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INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION



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Evaluability Assessment: UNIDO's contribution to SDG9

Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight

**OFFICE OF EVALUATION AND INTERNAL OVERSIGHT
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION UNIT**

Evaluability Assessment:

UNIDO's contribution to SDG9



**UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION**

Vienna, May 2024

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Abstract

This report summarizes the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Evaluability Assessment (EA) conducted by the Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight, through its Independent Evaluation Unit (EIO/IEU), to determine the feasibility of evaluating the United Nations Industrial Development Organization's (UNIDO) contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 9 (SDG9) reliably and credibly. The assessment focused on three aspects: the presence of a clear theory of change, the availability and quality of data, and the appropriateness of timing and institutional resources for evaluation.

The assessment identified gaps and areas for improvement, including weaknesses in UNIDO's logical model and results framework, underreporting of its SDG contributions, and the need for clearer definitions and focus on UNIDO's impact. There is a disconnect between SDG targets and UNIDO's measurement of results and performance.

The evaluation of UNIDO's contributions to the SDGs is deemed useful and relevant. The findings and lessons learned from SDG evaluations are valuable for organizational learning and of strategic interest to UNIDO and its constituents.

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Glossary of Evaluation-Related Terms

Term	Definition
Assumptions	A set of (untested) factors and beliefs that form the basis of the intervention logic, and factors or risks, which affect its relevance, progress or success. Assumptions are the conditions necessary for the cause-and-effect relationships between the different levels of results (i.e. to move from activities to outputs, outputs to outcomes, and outcomes to impacts).
Baseline	The situation, prior to an intervention, against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made.
Coherence	The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution. The extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention, and vice versa.
Effect	Intended or unintended change due - directly or indirectly - to an intervention.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention were or are expected to be achieved.
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.
Environmental and social safeguards (ESS)	The extent to which environmental, climate change and social risks and impacts of a UNIDO product, service or process have been assessed and addressed (in line with respective administrative issuances).
Evaluand	The object of an evaluation, typically an intervention, organizational programme of work, or system.
Gender mainstreaming	The extent to which an adequate gender analysis has been conducted for a UNIDO product, service or process, its findings have been included in its design and monitoring and reporting data is sex-disaggregated where feasible.
Impact	Positive and negative, primary and secondary, intended and non-intended, directly and indirectly, long-term effects produced by a development intervention.
Indicator	Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor. Means by which a change will be measured.
Intervention	An external action to assist a national effort to achieve specific development goals.
Lessons learned	Generalizations based on evaluation experiences that abstract from specific to broader circumstances. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design, and implementation that affect performance, outcome, and impact.
Logframe (logical framework approach)	Management tools used most often at the project level. It involves identifying strategic elements (activities, outputs, outcomes, impact) and their causal relationships, indicators, and the assumptions or risks that may influence success and failure. It thus facilitates the designing, planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation of a development cooperation intervention. System based on MBO (management by objectives) also called RBM (results-based management) principles.
Means of verification	Data sources for indicators; reliable and cost-effective.
Outcome	The achieved or likely short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs.
Outputs	The products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes.
Progress to impact	Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended, including redirecting trajectories of

	transformational process and the extent to which conditions for trajectory change are being put into place.
Quality	Products, services and processes being free of deficiencies or, in other words, satisfactory in terms of meeting established requirements (i.e. principles, standards and criteria).
Recommendations	Proposals aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, quality, or objectives; and/or at the reallocation of resources.
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donor's policies. Note: Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances.
Replication	Initiatives are reproduced/adopted in other geographical areas or regions.
Result	Specific and measurable change (output, outcome and impact) that is derived from a cause-and-effect relationship. The causality relationship between the changes is as important as the results themselves as it reflects the theory of change (see below) and the roles of UNIDO and its partners.
Results-Based Management (RBM)	A management strategy – at project and programme, portfolio, organizational, country, and global levels – based on managing for the achievement of intended results within a given context by integrating a results philosophy and principles into all aspects of management and by integrating good practices and lessons learned from past performance into management decision-making.
Results chain	The causal sequence for a development intervention that stipulates the necessary sequence to achieve desired results – beginning with inputs, moving through activities and outputs, and culminating in individual outcomes and those that influence outcomes for the community, goal/impacts and feedback. It is based on a theory of change, including underlying assumptions.
Review	A systematic and evidence-based self-assessment of the performance of a programme or project, aiming at determining performance against established criteria. It can be conducted internally, i.e. by personnel directly involved in a programme or project, or externally, i.e. by personnel hired specifically to conduct the review, whereby the overall responsibility for the review rests with the programme or project management. Reviews can be carried out at different stages of the programme or project life cycle, i.e. for programmes and projects with start and end dates as mid-term reviews (MTRs) and terminal self-evaluations, and for open-ended programmes periodically.
Risks	Factors, normally outside the scope of an intervention, which may affect the achievement of an intervention's objectives.
Scale-up	Scale-up is defined as the multiplication of an achieved result from an intervention, in which a greater number of beneficiaries (people or institutions) benefit more lastingly from the results. The scaling-up process may be: a) horizontal, expanding geographical reach to cover more people through replication and adaptation; and/or b) vertical, expanding institutional reach to guide principles of practice through mainstreaming. Scaling-up of results may require an integrated approach of horizontal and vertical scaling-up
Sustainability	The continuation of benefits from an intervention, after the development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.
Target group	The specific individuals or organizations for whose benefit an intervention is undertaken.
Theory of change	Theory of change or programme theory is similar to a logic model but includes key assumptions behind the causal relationships and sometimes the major factors (internal and external to the intervention) likely to influence the outcomes.

