highlighting achievements relating to gender equality and women's empowerment in the KSA and identifying prime areas for future collaboration.

➤ Internal Progress and Alignment

The KSA's United Nations Advisory Working Group on Disability Inclusion was established by April in 2022. The Advisory Working Group developed a work plan that underscored the critical role of advocacy and capacity building (both internally¹⁰ and at the national level) to address the needs of people with disabilities. With the support of the Resident Coordinator, advocacy efforts focused on working with national partners and stakeholders to shift from away from a charity-based approach towards an human rights-based approach (HRBA), in line with recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A situation analysis study of youth and children with disabilities will be launched in 2023 in order to gather additional qualitative data and better identify the specific challenges faced by youth with disabilities in the KSA.

In February 2022, UNDP organised a webinar on gender equality for the United Nations System Staff College as part of its Sustainable Development Reflection Series. The webinar dived into the specifics of SDG 5: *Gender Equality* in the context of the KSA, specifically addressing the process of gender mainstreaming and the rapid pace of change on gender-related issues in the country for the benefit of the global United Nations staff network.

Drawing upon the experiences of other countries as they too work towards realising the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs in their own contexts, the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) published 'Accelerating SDG Progress in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Through Peer Learning' in June 2022. With the goal of identifying potential policies that could accelerate the KSA's progress towards the SDGs, the research collated the strategies employed by the KSA's top five nearest 'neighbour countries' in terms of SDG achievement. By means of a multi-criteria ranking algorithm that evaluated the cost, timeframe, and applicability of each policy, the experiences of KSA's peers across the United Nations network were mobilised to identify the best policy practices to accelerate SDG achievement in the KSA.

In June 2022, OHCHR, RCO, UNESCO, and UNICEF, in partnership with the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority, participated in the virtual Forum on Protecting Children in Cyberspace. Amplifying their message by means of working together, this coalition took the opportunity to

emphasise UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence as a framework to protect children online. A similarly joint initiative was organised by IOM with participation from OHCHR, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, and the International Committee of the Red Cross: together, they delivered a workshop to over 100 border guards in the KSA in June 2022. Referring to international standards and best practices for screening and identifying vulnerable irregular migrants, the workshop offered border guards in attendance the opportunity to bolster their understanding of migration management from a HRBA from a multitude of United Nations perspectives.

In December 2022, capping off a year of working much more closely and effectively together, the United Nations–Government Joint Cooperation Framework Committee—led by the Ministry of Economy and Planning with the participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance—held its first meeting to track progress on the implementation of SDGs in the KSA under the new UNSDCF 2022–2026. The United Nations has met on a monthly basis to promote broad engagement and ensure that all AFPs are fully aware of key United Nations priorities in addition to initiatives that are helping deliver results. The Resident Coordinator continues regular bilateral meetings with the heads of all AFPs to discuss particular topics of importance.



Photo by
Nejla AlKhailfa

➤ FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The table below displays the financial overview of project funds reported by United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes (AFPs) in the KSA in 2022. It should be noted that OCHA and WFP activities are primarily focused on Yemen and, therefore, are omitted from the table. RCO is entirely funded

through the Special Purpose Trust Fund and is not included in the table. ESCWA is omitted from this table because it is a regional economic social commission and does not have any explicit financing in the KSA.

◆ AFPs	Required Budget and Budgeted Resources (USD)	Received Resources (USD)	Total Expenditures (USD)
<i>FAO</i>	69,222,224	12,000,000	10,000,000
<i>UNDP</i>	24,369,645	23,170,000	18,824,705
<i>UNEP</i>	25,256,000	9,643,723	4,495,584
<i>UNESCO</i>	4,500,000	1,400,000	1,550,000
<i>UNFPA</i>	111,000	111,000	63,669
<i>UN-HABITAT</i>	15,800,000	5,800,000	2,000,000
<i>UNHCR</i>	258,000	258,000	258,000
<i>UNICEF</i>	475,936	475,936	342,684
<i>ILO</i>	437,501	437,501	166,180
<i>IOM</i>	1,248,502	1,248,502	950,527
<i>UNODC</i>	*	*	*
<i>OHCHR</i>	1,602,699.50	1,555,977.00	1,262,470.89
<i>WHO</i>	255,075	208,394	36,500
<i>UN Women</i>	*	*	*
TOTAL	143,536,583	56,309,033	39,950,320

*No information provided.

