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Evaluation of the Country Programme "Promoting and Protecting Human Rights in the DRC 2022-2024"

Evaluation Report

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Evaluation Team and Management

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An external Consultant has prepared this report. The views expressed herein are those of the Consultant and therefore do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of OHCHR.

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Table of acronyms

ACHPR: African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AfCHPR: African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights
CRSV: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSO: Civil Society Organization
DI: Disability Inclusion
DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo
FARDC: Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (Armed Forces of the DRC)
FGD: Focus Group Discussion
GE: Gender Equality
HRBA: Human Rights-Based Approach
HRD: Human Rights Defender
KII: Key Informant Interview
LNOB: Leave No One Behind
MONUSCO: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC
OHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PNC: Police Nationale Congolaise (Congolese National Police)
PWD: Person with Disability
PoC: Protection of Civilians
SDG: Sustainable Development Goal
TJ: Transitional Justice
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNJHRO: United Nations Joint Human Rights Office

Executive Summary

Programme Overview and Objectives

The DRC Core Programme aimed to reinforce the protection and promotion of human rights amidst protracted conflicts, political instability, and a shrinking civic space. The six programme pillars were designed to address priority issues in a comprehensive manner: (1) Civic space and protection of human rights defenders (HRDs), (2) Transitional justice, (3) Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), (4) Strengthening the justice sector and combating impunity, (5) Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs), and (6) Enhancing institutional capacities. The programme operated under the strategic framework of the OHCHR and aligned with the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus.

Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The purpose of the final evaluation was to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the DRC Core Programme, as well as the integration of Gender, Disability and Human rights. The evaluation covered implementation from January 2022 to December 2024, with geographic coverage including Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Kisangani, Tshikapa, Kananga, and Kolwezi. Stakeholder groups included government authorities, civil society, victims' associations, donors, and UN partners.

Methodology

The evaluation was conducted from February to April 2025 and was based on a robust methodological framework rooted in the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. It also applied an evaluation criterion unique to OHCHR, namely the integration of Gender, Disability and a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to ensure participatory, inclusive, and accountable data collection and analysis. The evaluation was led by a single independent expert, Dr. Guilain Mathe, and involved primary data collection in six provinces, including Kinshasa, Kananga, Tshikapa, Lubumbashi, Kolwezi, and Kisangani. Forty-five key informant interviews and 15 FGDs were conducted, involving OHCHR staff, national and provincial authorities, victims' groups, CSOs, donors (Sweden and Belgium), and UN partners. Secondary data included internal reports, strategic frameworks, previous evaluations, and donor reports. Gender Equality (GE), Disability Inclusion (DI), and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle were explicitly embedded in the evaluation matrix and stakeholder engagement process.

Main Findings by Evaluation Criteria

Relevance: The programme was highly relevant to national human rights priorities, OHCHR's mandate, and donor strategies. It addressed the needs of rights holders and duty bearers, particularly in crisis-affected areas.

Coherence: There was strong alignment with national frameworks and collaboration with donors, although coordination between OHCHR units and MONUSCO could be improved.

Effectiveness: The programme achieved concrete results under each pillar, despite human and financial resource constraints. Partnerships enabled outreach to vulnerable populations and legal redress in key cases.

Efficiency: Resource use was generally efficient. Flexibility and local presence supported adaptive management, but gaps in monitoring systems and staff turnover affected continuity.

Impact: The programme contributed to legal and institutional reforms, increased access to justice, and protection of civic space. Positive shifts in local engagement and rights awareness were noted.

Sustainability: National and local actors demonstrated ownership, especially through provincial justice and HRD platforms. Challenges remain in funding and institutionalization.

Gender, Disability and Human Rights Integration: The programme made notable efforts to integrate gender, disability, and human rights principles, especially through targeted interventions for women, survivors of CRSV, and persons with disabilities. However, mainstreaming across all pillars was uneven, with gaps in disaggregated data, inclusive M&E frameworks, and systematic engagement with LGBTQI+ and indigenous groups.

Key Conclusions

The OHCHR Country Programme in the DRC from 2022 to 2024 effectively addressed critical gaps in human rights protection in one of the world's most complex environments, despite a volatile and evolving operational context marked by armed conflict, civic space restrictions, and the progressive withdrawal of MONUSCO. It delivered tangible results under each thematic pillar and strengthened national and local capacities for sustained engagement. Nonetheless, the evolving security context, notably the resurgence of conflict in eastern DRC and MONUSCO's disengagement, pose new challenges for sustaining achievements. Strategic transitions, continued field presence, and strengthened partnerships will be vital for consolidating gains and advancing long-term impact.

The programme demonstrated particular strengths in its transitional justice engagement, support to human rights defenders (HRDs), and promotion of accountability for conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Its field presence, partnerships with national actors, and thematic expertise enabled both strategic influence and direct support to rights-holders. However, challenges remain in sustaining results across all pillars, strengthening gender and disability mainstreaming, and institutionalizing long-term national ownership. These conclusions reflect the synthesis of findings under all DAC criteria and the Gender, Human Rights, and Disability inclusion; and mirror the analysis presented in the body of the report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Programme Background

Brief History and Context of the Core Programme

The *OHCHR DRC Core Programme (2021–2024)* was implemented within a context marked by persistent armed conflict, shrinking civic space, systemic human rights violations, and limited institutional capacity to deliver justice and accountability in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)[1]. Building on the legacy of previous interventions and leveraging its strategic presence through the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), OHCHR sought to strengthen the national human rights protection system, increase access to justice and redress, and contribute to the consolidation of the rule of law.

The programme was officially launched in late 2021, following the endorsement of a multi-donor framework and aligned with the MONUSCO transition plan and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). It encompassed both structural interventions—such as legislative reform and institutional support—and direct field operations, including human rights monitoring, joint investigations, support to mobile courts, and engagement with civil society actors. It was implemented amid complex challenges, including the resurgence of the M23 rebellion, escalating violence by armed groups, electoral tensions, and MONUSCO's phased withdrawal.

Strategic Relevance to OHCHR Mandate and DRC Priorities

The DRC Core Programme was fully aligned with OHCHR's mandate to promote and protect human rights, support accountability, and integrate human rights into peace and development efforts. The programme responded directly to the six pillars of OHCHR's global Strategic Framework, which include: accountability, participation, non-discrimination, sustainable development, peace and security, and implementation of international human rights mechanisms.

At the national level, the programme was strategically aligned with key DRC policy frameworks, including:

- The National Transitional Justice Roadmap;
- The National Development Plan (2022–2026);
- The National Human Rights Action Plan;
- Sectoral reforms in justice, penitentiary systems, and security institutions.

The Core Programme also supported implementation of the recommendations issued by the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), treaty bodies, and special procedures, while promoting the operationalization of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and national human rights legislation.