Executive Summary

The Evaluability Assessment (EA) conducted by the Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight (EIO) aims to determine the feasibility of evaluating the United Nations Industrial Development Organization's (UNIDO) contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular to SDG9, reliably and credibly.

The assessment focuses on key aspects related to the UNIDO's theory of change and the respective availability and quality of data and evidence. Through an extensive document review and key informant interviews, the EA identifies gaps and related areas for improvement for further management consideration.

This EA would also inform the development of the new MTPF 2026-2029.

Key Findings

Adequacy of UNIDO's Theory of Change (ToC) to evaluate its SDG9 contribution: The Independent Thematic Evaluation (ITE) of the UNIDO Medium-term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2018-2021 identified weaknesses in the logical model and results framework, highlighting the need for clearer definitions of results and outcomes. The ITE recommended that UNIDO clarify the distinction between context and UNIDO's actual contribution and ensure that the results framework focuses on UNIDO's impact. The Synthesis Evaluation report emphasized the underreporting of UNIDO's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and recommended systematic identification, evidence collection, and reporting on UNIDO's SDG contributions. A mapping study confirmed positive causal links between UNIDO's Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) approach and the SDGs, providing evidence for UNIDO's SDG Mapping Methodology and the integration of normative aspects in its interventions.

Data availability and quality of data: There is a disconnect between the SDG targets at the IRPF Level 1 and ISID Level 2 targets in measuring UNIDO's results and performance. While UNIDO does not report directly to Integrated Results Programme Framework (IRPF) Level 1 targets, it collects data from national statistics offices on the relevant targets for which it is a custodian. There is no quantifiable direct causal link between UNIDO's Level 2 and Level 1 targets, but qualitative data sources can help explain the connection to the SDGs. Internal data sources include UNIDO's ERP system, SDG9 progress reports, statistical yearbooks, UNIDO annual reports, and industrial development reports. External data sources include countries' voluntary national reviews, analysis of speeches by high-level officials, Industrial Development Board statements, the Secretary-General's biennial report on Industrial Development Cooperation, and UNGA and UNIDO GC resolutions.

Usefulness and use of an SDG evaluation: When evaluating UNIDO's contributions to the SDGs, key issues to address include UNIDO's positioning vis-à-vis member states' needs, collaboration with other UN agencies, coherence of internal and external work processes and intervention approaches, and results attribution. Member states have requested regular reporting from UNIDO on its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is a consensus within the UN System, as attested by the recent creation of the inter-agency Global SDGs Synthesis Coalition, that the findings and lessons learned from SDG related evaluations are valuable for organizational learning.

Key Conclusions

The UNIDO Theory of Change (ToC) provides a foundation for understanding the relationship between programmes and their intended outcomes and impact. However, currently, there is limited factual evidence to articulate UNIDO's contribution to impact and SDG targets. As Member States call for an acceleration of SDG implementation, UNIDO needs to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness and coherence of its programmes in achieving the SDGs.

Areas for Attention

The next MTPF 2026-2029 process should consider the findings from this assessment, for which UNIDO should further consider to:

- Establish an institutional mechanism to collect and record data on programme activities, focusing on outcomes and impact.
- Review and validate the UNIDO Theory of Change (ToC) to strengthen linkages and clarify expected outcomes and impacts.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the evaluability assessment (EA) is to determine to what extent UNIDO's contribution to SDG9 can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion. More specifically, the EA will examine the following inter-related aspects of evaluability¹:

- (i) Whether there is a logical and clear theory of change that spells out how and under what conditions interventions influence particular processes of change that contribute to SDGs?
- (ii) Whether UNIDO has sufficient information and the quality, scope, and depth of data required to conduct the evaluation. Which data, including progress reports, annual reports, internal and external data sets, policy, and academic literature, are available that can be used in assessing the merit and worth of the intervention?

This EA will inform on gaps and areas for improvement to consider before undertaking an evaluation of UNIDO's contribution to SDG9. The EA was conducted by EIO based on an extensive document review and a few key informant interviews.

2. Background and Context

2.1 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9 and its relation to other SDGs

Sustainable Development Goal 9: "Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation" comprises eight targets and 12 indicators. SDG 9 covers measures of sustainable infrastructure and sustainable industrialization. It includes access to financial services and enhancement of scientific research. Means of implementation are sustainable infrastructure and technology development, support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and improved access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). SDG 9's lead coordinating agencies are UNIDO, UN-DESA, ITU, UNCTAD and the World Bank.²

SDG 9 addresses core economic processes and the structural transformation underlying sustainable development. Multiple other SDGs are inherently connected: Progress on SDG 9 is essential for access to water and sanitation (SDG 6), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), electricity (SDG 7), the creation of full, productive and decent jobs and inclusive economic growth (SDG 8), including the provision of choices for women to participate in the labour force as entrepreneurs or innovators (SDG 5). Inclusive and sustainable industrial development aims at reducing poverty (SDG 1) and ending hunger (SDG 2).