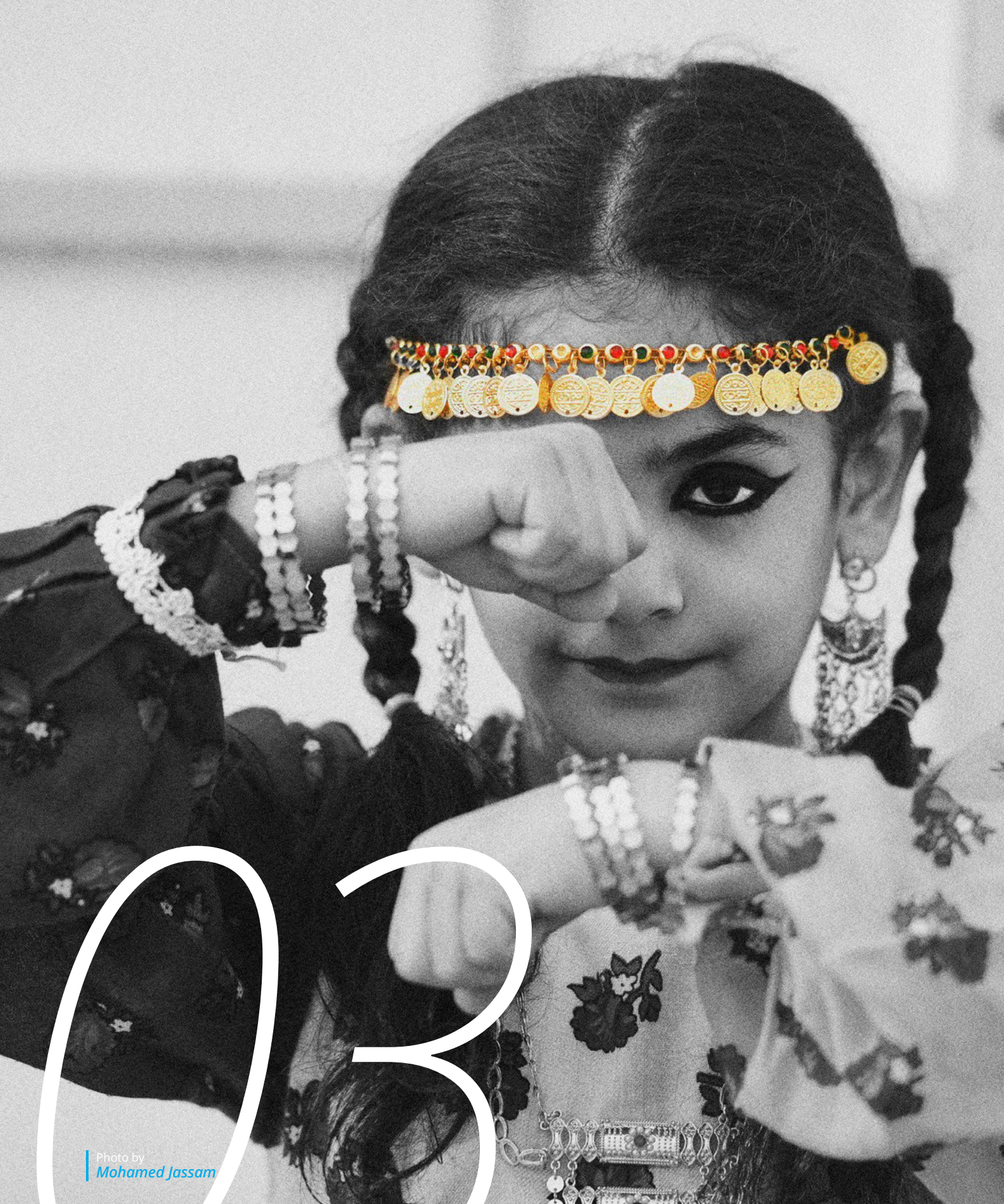


Photo by
Mohamed Jassam

➤ *Looking
Forward to 2023*



➤ LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023

The signing of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026 in June 2022 marked the start of a new phase in the work of the United Nations in the KSA. In 2023, this new phase entails three key priorities: (1) translating the UNSDCF into on-the-ground action, (2) exploring how to support translating the global agenda into national action, and (3) revising our partnership strategy to better position the United Nations to meet the aspirations of the UNSDCF and the KSA's Sustainable Development Roadmap.

In concert with the United Nations–Government Joint Cooperation Framework Committee, the United Nations must translate the UNSDCF into action, developing a cohesive results framework that strongly links the ongoing work of the United Nations in the KSA to the priorities of the Government. This effort must also clarify strategies to bolster United Nations normative areas, including human rights, youth, gender, accessibility, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and environmental concerns. The results framework, which will be reviewed annually, will provide the basis for annual monitoring and reporting, as well as act as a mechanism for identifying gaps in actions that will need to be addressed in order to achieve planned results and outcomes.

In conjunction with strengthened engagement through the UNSDCF, the United Nations will need

to translate the global sustainable development agenda—to be further articulated at the SDG Summit in September 2023 and the Summit of the Future in September 2024—into tangible advocacy and action. While many of core areas of the global agenda; particularly climate & environment, human rights, education, food systems, energy transition, human mobility, financing for development, and gender, disability and youth are already being addressed by the United Nations, much remains to be done to ensure that we are providing focused advocacy and support to the Government of the KSA as it shapes its engagement with the global agenda.

To advance its support to the next stage, the United Nations in the KSA's existing partnerships strategy, now in place for almost three years, will need to be reviewed and revised, taking into account the challenges and opportunities that attend the implementation of the UNSDCF. Such a revision will help strengthen and deepen our partnerships with the Government of the KSA, civil society, and the private sector in support of the SDGs. Key partnership priorities for 2023 include the launch of the Academia Network described in 'The Role of Saudi Universities in Advancing the SDGs and Vision 2030' and the development of a clear strategy regarding SDG localisation.



➤ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

With special thanks to the contestants who submitted entries to United Nation's photography competition for Saudi Arabia's Founding Day 2023. The photo entries highlight the role of culture and heritage as enablers to sustainable development and Agenda 2030.

- ◆ Abdelsattar Aldabis
- ◆ Al Baraa Hassan Saeed
- ◆ Amer Ali Khubrani
- ◆ Imad Baokad
- ◆ Mansour Mohsen
- ◆ Mohamed Omer
- ◆ Mohamed Jassam
- ◆ Najla AlKhalifa
- ◆ Oleh Yerus
- ◆ Shirmammad Mammadov

Photo by
Oleh Yerus





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