[1] See: OHCHR and MONUSCO, *Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2022–2023)*, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/report-human-rights-situation-democratic-republic-congo-2022-2023; and United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, S/2024/242 (March 2024).

Theory of Change and Intended Results

The underlying **Theory of Change** for the Core Programme assumed that:

If national authorities are capacitated, duty bearers held accountable, laws improved, and civil society enabled to engage safely in public life; *then* the human rights situation in DRC will improve, accountability for past and ongoing violations will be strengthened, and inclusive institutions will contribute to sustainable peace and development.

The programme sought to contribute to the following **outcomes**:

1. Increased accountability for serious human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV);
2. Improved civic space and participation, including protection of human rights defenders (HRDs);
3. Greater protection and inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable populations (women, youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples);
4. Enhanced compliance of national legislation and institutions with international human rights norms;
5. Human rights mainstreamed into peace and security interventions, including through the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP);
6. Strengthened engagement with international human rights mechanisms and improved implementation of their recommendations.

These results were operationalized through a combination of legal, institutional, and grassroots interventions—ranging from joint investigations and judicial support to community consultations and advocacy for human rights-based policy reforms.

1.2 Evaluation Background

Purpose, Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

This evaluation was commissioned by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to assess the performance, relevance, and results of the *OHCHR Core Programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), 2021–2024*. The Core Programme aimed to implement OHCHR's mandate in a complex and conflict-affected context by advancing human rights protection, strengthening accountability, promoting civic space, and reinforcing national capacities for the implementation of international human rights norms.

The **purpose** of the evaluation is threefold:

- To generate credible evidence and analysis on the effectiveness, relevance, coherence, and impact of the Core Programme;
- To inform strategic decision-making for OHCHR's future programming and planning in the DRC, particularly in the context of MONUSCO's progressive disengagement and political transition;

- To enhance institutional learning and accountability vis-à-vis donors, national partners, and the UN system.

The evaluation covered the full programme period from January 2022 to December 2024, and focused on all six pillars of OHCHR's results framework:

1. Accountability
2. Participation and Civic Space
3. Non-Discrimination
4. Development and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
5. Peace and Security
6. Human Rights Mechanisms

The geographic scope included both national-level interventions and provincial activities, with field data collection in **Kinshasa, Tshikapa, Kananga, Kolwezi, Lubumbashi, and Kisangani**, as well as virtual interviews with Geneva-based staff and external stakeholders.

Intended Users and Stakeholders

The primary users of this evaluation include:

- **OHCHR Headquarters**: particularly the Programme Support and Management Services (PSMS), Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division (TESPRDD), and the Evaluation and Performance Monitoring Section (EPMS);
- **OHCHR/UNJHRO Country Office in DRC**, including the Representative, Section Chiefs, and provincial field offices;
- **Donors**, notably the Governments of the Netherlands and Sweden, who financially supported the DRC Core Programme;
- **National stakeholders**, including the Ministry of Human Rights, the judiciary, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and provincial authorities;
- **Civil society actors and human rights defenders**, including local and national NGOs, women's groups, youth organisations, and PWD organisations;
- **UN partners**, such as MONUSCO, UNDP, and UNCT entities engaged in joint programming and human rights-based approaches;
- **Other evaluation units and human rights mechanisms**, who may use the report for learning and comparative purposes.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation was guided by the following core questions, structured along the OECD-DAC criteria:

Relevance

- To what extent did the programme respond to the needs and priorities of rights-holders and duty-bearers in the DRC?
- Was the programme aligned with OHCHR's mandate, global strategies, and national human rights priorities?

Coherence

- How well did the Core Programme coordinate with other OHCHR initiatives, UNCT, MONUSCO components, and donor-funded projects?
- Was there internal coherence across pillars and geographic locations?

Effectiveness

- To what extent did the programme achieve its intended outcomes under each strategic pillar?
- What factors enabled or hindered the achievement of results?

Efficiency

- Were human and financial resources used strategically and efficiently to deliver the planned outputs?
- How well did the programme adapt to logistical, political, and security challenges?

Impact

- What are the visible or potential long-term effects of the programme on institutional capacity, accountability for human rights violations, and protection of rights-holders?

Sustainability

- To what extent are the programme's results likely to be sustained, particularly in the context of MONUSCO drawdown and evolving national governance?
- Were adequate capacity-strengthening or exit strategies put in place?

Gender, Disability and Human Rights Integration

- How well were **gender equality**, **disability inclusion**, **conflict sensitivity**, and the principle of **Leaving No One Behind** integrated throughout the programme?

1.3 Methodology

Evaluation Design

This evaluation was independently conducted by a single evaluator, **Dr. Guilain Mathe**, using a **mixed-methods approach** that combined qualitative and quantitative data to assess the performance and results of the OHCHR DRC Core Programme (2021–2024). A **human rights-based approach (HRBA)** guided all stages of the evaluation, emphasizing participation, non-discrimination, accountability, and attention to vulnerable groups.

The evaluation adopted a **utilization-focused and participatory approach**, engaging a diverse array of stakeholders—from government institutions and civil society to donors and rights-holders. The evaluation was structured using the **OECD-DAC criteria** (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability) and cross-cutting UN priorities

including **gender equality**, **disability inclusion**, **conflict sensitivity**, and **leaving no one behind**.

Data Sources and Collection Methods

The evaluation relied on a triangulation of data sources and tools:

- **Document Review**: Over 30 documents were reviewed, including the project proposal, donor narrative reports, internal assessments, and external evaluations.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**: 46 semi-structured interviews were conducted with:
    - OHCHR/UNJHRO staff (Geneva HQ and field offices in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, and Kisangani)
    - National institutions (judiciary, military courts, National Human Rights Commission)
    - UN agencies and implementing partners
    - Civil Society Organisations and human rights defenders
    - **Donors**: notably, **Sweden** and **Belgium**, who provided critical perspectives on programme performance, coordination, sustainability, and future funding opportunities
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**: 13 FGDs were held with:
    - Women's rights organisations
    - Youth associations
    - Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs)
    - Victims' associations, especially in **Tshikapa** and **Kananga**
- **Field Visits and Observations** :
    - Kinshasa: visits to detention sites and human rights field offices
    - Kisangani: site visit to FRIVAO memorial and transitional justice activities
    - Other field observations were carried out in Lubumbashi, Kolwezi, Tshikapa, and Kananga

Sampling and Geographic Coverage

A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure both thematic and geographic coverage. The provinces visited were selected based on the scale of OHCHR activities, existing human rights challenges, and opportunities to engage key stakeholders.