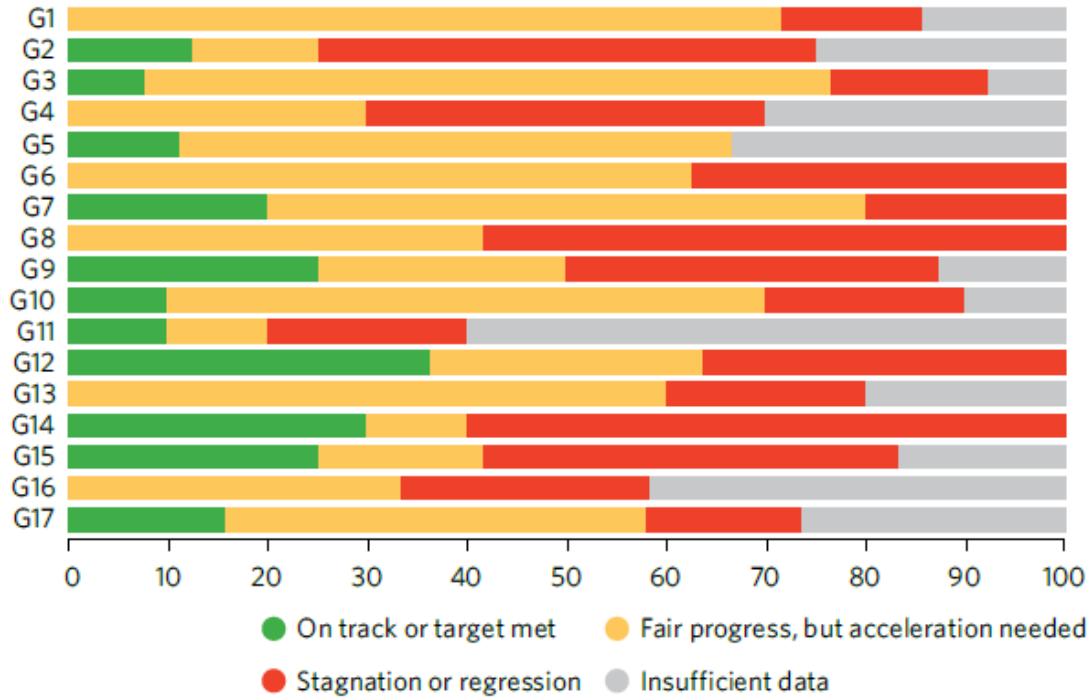
For developing countries, industrialization implies a structural transformation of the economy from a traditional agricultural and primary to a modern industry-based one. This transformation must account for social progress and the impacts on the planet, balancing industrial advancement and growth with sustainable production and consumption (SDG 12), stewardship of the climate (SDG 13) and the health of the oceans (SDG 14) and the land (SDG 15). Innovation and technological developments that arise from the process of industrialization contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development by making production processes cleaner, promoting a circular economy, supporting renewable energy production, and innovating green product development.

¹ Evaluability Assessments in Austrian development cooperation, Guidance Document, March 2022, p.7 ([link](#), accessed April 2024)

² UN-DESA/UNIDO SDG9 review concept note, 2023

As last year’s Sustainable Development Summit marked the midpoint in the implementation of Agenda 2030, progress made halfway was measured. The 2023 SDG Progress Chart highlighted a concerning development at the midpoint: 48 per cent of all SDGs are moderately or severely off track and 37 per cent stagnate or even regress.³

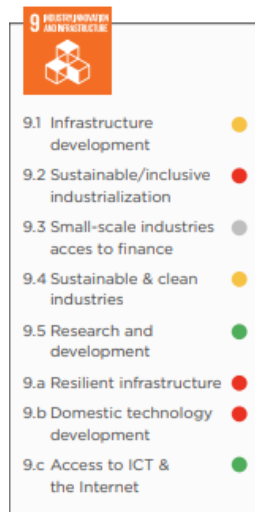
Chart 1: Sustainable Development Goals Progress



Source: United Nations Secretariat, 2023

Progress on each of the SDG9 targets shows stagnation/regression for sustainable and inclusive industrialization (9.2) and fair progress for sustainable and clean industries (9.4).

Chart 2: SDG9 progress by target



Source: United Nations Secretariat, 2023

³ The Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2023. United Nations, 2023 ([link](#), accessed April 2024)

2.2 UNIDO's organizational Theory of Change (ToC)

UNIDO's organizational ToC, as presented in the Medium-term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2022-2025⁴, combines a troika of tools that form the basis for UNIDO's Results-based Management (RBM) architecture and adopts an actor-based, behavioural changes model. The three tools are the Medium-term Programme Framework (MTPF), the Integrated Results and Performance Framework (IRPF), and the Programme and Budgets (P&B), which applies results-based budgeting (RBB) principles.

As the Independent Thematic Evaluation of UNIDO's MTPF 2018-2021 states: "These tools have helped establish a clearer results chain between UNIDO's work and its expected development results at global and country level, and its organizational performance."⁵

4 IDB.49/8-PBC.37/8 Medium-term programme framework 2022-2025. Integration and scale-up to build back better

5 Independent Thematic Evaluation of the UNIDO Medium-term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2018-2021, Vienna 2022

Diagram 1: UNIDO's organizational theory of change as depicted in IDB.49/8-PBC.37/8 Medium-term programme framework 2022-2025

CONTRIBUTING TO ISID AND THE SDGS: THEORY OF CHANGE OF UNIDO

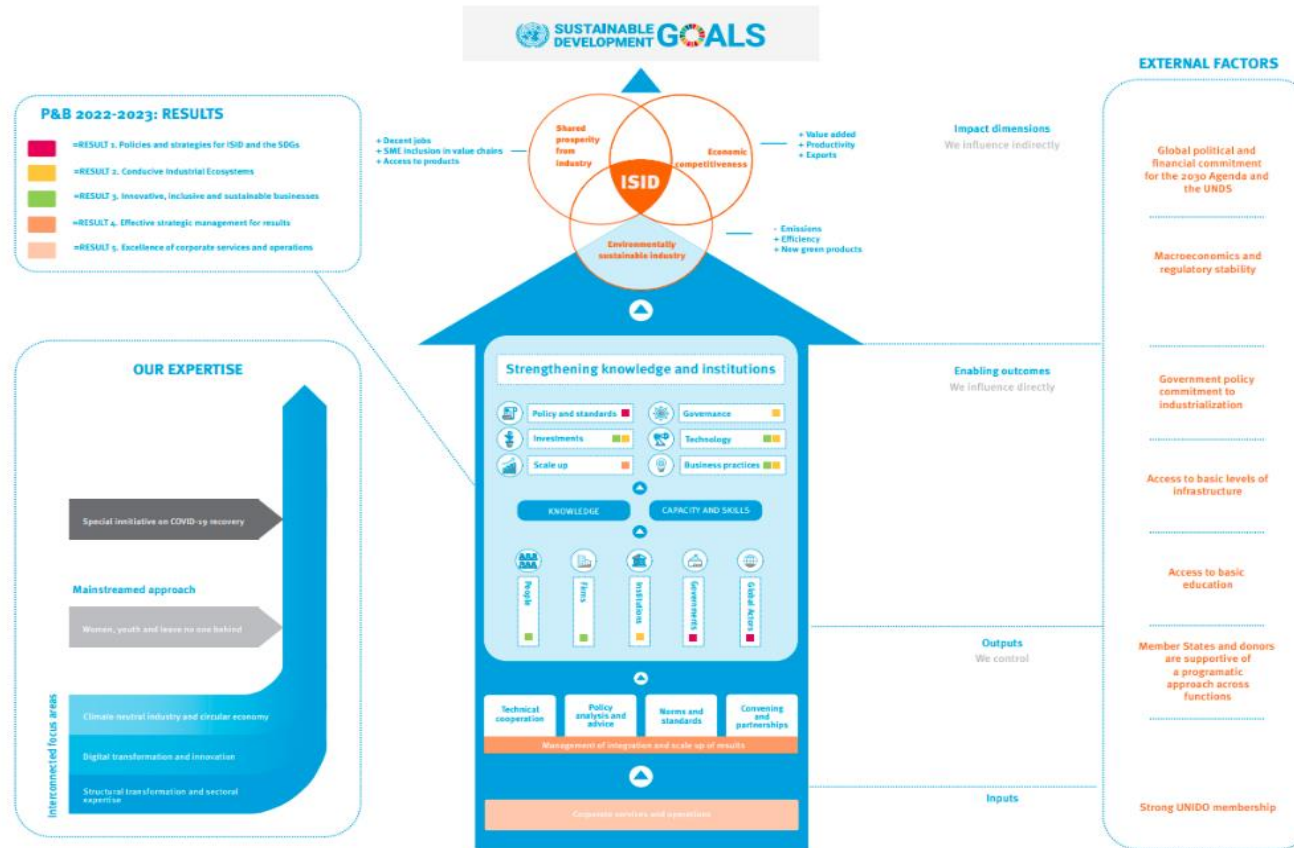


Figure 1. Theory of Change of UNIDO

The results chain at the higher level is narrated as follows⁶: Empowered with knowledge, capacity and skills (on the three main interconnected focus areas, namely, digital transformation and innovation; climate-neutral industry and the circular economy; and, structural transformation and sectoral expertise) actors (people, firms, institutions, governments, and global actors, also categorized as micro, meso and macro level) change their business practices, innovate and diffuse technologies, mobilize investments, strengthen governance systems, and introduce policies and standards for ISID (five behavioural change areas). The population of all actors will scale up the accumulated behavioural changes, thereby driving systemic transformation.

“Strengthening knowledge and institutions,” which identifies the ToC's outcome level, is “at the centre of the UNIDO contribution story to ISID and the SDGs, and therefore represents the main evidence of the Organization's value addition. It is at the level of the five behavioural change areas and one cross-cutting area where UNIDO can trigger a change to have an impact on inclusive and sustainable industrial development and consequently the SDGs. Advancing the three ISID impact dimensions, i.e., economic competitiveness, shared prosperity from industry, and environmentally sustainable industry enables countries to shift to inclusive and sustainable industrial development pathways. This shift leads to impacts such as job creation, value addition and reduced emissions and drives sustainable development through inclusive and sustainable industrialization, thereby contributing to SDG9 and other SDGs towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The impact contribution story of UNIDO’s programmatic delivery is compounded by the diversity of the contextual environment of UNIDO interventions. The IRPF places UNIDO-related SDG indicators at Level 1: Global industrial development context, and ISID and related SDG indicators at Level 2: Country and global results with UNIDO support. The impact indicators at levels 1 and 2 are categorized by the three strategic priorities/impact dimensions where level 2 also includes outcome indicators for strategic priority area: Strengthening knowledge and institutions⁷.

Table 1: UNIDO’s four strategic priority areas’ impact (and outcome) indicators:

Strategic Priority	Indicators
Strategic Priority 1: Advancing Economic Competitiveness	SDG 9.2.1: Manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP and per capita
	SDG 9.b.1: Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added
	ECO. 1: Number of firms with economic gains (additional sales, savings)
	ECO. 2: Number of firms with improved labour productivity
	ECO. 3: Number of firms with an increase in exports
Strategic Priority 2: Creating Shared Prosperity	SDG 9.2.2: Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment
	SDG 9.3.1: Proportion of small-scale industries in total industry value added
	SDG 9.3.2: Proportion of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit
	SOC. 1: Number of additional jobs created and jobs retained
	SOC. 2: Number of SMEs with increased inclusion in value chains

⁶ MTFP_v.8indd.indd (unido.org)

⁷ GC.18/CRP.4 Integrated results and performance framework: Updated indicators and definitions