Data collection occurred in :

- **Kinshasa** (national level coordination, detention monitoring)
- **Lubumbashi & Kolwezi** (South-East DRC, transitional justice and civic space)
- **Kananga & Tshikapa** (Kasai region, conflict-related sexual violence and reconciliation)
- **Kisangani** (legacy activities, memory and reparations)

This geographic spread allowed the evaluator to reflect both the national policy-level and sub-national implementation contexts of the programme.

Limitations and Mitigation Measures

The evaluation faced several limitations, mitigated as follows:

- **Access limitations** due to security risks in Eastern DRC restricted visits to Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika. These were mitigated through remote interviews and inputs from OHCHR field personnel.
- **Limited disaggregated data** on vulnerable groups, especially for persons with disabilities and indigenous communities. This was addressed through qualitative data from FGDs and thematic interviews.
- **Post-electoral transitions** in 2024 limited access to some political and institutional stakeholders. The evaluator extended the fieldwork window and conducted follow-up digital interviews to fill these gaps.
- **Stakeholder bias**, particularly among programme implementers, was mitigated by ensuring confidentiality of responses and triangulating across civil society, donors, and OHCHR staff.

Despite these constraints, the methodology enabled a credible, independent, and inclusive assessment of programme performance and strategic positioning.

2. Main Findings

2.1 Relevance

EQ: How relevant is the programme to the country's human rights situation, stakeholder needs, OHCHR's mandate, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Sweden's Development Cooperation Strategy for the DRC?

This section assesses the degree to which the OHCHR DRC Core Programme (2021–2024) aligns with the country's human rights priorities, stakeholder needs, OHCHR's global and regional strategic frameworks, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the priorities outlined in Sweden's Development Cooperation Strategy for the DRC.

1. Alignment with the National and Regional Human Rights Context

The programme has demonstrated strong relevance to the evolving national human rights landscape in the DRC. It was strategically aligned with:

- **National justice and human rights priorities**, including the National Transitional Justice Roadmap (validated in 2021), the implementation of the law establishing the *Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme* (CNDH), the draft law on the rights of persons with disabilities (adopted in 2023), and the government's commitments under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).
- The **State of Siege** imposed in Ituri and North Kivu provinces, and the heightened human rights risks it triggered, which the programme responded to through adapted protection and monitoring mechanisms.
- Regional frameworks such as the **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights**, the **ICGLR Protocol on the Prevention and Punishment of Sexual Violence**, and the **Great Lakes Regional Strategy on CRSV**.

Provincial authorities in Tshikapa, Kananga, Lubumbashi, and Kisangani confirmed the relevance of the programme's focus areas—particularly legal protection, civic space, and protection from sexual and gender-based violence—citing persistent gaps in accountability, human rights monitoring, and survivor support.

2. Responsiveness to Stakeholder Needs (Rights Holders and Duty Bearers)

The programme design and implementation reflected an inclusive and responsive approach, addressing the priorities of both **rights holders** (victims/survivors, HRDs, women, youth, persons with disabilities) and **duty bearers** (state institutions, justice actors, military tribunals, local authorities).

Key findings from field consultations and FGDs include:

- CSOs and local authorities in Kasai, Haut-Katanga, and Tshopo described the programme's interventions (e.g. support to mobile courts, HRD protection, civic space monitoring) as "urgently needed and timely".

- Women's and youth organisations emphasized the importance of programme support for strengthening access to justice, capacity-building in legal frameworks, and monitoring of electoral processes.
- Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) reported that the programme enabled the national disability law to gain momentum and increased visibility of their issues.
- State partners (e.g., military courts, CNDH, Ministry of Human Rights) reported that the programme addressed key capacity gaps in legal accountability, joint investigations, and monitoring of HR violations.

Stakeholders consistently reported that OHCHR played a unique role in convening actors, mediating sensitive issues, and protecting victims/witnesses, particularly in fragile zones.

3. Coherence with OHCHR's Mandate and Strategic Plans

The programme is well aligned with OHCHR's global and regional strategies:

- It directly contributed to OHCHR's **Management Plan (**2018-2021, extended to 2023**)**, especially Strategic Shifts 1 (Strengthening prevention), 2 (Protecting civic space), and 3 (Enhancing engagement with human rights mechanisms).
- It operationalized OHCHR's **Africa Region priorities**, including the focus on strengthening state accountability, supporting national human rights institutions, and promoting gender equality and non-discrimination.
- At the field level, it also ensured continuity with the **MONUSCO Human Rights Division** (UNJHRO), while planning for eventual mission drawdown and national ownership.

This coherence is reflected in the programme's Theory of Change, which integrates OHCHR's principles—universality, indivisibility, and participation—across its six result areas (Accountability, Participation, Non-discrimination, Development, Peace & Security, Mechanisms).

4. Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The programme made explicit contributions to the **SDG framework**, particularly:

- **SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)**: Through support to transitional justice, judicial accountability (via joint investigation teams and mobile courts), and institutional strengthening (e.g. CNDH and Ministry of Human Rights).
- **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**: By tackling conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), promoting legal protection and survivor care, and supporting female-led civil society initiatives.
- **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)**: Through disability rights advocacy and legal support for marginalized groups.
- **SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)**: By enhancing donor coordination and multi-stakeholder platforms for dialogue.

By linking human rights programming to the national SDG implementation agenda (including the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020–2024), the programme positioned itself as a key enabler of inclusive governance and peaceful development.

5. Alignment with Sweden's Development Cooperation Strategy for the DRC (2021–2025)

The programme is well aligned with Sweden's bilateral development strategy, which prioritizes:

- **Democracy and human rights**: Through civic space protection, HRD support, and engagement with state accountability mechanisms.
- **Gender equality and women's rights**: Via the SWPA/CRSV component and direct support to women's rights defenders, victims, and women-led legal clinics.
- **Peacebuilding and conflict prevention**: Through transitional justice work, joint military-civilian justice responses, and protection interventions in conflict-affected provinces.

During interviews, representatives of the Swedish and Belgian embassies expressed strong appreciation for the programme's **strategic alignment**, **trusted field presence**, and **flexibility** in adapting to crises such as COVID-19, the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo, and the State of Siege. Sweden in particular emphasized the importance of continuing human rights monitoring and civic space protection as MONUSCO gradually withdraws.

2.2 Coherence

This section assesses how well the OHCHR DRC Core Programme aligns with and supports national and regional plans, the priorities of local partners, and the mandates of donors and UN agencies working in the DRC. It also explores the comparative advantage of OHCHR in this ecosystem.

EQ: How does the programme align with and support national/regional plans, programmes, and priorities of local stakeholders, donors, and UN agencies on human rights priorities?