	SOC. 3: Number of people living under poverty line who gain access to quality assured products
Strategic Priority 3: Safeguarding the Environment	SDG 9.4.2: CO2 emissions per unit of value added
	ENV. 1: Cumulative reduction of CO2eq emissions
	ENV. 2: Cumulative tons of pollutants reduced or phased out
	ENV. 3: Cumulative improved energy efficiency
	ENV. 4: Cumulative improved material efficiency
	ENV. 5: Number of new or improved green products made available or used
Strategic Priority 4: Strengthening Knowledge and Institutions	BUS. 1: Cumulative/Annual number of firms with improved management practices
	BUS. 2: Cumulative/ Annual number of actors developing new products
	BUS. 3: Cumulative/Annual number of established start-ups
	TEC. 1: Number of new technologies developed or adapted
	TEC. 2: Number of countries showing the adoption of new technologies
	TEC. 3: Number of new technologies
	POL 1.: Cumulative number of new or revised policies adopted by policymakers
	POL. 2: Cumulative number of new standards adopted or implemented
	POL. 3: Number of guidelines adopted by relevant actors
	INV. 1: Number of investment-ready proposals elaborated
	INV. 2: Number of projects or businesses financed
	INV. 3: Value (\$) of new investments leveraged
	GOV. 1: Number of institutions established or strengthened
	GOV. 2: Number of actors participating in enhanced collaboration settings (clusters, networks)
	SCA. 1: Percentage of UNIDO interventions with demonstrated results at scale
	KASA. 1: Number of actors gaining awareness/ knowledge on UNIDO knowledge areas*
	KASA. 2: Number of actors gaining skills on UNIDO knowledge areas
	REACT. 1: Percentage of actors satisfied with UNIDO interventions
REA. 1: Number of actors reached (by kind of actors*)	
REA. 2: Number of actors engaged (by kind of actor)	

2.3 Custodian agency for SDG9 indicators and SDG reporting

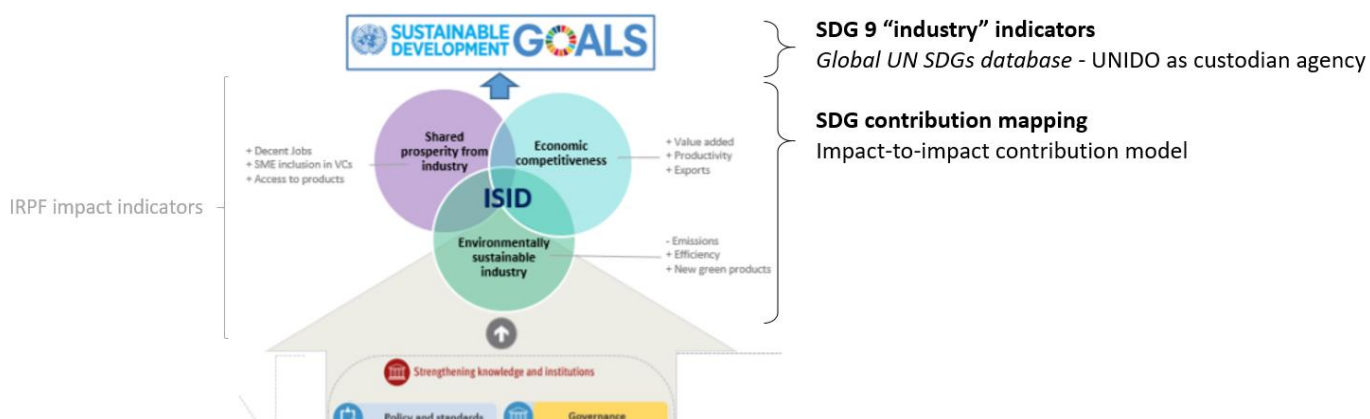
UNIDO is the custodian for six SDG 9 indicators, namely, SDG 9.2.1, SDG 9.2.2, SDG 9.3.1, SDG 9.3.2, SDG 9.4.1, and SDG 9.b.1. These indicators are collected through official national statistics and are therefore exogenous to UNIDO. UNIDO's IRPF Level 1 reporting is the responsibility of the Statistics Division. The highest level that UNIDO project managers can report on in the ERP System is at Level 2 for ISID impact indicators. The responsibility to meet SDG targets lies with the countries, not the custodian UN agencies.

UNIDO, in 2021, developed an IRPF-based methodology to be able to map SDG contribution⁸. The below figure illustrates the impact level of the UNIDO Theory of Change and how ISID impact indicators and their results areas are applied to map SDG contribution.

⁸ Results-based SDG Mapping. A methodological note on the UNIDO approach. November 2021.

Diagram 2: Theory of Change higher level illustrating impact indicators as depicted in UNIDO’s methodological note on results-based SDG mapping

SDGs in the UNIDO MTPF/IRPF Theory of Change



UNIDO’s IRPF establishes the logical link and contribution channels that exist and aligns SDG 9 and IRPF impact indicators and results areas, as illustrated in the below table.

Table 1: SDG9 and IRPF impact indicators and result area as presented in UNIDO’s methodological note on results-based SDG mapping

SDG 9 “industry” indicators		Selected IRPF impact indicators	IRPF results area
9.2.1 Manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP and per capita	➡	ECO.1: Number of firms with economic gains ECO.3: Number of firms with an increase in exports	Economic gains Exports
9.2.2 Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment	➡	SOC.1: Number of additional jobs created and jobs retained	Decent jobs
9.3.1 Proportion of small-scale industries in total industry value added	➡	SOC.2: Number of SMEs with increased inclusion in value chains	SMEs inclusion
9.3.2 Proportion of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit	➡	INV.1*: Number of investment-ready proposals elaborated INV.2*: Number of projects or businesses financed INV.3*: Value (\$) of new investments leveraged	Investments
9.4.1 CO2 emission per unit of value added	➡	ENV.1: Cumulative reduction of CO2eq emissions	Reduced emissions
9.b.1 Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added	➡	ECO.2: Number of firms with improved labour productivity	Productivity
* Outcome indicators			

The mapping model uses the IRPF results-chain approach and bases its methodology on impact-to-SDG as ISID is considered an integral element of SDG 9 (sustainable industrialization) and SDGs are the highest-level, i.e., impact-level, results for UNIDO.

Hence, SDGs and ISID are linked at the impact level. ISID impact results are directly influenced by outcomes and outputs.

The UNIDO mapping model therefore links organization/country/programme/project impact results to SDGs. The below table shows the basic mapping matrix with nine ISID impact areas drawn from the IRPF against UNIDO-relevant SDGs.

Diagram 3: ISID impact dimensions and result areas mapped against SDGs as presented in UNIDO’s methodological note on results-based SDG mapping

ISID Impact dimensions and results areas		Selected Sustainable Development Goals			
		SDG1: No poverty	SDG2: Zero hunger	..	SDG16: Peace and justice
Economic components	Increased economic gains				
	Productivity				
	Exports				
Social components	Decent jobs				
	SMEs				
	Access to goods				
Environmental components	Reduced emissions				
	Increased efficiency				
	Green goods and services				

Data collection for mapping is crucial and draws on UNIDO’s normative, policy and statistical work and ISID-related economic literature as well as programmatic evidence from UNIDO’s development cooperation interventions, mostly gathered through evaluation findings.

3. Findings

3.1 Adequacy of UNIDO’s ToC to evaluate its SDG9 contribution

As stated in the Independent Thematic Evaluation of the UNIDO Medium-term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2018-2021: “The logical model underlying the overall results framework (MTPF, IRPF and P&B) still shows important weaknesses as no clear definition of results and outcomes can be found especially at higher levels of the theory of change. Level 1 results essentially describe the state of the world. There is some recognition of this in the IRPF, which states the level 1 results under the heading “Level 1: Global industrial development context”. As the context, it is not really a UNIDO result. It is the background for UNIDO’s contribution. Level 1 results should be the degree of change to this situation that UNIDO seeks to make.” (ITE, page 15). The ITE further suggests that “the results framework should only contain that slice of the change that relates to UNIDO’s contribution,” and further that UNIDO should clarify what constitutes context and what is a result of UNIDO’s work.

The recent Synthesis Evaluation report⁹ found that UNIDO's contribution to SDGs is underreported in evaluations and presents a missed opportunity for UNIDO to demonstrate its contribution to this important priority. The evaluation furthermore clarified that for UNIDO to undertake an evaluation measuring UNIDO's actual contribution to any SDG, impact assessments would have to be undertaken for each project. UNIDO usually stops at assessing the likelihood of impact. The evaluation furthermore suggested that "UNIDO should systematically identify, collect evidence, and report on its contribution to the SDGs ...," and highlighted UNIDO's IRPF-based SDG mapping methodology as a tool to improve reporting.

To verify UNIDO's contribution claim from ISID to the SDGs a 2020 mapping study titled "Assessment of UNIDO contributions to sustainable development goals – as reported in evaluation studies" looked at the relationship between each of the nine impact results areas and all SDGs and concluded that there are "positive causal links between ISID and SDGs"¹⁰. The study provided some evidence of the factors at play and made a compelling case for integrating normative aspects in UNIDO's interventions. This study, which provided programmatic evidence for assessing UNIDO's contribution to SDG9, also served as the basis for UNIDO's SDG Mapping Methodology. UNIDO's IRPF-based methodology for SDG mapping establishes that it is "possible to draw conclusions on how UNIDO impact influences SDG 9 and other goals."

In March 2023, the mid-term update of the MTPF 2022-2025¹¹ reflected the strategic direction of a new Director General. The mid-term update focussed on "both the internal organizational governance and on the organizational reform and thematic priorities of the Director General" (IDB.51/10, para 15). The three new thematic areas:

- Food security and agri-business;
- Sustainable access to energy and industrial decarbonization; and,
- Sustainable supply chains and sustainability standards;

The mid-term update further emphasized an evolving organizational context and ambition and further addressed UNIDO's contribution claim from ISID to the SDGs. Paragraph 30 states: "The engagement with these forums [G20, G7, BRICS, Clean Energy Ministerial, HLPF, etc.] allows UNIDO to support the prioritization of inclusive and sustainable industrial development matters in the global development cooperation debate. Such a global public good function contributes to shaping global and national policies for sustainable industrial development, and to consolidate its positioning within and beyond the United Nations System. In turn, this improved visibility allows UNIDO to better access opportunities and attract partners and resources towards sustainable industrialization programmes at the country level."

At the time of this Evaluability Assessment, UNIDO is in the middle of an on-going organizational reform, which aims to "result in a stronger focus on results on the ground, with clearer orientation towards results, internal and external accountability for contributions to national needs in sustainable industrial development, and with capacities, skills and resources better aligned with the achievement of SDG9" (IDB.51/10; para 34).

⁹ Synthesis of UNIDO Independent Evaluations 2018-2022, Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight, 2023

¹⁰ Montague, Steve. Assessment of UNIDO contributions to sustainable development goals – as reported in evaluation studies, 2020

¹¹ IDB.51/10-PBC.39/10. Medium-term programme framework 2022-2025: midterm update, UNIDO, 14 March 2023.