1. Alignment with National and Regional Human Rights Plans and Priorities

The programme was designed and implemented in strong alignment with national and regional human rights priorities, including:

- **The National Human Rights Action Plan**, especially provisions relating to the rights of women, children, HRDs, and marginalized populations.
- The **National Transitional Justice Roadmap**, to which OHCHR provided both technical and strategic leadership, including co-chairing the drafting committee and facilitating civil society consultations.
- The **National Strategy on Civic Space**, where OHCHR played a catalytic role by supporting provincial-level dialogues and capacity-building of civil society actors.
- **The Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, adopted in December 2021, a legislative milestone strongly supported by the programme's advocacy and technical input.
- At the **regional level**, OHCHR's work aligned with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) protocols on sexual violence and the African Union's Agenda 2063, particularly in regard to governance, human rights, and peace.

Provincial stakeholders in Lubumbashi, Kisangani, and Kananga confirmed the programme's contribution to operationalizing national frameworks, especially in bridging central and local government commitments.

2. Coordination and Synergy with Local Stakeholders and Partners

The programme promoted synergies with a wide range of local actors through:

- **Joint Monitoring Teams** composed of OHCHR, CSOs, CNDH provincial branches, and local authorities that conducted fact-finding missions and verified human rights violations.
- **Provincial Human Rights Committees** in Kasai and Haut-Katanga, which were reactivated with OHCHR support and now conduct monthly sessions, bringing together civil society, the judiciary, and law enforcement.
- A **network of women's legal aid clinics and paralegal groups**, supported in collaboration with local bar associations and community-based women's organisations.
- The training of over **350 community-based human rights monitors** who now operate in areas where OHCHR no longer has a field office presence (e.g., following MONUSCO downsizing).

CSOs interviewed in Tshikapa and Kolwezi praised OHCHR for acting as a **facilitator and guarantor of neutrality**, allowing them to engage with sensitive institutions, including the military justice system and provincial authorities.

Despite these achievements, several stakeholders highlighted the need for **deeper and more regular multi-actor coordination platforms**, especially during project design and joint field deployments.

3. Contribution to Donor and UN Agency Priorities

The programme was also coherent with the objectives of key donors and UN agencies:

- **Donors:** The programme responded to core elements of their development strategies, including the protection of civic space, gender equality, and accountability. Interviews with Sweden and Belgium emphasized the programme's ability to adapt to crises and maintain strategic focus, even during the COVID-19 pandemic and regional security escalations.
- **UN Agencies (UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA):** The programme contributed to joint initiatives, notably:
    - The **joint programme on CRSV** in eastern DRC, with UNFPA and MONUSCO, to ensure multi-sectoral survivor support.
    - The development of the **UNCT Common Position on Human Rights and Rule of Law**, to which OHCHR provided technical input and evidence from field monitoring.
    - Development of joint programmes within the UNCT: the UN joint justice reform support program (2020-2024) and the UN joint police reform support programme (2024-2028). The next joint justice programme planned for 2025-2029 is currently being finalized.

Moreover, coordination has been key (and done) with regards to the joint support to the fight against impunity (UNJHRO, MONUSCO JSS, UNDP, Trial, ASF, Panzi, RCN, etc.), with OHCHR on the lead on judicial protection of victims and witnesses. However, coordination with UN agencies was **stronger at the national level** than in provinces, where limited capacity and operational differences affected collaboration. For example, UN Women and OHCHR jointly supported some survivor services in South Kivu but reported weak coordination in Kasai and Tshopo.

4. OHCHR's Comparative Advantage in the Human Rights Context

The evaluation confirmed that OHCHR retains a strong comparative advantage in the human rights domain in the DRC due to:

- Its **recognized neutrality and credibility** among state and non-state actors, enabling access to high-risk zones and sensitive institutions (e.g., military courts, prisons).
- Its **strong field presence and legacy footprint**, including in areas where MONUSCO has already closed field offices.
- Its **legal expertise** and long-standing engagement in justice sector reform, transitional justice, and institutional strengthening.
- Its **lead role in human rights monitoring**, with field-based staff and established partnerships that allow for rapid response and verified documentation.

Several donors and CSO partners emphasized that OHCHR plays a **"bridging role" between national policy frameworks and grassroots realities**, particularly in civic space protection, disability rights, and transitional justice. This positioning is not easily replicable by other UN entities.

Nonetheless, stakeholders highlighted the need for **stronger internal coordination** between thematic units (e.g., CRSV and civic space) and better integration of field findings into national-level policy advocacy and reporting.

EQ: What have been the roles of local stakeholders, partners, donors, and UN agencies in achieving results? What methodologies have been used for collaboration and communication?

1. Contribution of Local Stakeholders, Partners, Donors, and UN Agencies to Results

The Core Programme's results were made possible through a dynamic web of **collaborative contributions** at multiple levels:

- **Local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)** were pivotal in documenting human rights violations, referring victims, engaging in joint investigations, and participating in policy advocacy. For instance, in Tshikapa and Kananga, CSOs co-facilitated mobile legal clinics and contributed to UPR shadow reporting.
- **State institutions**, including the **military and criminal courts**, **CNDH**, **provincial ministries of justice and human rights**, and local bar associations, were directly involved in co-implementing activities. The military courts in Lubumbashi

and Kolwezi notably confirmed that OHCHR's joint trainings and legal briefings enhanced the application of CRSV-related provisions.

- **Donors (notably Sweden and Belgium)** played both funding and strategic advisory roles. In donor interviews, both emphasized their active engagement in programme reviews, field visits (e.g. to Kasai), and the expectation of greater strategic visibility on results and sustainability. They also valued OHCHR's capacity to maintain a human rights agenda in volatile or under-funded areas.
- **UN Agencies (UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF)** contributed through joint programming, coordinated advocacy, and information-sharing. For example:
    - With **UN Women** and **UNFPA**, OHCHR collaborated on multi-sectoral responses for survivors of CRSV in Eastern DRC.
    - With **UNICEF**, synergies emerged on child protection and detention monitoring, especially in collaboration with MONUSCO before its downsizing.

2. Strategy and Methodology for Collaboration

The programme adopted **multi-tiered collaboration methodologies** to achieve synergy and complementarity:

- **Joint planning and implementation frameworks**: Co-design of activities with provincial CSOs, justice sector actors, and human rights institutions was a regular practice in at least four provinces. These included structured co-implementation of mobile courts, prison visits, and human rights caravans.
- **Thematic and provincial coordination platforms**: These included the **Provincial Human Rights Committees**, the **Transitional Justice Working Group**, and the **CRSV joint programme steering committee**, which were either chaired or co-facilitated by OHCHR.
- **Donor coordination mechanisms**: While the programme did not have a formal donor working group, **bilateral coordination was regular**, and donors appreciated being consulted during annual work plan revisions and monitoring missions.
- **Community engagement methodologies**: OHCHR used **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**, rapid needs assessments, and community listening exercises to ensure the programme was grounded in context-specific realities and that local partners had ownership in the design and validation of results.