3.2 Data availability and quality of data

There is a disconnect between the SDG targets at IRPF Level 1 and the ISID Level 2 targets, which measure UNIDO's results and performance, considering that the UN in general is an enabler of countries to meet the SDG targets. As such UNIDO does not report to IRPF Level 1 targets but collects data from national statistics offices on those six targets for which it is a custodian. No direct causal link is quantifiable between UNIDO's Level 2 and Level 1 targets. SDG targets are for UNIDO a measure of relevance and context. However, there are qualitative data sources that can help explain a link to SDGs.

Internal quantitative and qualitative data include:

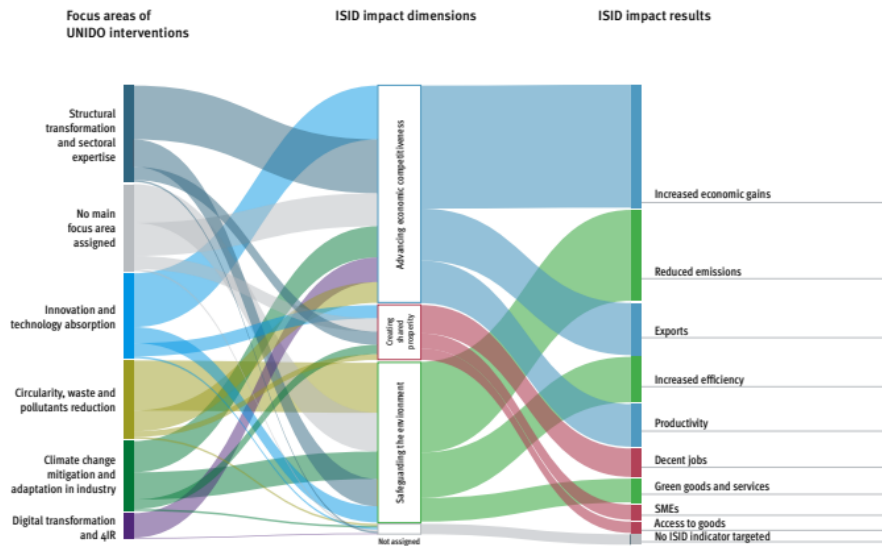
1. ERP-System. Since 2016 when the IRPF was first introduced its integration into UNIDO's ERP system has been fine-tuned. UNIDO collects data up to IRPF level 2 on ISID impact indicators.
2. SDG9 progress reports issued biennially by UNIDO and co-custodians, namely, the International Energy Agency, The International Labour Organization, and the World Bank, on industry-related SDG9 targets.
3. Statistical Yearbooks
4. UNIDO Annual Reports
5. Industrial Development Reports

External data sources include:

1. Countries' voluntary national reviews (VNRs) as presented during the HLPFs. Analyses are not done systematically. When resources allow, UNIDO's New York Office has monitored VNRs for industrial development content. Such systematic analysis could provide insights into the uptake of SDG9 and inclusive and sustainable industrialization priorities and provide quantitative and qualitative data.
2. Analysis of speeches by heads of state, heads of government or ministers during the UNGA general debate with a view to establishing country priorities around SDG9 and inclusive and sustainable industrialization.
3. Industrial Development Board's statements to the HLPF.
4. Secretary General's biennial report on Industrial Development Cooperation.
5. UNGA and UNIDO GC resolutions on industrial development issues.

Applying UNIDO's SDG mapping methodology, the diagram below illustrates the current reporting of the contribution of UNIDO to ISID and the SDGs¹².

¹² UNIDO Annual Report, Annex 1, 2021



It would be expected that IRPF data coverage and quality improve over time so that UNIDO’s SDG contribution could be more accurately studied and determined. This is provided that the IRPF, which currently does not provide a comprehensive measure of UNIDO programmatic activities, will not be adjusted to the new realities introduced by the current UNIDO management.

Yet, if all stays as is, the use of UNIDO’s SDG mapping model could open up significant opportunities to improve monitoring and reporting on SDGs. However, project managers, who may select IRPF impact indicators for their projects and programmes in the ERP System, are not obliged to do so. Hence, it can be assumed that there is massive underreporting at the impact level. Furthermore, data before 2016 is not systematically stored in the ERP System.

Future strategic evaluations can provide an opportunity to collect data and evidence of the impact of UNIDO’s work around key functions and priority programmes. Below are two examples of what evidence would be required:

Example 1: UNIDO prioritizes its normative role. The normative role (e.g., IDR, GA resolutions, policy advice documents; SG reports, high-level forum policy statements) is linked to the convening and partnership functions (UNGA, HLPF, GC/IDB, GMIS) as well as knowledge management.

How has UNIDO been integrating these functions to scale up results at the impact level? E.g., how relevant are UNGA side events and meetings to inform national policymakers on good policy practices in UNIDO’s areas of expertise? How are countries using UNIDO’s knowledge products and policy advice to engage with stakeholders nationally and internationally to effect change in governance, investments, standard-setting, etc? If this change happens, it should show up in e.g., countries’ VNRs or statements during the General debate at the UNGA. Is this the case? How often do countries refer to one of the impact dimensions of ISID? How many resolutions at global policy-making organs are on ISID-related measures? Who keeps track in UNIDO? Do we have that data in IRPF?

Example 2: UNIDO’s Quality Infrastructure portfolio was established in 1996 and has since grown into a globally recognized UNIDO flagship programme.

Is there enough quantitative and qualitative data to assess the key causal links in a country from a situation where lack of product and management standards' adoption and/or lack of a quality infrastructure hinder the growth of firms or access to local, regional and global value chain to a situation where the UNIDO intervention has shifted behaviours to enable job creation, economic competitiveness in a sustainable manner? Can we find evidence of whether this shift has had any impact on meeting SDG9 targets? If so, how can we further upscale those programmes?