Despite these strengths, **stakeholders in Kolwezi and Kisangani** noted that coordination frameworks weakened in the latter phase of the programme, especially after MONUSCO began its drawdown, resulting in fragmented responses to urgent protection needs.

3. Communication and Information-Sharing Strategies

Communication and information-sharing were conducted through several formal and informal mechanisms:

- **Quarterly reports and human rights situation updates**, shared with donors, UN agencies, and national partners.
- **Field-level debriefs and wrap-up sessions** following major missions or investigations, often co-organized with CSOs and local officials.
- **Public dissemination** of advocacy materials, policy briefs (e.g., on transitional justice and disability rights), and support for media engagement.

- A select number of **success stories and visibility materials** were produced—e.g., newsletters, field visit reports, and testimonies shared during public events such as the Human Rights Day or 16 Days of Activism.

However, both CSOs and donors expressed the need for **more strategic visibility** of programme results. Several partners noted the absence of a **regular donor bulletin**, and limited presence of programme outputs on OHCHR's website or social media platforms.

4. Dissemination of Results

While dissemination of results occurred primarily through donor reports and inter-agency meetings, the evaluation noted the following modalities:

- **Donor-specific reporting** (Sweden, Netherlands, Belgium) structured around each funding agreement, but often focused on activities and outputs rather than strategic-level outcomes.
- **Workshops and roundtables** organized for key deliverables, such as the validation of draft legislation (e.g., disability law) and the dissemination of CRSV analysis reports.
- **Participation in inter-agency platforms** (e.g., UNCT and HCT briefings), where OHCHR shared key findings from its monitoring and protection work.

Still, the lack of **a unified communications strategy** was noted as a missed opportunity. Some good practices—like the joint field visits and donor debriefings in Kasai—could be systematized to support advocacy, sustainability, and donor confidence.

EQ: How has been the communication and coordination between the programme, the country/regional office, and other OHCHR units regarding programmatic, financial, and administrative matters?

1. Programmatic Coordination

The coordination between the OHCHR Country Office in the DRC and the central OHCHR structures, notably the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division (TESPRDD) and the Programme Support and Management Services (PSMS) in Geneva, was reported to be functional but marked by occasional delays in response time. The programme team in Kinshasa operated with a relatively high degree of autonomy in designing and implementing activities, particularly those tailored to the conflict-affected context of eastern DRC. Regular communication was maintained through periodic situation updates and reporting mechanisms, especially when sensitive human rights developments emerged.

Coordination between the Kinshasa office and MONUSCO was facilitated through the integrated structure of the Joint Human Rights Office (JHRO), which streamlined joint planning, shared field deployments, and information exchange. The joint structure served as a comparative advantage in programmatic coherence, especially in contexts of rapid response to violations and protection needs.

2. Financial Coordination

Financial planning and reporting were largely managed through OHCHR country office financial focal points in Kinshasa, in coordination with the Administrative and Finance Unit of MONUSCO. Donor-specific reporting, particularly for Sweden and the Netherlands, was submitted regularly in accordance with grant agreements. However, the evaluation noted several constraints affecting financial coordination, notably delays in the disbursement of funds for provincial and field-level operations. These delays were attributed to procedural bottlenecks within OHCHR's internal approval processes, limited delegated financial authority to the country office, and coordination gaps with MONUSCO support units. These factors occasionally impacted the timely implementation of activities, particularly those requiring urgent logistical mobilization or flexible reallocation of resources[2].

Efforts to increase financial transparency and control were made by reinforcing the role of the finance team in Kinshasa and enhancing direct liaison with donor focal points. Nevertheless, several stakeholders from the programme team expressed the need for clearer lines of authority and decision-making in budget revisions and activity-based costing.

3. Administrative Coordination

Administrative processes — including procurement, recruitment, and logistics—were primarily governed by MONUSCO systems due to the integrated nature of the Joint Human Rights Office. While this arrangement facilitated overall administrative alignment with the peacekeeping mission, the evaluation found that it also introduced operational rigidity. Lengthy procedures affected the timely recruitment of consultants, procurement of essential services, and deployment of field missions. These constraints were compounded by overlapping or unclear responsibilities between MONUSCO administrative structures and OHCHR headquarters, particularly in areas such as mission clearances, contractual amendments, and staff entitlements. The resulting delays adversely affected operational agility, especially in provinces with heightened insecurity where rapid response capacity was essential.

4. Effectiveness of Communication Channels

Communication between the programme team in Kinshasa and Geneva-based OHCHR units was maintained primarily through email correspondence, periodic remote meetings, and reporting via Umoja and SharePoint platforms. However, interlocutors in Kinshasa indicated that more structured and predictable communication protocols would enhance efficiency, especially when seeking strategic or legal guidance from headquarters.

Internally, the communication between the Kinshasa-based thematic units (e.g., Civic Space, CRSV, Detention Monitoring, Legal Reform, etc.) and field offices in provinces such as

[2] Based on the interviews with OHCHR staff and donor feedback, delays in fund disbursement and budget execution were partly due to centralized clearance procedures at OHCHR headquarters, especially for procurements, staff contract extensions, and budget re-allocations. Additionally, the lack of delegated financial authority to the DRC Country Office created administrative inefficiencies, as minor budget adjustments required lengthy approvals from Geneva. These procedural constraints were particularly challenging during emergency responses (e.g., rapid protection interventions in conflict-affected provinces) where flexibility and timeliness were critical.

Lubumbashi, Kananga, and Kisangani was generally effective. Weekly coordination calls, shared reporting templates, and joint field missions contributed to information-sharing and alignment.

Donor representatives interviewed also expressed the need for improved feedback loops on how their funding was being used and its concrete results, recommending more frequent briefings and access to real-time data where possible.

2.3 Efficiency

EQ : Have human, financial, and intellectual resources and organizational arrangements been adequate for achieving results in the DRC?

1. Adequacy of Human Resources

The Core Programme was implemented by a team composed of international and national OHCHR staff working within the Joint Human Rights Office (JHRO) structure. While staff were generally qualified and experienced, several gaps and constraints were observed:

- **Provincial staffing levels** were described as insufficient relative to the scale and complexity of protection challenges, particularly in provinces such as Kasai, Haut-Katanga, and Tshopo. Stakeholders noted that many field staff carried multiple thematic responsibilities simultaneously (e.g., civic space and CRSV), limiting strategic depth.
- In provinces where **MONUSCO had already drawn down**, the redeployment of human rights staff was often delayed, weakening OHCHR's monitoring coverage and response time.
- The programme benefited from **long-serving national staff**, who contributed to continuity, contextual knowledge, and trusted relationships with local stakeholders. However, some staff reported **limited opportunities for professional development**, particularly in emerging areas like disability rights, transitional justice, and digital civic space threats.
- The recruitment of **short-term consultants** was hindered by complex administrative procedures and insufficient roster flexibility, which affected implementation of time-sensitive components such as impact assessments and legislative reviews.

Overall, while the human resources were technically strong, their quantity and geographic distribution did not always align with needs on the ground.

2. Adequacy of Financial Resources

The programme was primarily funded by Sweden, Belgium, and the Netherlands, with multi-year, earmarked contributions. Funding was relatively stable across the three-year cycle, enabling the planning and delivery of core activities. However, the following constraints were noted:

- Field staff in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi reported **underfunding for outreach activities**, including transportation and logistics for mobile teams in remote areas.

Some planned activities had to be scaled down or cancelled due to insufficient funds for field-level implementation.
- Donors interviewed emphasized the importance of **increased visibility of results** and clearer cost-benefit articulation to justify continued investment.
- The financial model, which relied on annual and mid-year disbursement cycles, sometimes created **operational bottlenecks**, especially when rapid reallocation was needed in response to emerging crises (e.g., civic space restrictions, security deterioration in Kasai).

Despite these challenges, the programme maintained core delivery and met most donor contractual expectations.

3. Intellectual and Technical Resources

The programme demonstrated access to a robust knowledge base and technical support through:

- Thematic expertise embedded within the OHCHR country team, particularly on **CRSV, transitional justice, civic space, legal reform, and disability inclusion**.
- Support from OHCHR Geneva units on specific tasks such as **treaty body reporting**, **UPR follow-up**, and **international legal standards application**.
- Engagement with external experts and consultants (though limited in number), including for tasks such as **drafting legislative reviews**, **guidance notes on survivors' rights**, and **capacity-building manuals**.

However, programme staff reported a need for **enhanced access to comparative experiences and best practices** from other field presences (e.g., South Sudan, Mali, CAR) to guide adaptation of strategies and tools. Learning remained mostly vertical (Geneva-Kinshasa) rather than cross-field horizontal.

4. Organizational Arrangements and Efficiency

The Joint Human Rights Office (OHCHR–MONUSCO) arrangement provided key structural advantages:

- **Integrated planning and coordination**, particularly for protection-related field missions, training of state actors, and reporting on serious violations.
- Leverage of **MONUSCO logistics and field access**, allowing OHCHR to reach insecure or isolated areas that would otherwise be inaccessible.

However, several **inefficiencies** were also observed:

- The dual administrative procedures of OHCHR and MONUSCO sometimes led to **duplications or delays** (e.g., in procurement, contracting, and mission clearances).
- As MONUSCO began its drawdown, OHCHR's ability to maintain field presence and service delivery was weakened due to **over-reliance on the Mission's infrastructure**, especially in transport and security protocols.
- Stakeholders expressed concerns over the **continuity and sustainability** of operations in MONUSCO exit zones, underscoring the need for OHCHR to rethink its presence model beyond 2024.

5. Relevance to Local Priorities, Context, and Stakeholders

The evaluation confirms that the programme was **well aligned with local priorities and stakeholder expectations**, notably:

- Victims' rights and access to justice, particularly for survivors of CRSV and arbitrary detention.
- Protection of civic space, including for HRDs, journalists, and youth-led organisations.
- Legal and institutional reforms to strengthen accountability and non-discrimination (e.g., the disability law and transitional justice roadmap).
- Capacity building of state actors and CSOs in areas such as judicial oversight, police ethics, and monitoring of detention conditions.

FGDs conducted in Kananga, Tshikapa, Lubumbashi, and Kisangani validated the perceived relevance of OHCHR's engagement and its catalytic role in amplifying local voices in national policy processes.

EQ: How does the country office monitor and evaluate programme performance and results for decision-making, including responding to findings from previous evaluations?

1. Existence and Use of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Systems

The evaluation found that the OHCHR DRC Country Office applies a hybrid M&E approach that draws on both country-specific mechanisms and the broader institutional M&E systems embedded within the OHCHR Management Plan (OMP) and the Performance Monitoring System (PMS).

At the **country level**, the office developed internal planning and reporting tools aligned with the Annual Work Plan (AWP) and individual donor-funded project frameworks (e.g., Sweden, Netherlands). These include :

- Periodic internal planning and review processes structured around the AWP and project-specific logical frameworks.
- Tracking of activities and outputs through tailored monitoring templates and donor reporting formats.
- Designation of focal points within thematic units (e.g., CRSV, civic space, transitional justice) for activity-based data collection and narrative reporting.

However, the evaluation noted that this **DRC-specific M&E system remains largely focused on outputs and activities**, with only partial alignment to outcome-level indicators and limited integration of qualitative feedback mechanisms from rights holders and beneficiaries. This approach also results in fragmented monitoring efforts, with minimal harmonization across different thematic pillars or links to strategic-level indicators from the OMP.

At the **institutional level**, the OHCHR Management Plan (OMP) and the Performance Monitoring System (PMS) provide a global framework for planning, monitoring, and accountability. The DRC Office contributes to these systems through:

- Submission of Country Programme Plans and Costed Work Plans.
- Mid-Year and End-of-Year progress reports in the PMS, with standardized indicators and narratives.
- Contributions to global outcome indicators related to civic space, transitional justice, protection of vulnerable groups, and access to justice.

Yet, the evaluation observed that **linkages between DRC-specific donor frameworks and the OMP/PMS indicators are not consistently articulated**, and many staff members involved in reporting were more familiar with project-specific obligations than with global performance indicators.

2. Frequency and Quality of Reporting

Reporting is conducted regularly and serves multiple accountability and learning functions:

- **Quarterly internal reviews** are held at both the Kinshasa and field levels, feeding into management decision-making and donor updates.
- **Semi-annual and annual donor reporting** (e.g., Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands) has been timely and generally of satisfactory quality, though mostly descriptive and focused on activities rather than change processes.
- **Contributions to MONUSCO reports** (including Security Council updates and public human rights reports) have added strategic visibility to results, especially in areas such as CRSV and civic space protection.

Nonetheless, donor feedback indicated a desire for more **analytical and impact-oriented reporting**, including deeper reflections on challenges encountered, adaptations made, and measurable change at the beneficiary level. The evaluation further identified an opportunity to **strengthen alignment between country-level reporting and the OMP/PMS strategic outcome framework**, ensuring consistency and facilitating institutional learning.

3. Use of M&E Data for Decision-Making

The use of M&E data to inform strategic and operational decisions remains **limited**:

- While output data informs **budget revisions** and activity reprogramming, there is **no structured learning cycle** linking monitoring findings to major shifts in programme direction.
- **Decisions on geographic targeting, partner selection, or advocacy priorities** are more often driven by contextual developments (e.g., civic space restrictions, conflict patterns) than by longitudinal monitoring data.
- Stakeholders suggested that **greater investment in participatory monitoring**, such as beneficiary feedback loops and community validation workshops, could improve adaptive management and deepen impact.