3.3 Usefulness and use of SDG evaluations

If a key assumption is that all of what UNIDO does somehow relates to one SDG or another, the central issues to address in an evaluation may relate to UNIDO's positioning vis-à-vis member states' needs and collaboration with other UN agencies, coherence of internal and external work processes and intervention approaches, or results attribution. UNIDO's member states have requested UNIDO to regularly report on its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹³. The Political Declaration adopted at the recent 2023 SDG Summit states in para 28¹⁴:

"We take note of the Secretary-General's special edition progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Global Sustainable Development Report, recognizing the value of evidence-based approaches to evaluate progress to date towards the SDGs."

In the draft decision on the scope of the Summit of the Future to be held in September 2024, the co-facilitators highlight the following areas of the 2030 Agenda for inclusion¹⁵:

"(b) Also decides that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its pledge to leave no one behind, the commitment to end poverty and hunger everywhere, to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources and creating conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities; as well as the realization of the human rights of all, the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls will be taken into account in the relevant chapters of the Pact of the Future;"

It is reasonable to expect that the UN Development System will be encouraged to report on progress made towards the SDGs covering those areas. As industry, innovation and infrastructure are not highlighted, a case could be made to highlight SDG9's relevance and/or to emphasize inclusive and sustainable industrial development's contribution to the emphasized areas falling under various SDGs.

In light of these inter-governmental negotiations focusing on the second half of the 2030 Agenda, evaluating UN agency contributions to SDGs has entered the agendas of most UN agencies. At the recent 2024 EvalWeek of the United Nations Evaluation Group, this item enjoyed great interest from participating UN agencies. FAO and UNDP took the lead in sharing their lessons learnt concerning the conduct of complex SDG evaluations.

¹³ General Conference resolutions GC.15/Res.1 and GC.16/Res. 2, Programme and Budget Committee conclusion 2016/6 and Industrial Development Board decision IDB.44/Dec.9

¹⁴ United Nations. A/HLPF/2023/1. Political Declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly. New York, September 2023

¹⁵ President of the General Assembly, 20 August 2023. SG Letterhead (un.org)

In this regard, UNIDO EIO's active membership in the Global SDGs Synthesis Coalition, which aims to synthesize rigorous and evaluative evidence organized around the five pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals - People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership, deserves mention. This Coalition brings together more than 40 UN entities, as well as several bilateral and multilateral organizations, and global evaluation and synthesis bodies and networks. EIO is co-leading the "Prosperity" Pillar which includes SDGs 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. The original objective was to complete all five syntheses in time for the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024. So far, only one synthesis on People has been completed.

As an SDG evaluation is a complex process, the consideration of which approach to use is important. FAO, in their SDG 2 evaluation, adopted a formative lens.

The following list of questions from a formative evaluation approach which is drawn from FAO's semi-standard list of SDG evaluation questions, and which provides an insight into the evaluation criteria that were selected:

1. Has UNIDO positioned itself to respond to the most pressing needs under the SDG9?
 - 1.1 Relevance: Is UNIDO doing the right things to maximize its contribution to SDG9?
 - 1.2 Strategic positioning: How is UNIDO positioned to support member states in achieving SDG9?
2. Has UNIDO organized its working processes to best contribute to SDG9?
 - 2.1 Internal coherence: To what extent are UNIDO's activities coherently coming together to maximize its contributions in pursuit of SDG9?
 - 2.2 External coherence (partnerships and collaborations): Has UNIDO made the most of potential synergies with partners?
 - 2.3 Use of 2030 Agenda principles: To what extent has UNIDO adopted, adapted, and used the fundamental principles of the 2030 Agenda in its work?
3. What results can be attributed to UNIDO's work?
 - 3.1 Effectiveness: What have been some immediate results achieved at country, regional and global levels, relating to SDG9?
 - 3.2 Impact and sustainability: Are there indications that UNIDO might contribute to transformational and long-term changes towards SDG9?

Considering the various initiatives from within the UN System there seems to be consensus that the findings and lessons learnt from SDG evaluations are useful and valuable for organizational learning but also of high strategic interest for internal and external constituents. However, the feasibility of conducting SDG evaluations depends on the availability of institutional mechanisms and systematic mainstreaming of data and evidence collection within organizational activities, programmes and projects.

4. Conclusion

The EA finds that the UNIDO ToC provides a basis to explain the relationship between programmes and their intended outcomes and impact. However, given the ongoing organizational reform and the new thematic priorities of the Director General, the Organization would need to undertake further steps to redefine and realign its strategy and tools that form the basis for UNIDO's Results-based Management (RBM) architecture.

It is expected that a more systematic data collection and monitoring adopting the IRPF framework will facilitate the estimation of ISID-SDG links from programmatic evidence. At this point, however, there is little or no factual evidence to articulate UNIDO's contribution to impact and/or SDG targets.

As pressure from UN inter-governmental processes to accelerate SDG implementation increases, the UN Development System, including UNIDO, is required to step up its efforts to provide evidence-based information on how relevant, effective, coherent, impactful, and sustainable our programmes are in the achievement of the SDGs.

5. Areas for attention

The next MTPF 2026-2029 process should consider the findings from this assessment, for which UNIDO should further consider to:

- Establish an institutional mechanism to baseline, collect and record data from all related activities of UNIDO programmes and projects, with a focus on results (outcome and impact levels).
- Review/validate the UNIDO Theory of Change (ToC) by making clearer linkages and revisiting the expectations regarding anticipated outcomes and impacts.

6. Annexes

Annex 1: List of documents reviewed

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