4. Consideration of Previous Evaluation Findings

There is documented evidence that recommendations from the 2021 Evaluation of OHCHR's Civic Space and CRSV interventions in the DRC informed the design and prioritization of the 2022–2024 Core Programme. For example, recommendations related to sustainability, the

inclusion of marginalized groups, and legal protection mechanisms translated into concrete programming shifts—such as increased focus on disability rights, expanded legal aid services, and the operationalization of HRD protection frameworks.

Crucially, OHCHR developed a formal management response and action plan following the 2021 evaluation. The DRC Office systematically reported on the implementation of this plan through the OHCHR recommendation tracking system, submitting biannual progress updates to senior management from 2022 to 2024. This process ensured institutional accountability and enabled oversight by OHCHR headquarters.

However, the evaluation observed that while a robust formal mechanism was in place, awareness and integration of these actions at the operational level varied. Implementation tracking was largely centralized, and the absence of a shared results dashboard or easily accessible reference point for all staff limited broader team engagement with the evaluation feedback. In addition, high staff turnover posed risks to institutional memory and limited the continuity of learning processes.

The current evaluation presents an opportunity to strengthen internal learning by encouraging:

- Better integration of tracking outputs into programme planning and review cycles (e.g., AWPs and mid-year reviews),
- Greater visibility of past recommendations and status updates across teams,
- And stronger linkage between the recommendation tracking system and the Performance Monitoring System (PMS) to close the evaluation-to-implementation loop.

5. Coordination with External Stakeholders on M&E

The programme engaged **external stakeholders** in monitoring and validation processes in several ways:

- **Joint field missions**, including with donors (e.g., Sweden's visit to Kasai) and MONUSCO protection teams, allowed for participatory assessment of progress.
- Civil Society Organisations and state actors were occasionally involved in **activity debriefings and lessons-learned sessions**—though mostly on an ad hoc basis.
- There was **limited structured collaboration** with external evaluation or research institutions for third-party monitoring or impact evaluation, representing an area for growth.

Donors expressed interest in more **joint reviews** and the co-design of M&E frameworks that allow them to assess value-for-money and inform policy dialogue with national authorities.

2.4. Effectiveness

EQ: What evidence exists of positive results achieved by the programme?

1. Achievement of Key Programme Outcomes

The evaluation confirms that the programme made significant progress across its six strategic pillars, despite operational and contextual challenges. Notable outcomes include:

- **Protection of Civic Space**: OHCHR interventions contributed to increased legal protection for human rights defenders (HRDs), including the adoption of a Ministerial Decree on HRD protection, improved emergency support mechanisms, and strengthened civil society coalitions.
- **CRSV Accountability**: Support to mobile courts and capacity building for judicial actors enabled prosecutions in CRSV cases, notably in Tshikapa and Kananga. Survivors accessed psychosocial and legal services through CSO networks supported by the programme.
- **Transitional Justice**: Technical support contributed to the development of the national roadmap for transitional justice, while pilot activities raised awareness among stakeholders at local levels.
- **Non-Discrimination**: Adoption of the decree protecting persons with disabilities, and the mainstreaming of disability rights in national planning and CSO advocacy, reflect the programme's influence on inclusive human rights policies.
- **Detention Monitoring and Rule of Law**: Regular monitoring led to tangible improvements in detention conditions in facilities visited (e.g., Kinshasa and Kisangani), including increased access to healthcare, legal aid, and reductions in unlawful detention cases.
- **Engagement with Mechanisms**: OHCHR supported the preparation of state reports (UPR, CAT, CEDAW), facilitated civil society submissions, and enhanced the participation of national institutions in Geneva-based reviews.

2. Impact on Stakeholders and Beneficiaries

The programme's impact on rights-holders and national stakeholders was evident through both direct benefits and systemic improvements. Evaluation interviews and focus group discussions confirmed that the programme enhanced human rights awareness, enabled access to justice, and improved institutional practices. Key areas of concrete impact include:

- **Legal empowerment and awareness**: Legal literacy sessions conducted in **Kasai and Haut-Katanga** enabled **women survivors of violence** and **persons with disabilities** to engage with local bar associations and lodge formal complaints with justice institutions and the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH). In **Tshikapa**, participants in outreach campaigns later participated in transitional justice consultations facilitated by OHCHR and national actors.
- **Application of knowledge**: Following targeted trainings in **Lubumbashi and Kolwezi**, local human rights defenders reported improvements in their ability to document violations, submit cases to provincial justice actors, and seek protection through provincial focal points. Several defenders used the HRD Protection Decree mechanisms to report threats, including through MONUSCO/OHCHR provincial human rights desks.
- **Institutional behaviour change**: In **Kinshasa Central Prison**, OHCHR's engagement led to improved conditions and treatment of detainees, including enhanced access to legal representation and a reduction in unlawful detention

practices. This was achieved through repeated prison visits, advocacy with correctional authorities, and training of penitentiary staff on minimum standards of detention.
- **Victim access to justice**: In CRSV cases, OHCHR-supported mobile court sessions (e.g., in **Ituri and South Kivu**) enabled victims—primarily women—to testify safely, contributing to prosecutions of FARDC members and strengthening public confidence in judicial accountability. Survivors also received psychosocial support and referrals through local partners.

Stakeholders consistently viewed the OHCHR–MONUSCO Joint Office as a **trusted and neutral human rights interlocutor**, especially in remote or conflict-affected areas where recourse to formal systems was otherwise limited.

3. Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building

The programme made measurable contributions to enhancing institutional capacities across state and non-state actors at both national and provincial levels. Beyond training and material support, the evaluation identified instances where technical assistance translated into improved institutional performance and rights-based service delivery.

- **National Human Rights Commission (CNDH)**: OHCHR support enabled the CNDH to draft and submit alternative reports to UN treaty bodies (e.g., Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW), monitor emblematic human rights cases, and intervene in provincial complaints through its focal points in **Kasai and Ituri**. As a result, CNDH offices in those regions were seen as more responsive to citizens' complaints, particularly from women and detainees.
- **Judicial and security sector**: In provinces such as **Haut-Katanga and South Kivu**, capacity-building for military and civilian magistrates led to improved investigation and prosecution of CRSV cases, including the application of trauma-informed approaches. Evaluative feedback from judicial actors indicated increased understanding and use of victim protection measures, including the anonymization of survivor testimonies and coordination with service providers.
- **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)**: OHCHR supported more than 20 local organisations through technical training and sub-grants. Several women's rights and youth-led CSOs reported strengthened ability to engage in UN mechanisms, such as contributing shadow reports for the UPR (Universal Periodic Review), and participating in transitional justice consultations. In **Kananga**, a youth CSO that had previously only operated as a community mobilizer began systematically documenting human rights violations and submitting cases to OHCHR and the CNDH.
- **Provincial human rights committees**: Through facilitation and logistical support, OHCHR helped reactivate dormant provincial human rights committees in **Kasaï Central and Tshopo**, where they began convening multi-stakeholder dialogues on civic space protection and detention monitoring.

Despite these advances, the evaluation noted persistent challenges in institutional continuity due to staff turnover, lack of public budget allocations, and weak internal monitoring systems. Many gains remain donor-dependent, underscoring the need for stronger anchoring of human rights responsibilities within state budgets and institutional mandates.

4. Community-Level Impact and Social Change

While national impact was evident in policy reform and engagement with international mechanisms, important community-level changes were also observed:

- Community-based interventions (e.g., awareness-raising on HRDs, CRSV, and transitional justice) contributed to **behavioural shifts**, including increased denunciation of abuses and community dialogue on rights.
- Pilot projects involving **community radios, schools, and local leaders** helped challenge discriminatory norms, especially around gender-based violence and disability.
- Focus group participants in Tshikapa and Kolwezi indicated that the programme's visibility and presence increased **citizen trust in institutional responses** to violations.

Nonetheless, these impacts were more visible where the programme maintained **continuous presence and partnerships**, with gaps noted in under-served or hard-to-reach provinces.

5. Visibility and Recognition of the Programme's Impact

The OHCHR–MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Office achieved high levels of visibility and institutional recognition:

- It was consistently cited by national stakeholders and the diplomatic community as a **reliable actor** on sensitive human rights issues, including elections, civic space, and CRSV.
- Its **public reporting** was frequently used as reference by other UN agencies, media, and advocacy organisations.
- Donors (e.g., Sweden and Belgium) recognized the value of the Joint Office's dual mandate and strategic positioning in the DRC's political and institutional ecosystem.

Nevertheless, interviewees noted that **greater efforts could be made to systematize success stories**, especially for dissemination beyond internal UN circles and for policy influence at national level.

Overview of Pillar-based Effectiveness

This subsection presents a thematic assessment of programme effectiveness based on the six strategic pillars of the OHCHR–MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Programme. It draws on evaluation data, including key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), programme documents, and donor reports, to demonstrate how each pillar contributed to the programme's overall objectives and human rights impact in the DRC.

Pillar 1: Civic Space and Protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

The programme significantly contributed to the protection and promotion of civic space, particularly during periods of heightened political tension. Achievements include:

- The adoption of a **Ministerial Decree on the protection of HRDs**, facilitated by OHCHR's advocacy and technical support.

- Strengthening of **early warning systems** in collaboration with local civil society networks, enabling timely alerts and protection interventions.
- Direct support to over **90 HRDs at risk**, including temporary relocation, legal aid, and psychosocial support.
- Promotion of **multi-stakeholder dialogues** between HRDs, authorities, and media to foster accountability.

These efforts helped establish a more enabling environment for civil society engagement in human rights advocacy. However, geographical disparities in implementation were noted, with Kinshasa and Lubumbashi receiving more consistent support compared to remote provinces such as Kasai Oriental.

Pillar 2: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)

The programme demonstrated notable effectiveness in enhancing the legal and institutional response to CRSV, especially in post-conflict provinces:

- It supported **mobile court hearings** in Tshikapa and Kananga, which enabled the prosecution of emblematic CRSV cases and increased survivors' access to justice.
- Training and mentoring of over **200 judicial and security personnel** improved the application of victim-centered approaches and national legislation aligned with international standards.
- Collaboration with **CSO-led survivor support networks** helped ensure access to psychosocial and legal services, although gaps persist in medical and socio-economic reintegration assistance.

While the programme improved judicial responsiveness and public awareness of CRSV, its full impact depends on continued follow-up, survivor protection, and institutional reinforcement in under-resourced jurisdictions.

Pillar 3: Transitional Justice and Accountability

The programme played a catalytic role in elevating transitional justice on the national agenda:

- OHCHR provided strategic support for the design and validation of the **National Transitional Justice Roadmap**, engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders including survivors, civil society, and state institutions.
- **Community awareness sessions** in Kasai, North Kivu, and South Kivu promoted public engagement with concepts of truth-seeking, reparations, and non-recurrence.
- The programme supported the **integration of transitional justice principles** into national policy dialogues, including truth commissions and reparations discussions.

Despite progress, transitional justice remains a politically sensitive issue. Stakeholders stressed the need for long-term technical and financial support to ensure implementation of the roadmap and to manage victims' expectations effectively.

Pillar 4: Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Non-Discrimination

This pillar registered strong achievements in mainstreaming non-discrimination and advancing the rights of groups in situation of vulnerability:

- Technical assistance to the Government of the DRC led to the **adoption of a Presidential Decree** on the rights of persons with disabilities.
- The programme built the institutional capacities of **Organisation of Disabled Persons (OPDs)** across five provinces, enabling them to influence public policy, participate in UPR reporting, and conduct community outreach.
- Disability inclusion was also **mainstreamed into civic space, CRSV, and detention monitoring interventions**, ensuring more intersectional responses.

This pillar demonstrated a clear model of systemic change—from legal reform to local empowerment. Nonetheless, challenges remain in operationalizing the decree, and the social stigma faced by persons with disabilities continues to hinder full societal inclusion.

Pillar 5: Detention Monitoring and Rule of Law

One of the most visible aspects of the programme's field-level effectiveness was its contribution to detention monitoring and legal safeguards:

- Over **50 detention monitoring missions** were conducted across Kinshasa, Kisangani, and Lubumbashi. These missions led to:
    - Improvements in **hygiene, medical care, and nutrition** conditions.
    - **Release of individuals held in prolonged pre-trial detention**.
    - Enhanced **data collection on torture, ill-treatment, and overcrowding**.
- Collaboration with bar associations and judicial authorities led to **capacity building for magistrates and prison officials**.

Prison visits were often coupled with legal aid clinics and follow-up mechanisms, making this pillar one of the most community-facing and directly impactful elements of the programme.

Pillar 6: Engagement with UN Human Rights Mechanisms

The programme substantially strengthened the DRC's engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms:

- OHCHR supported the drafting and submission of **state reports to UPR, CEDAW, CAT, and CRPD**, ensuring alignment with international obligations.
- Civil society and national institutions were trained on **reporting standards, follow-up processes, and national implementation plans**.
- The programme facilitated **over 30 shadow/alternative reports** by CSOs, enhancing the quality and plurality of engagement with Geneva-based bodies.

This contributed to improved compliance, enhanced national visibility on human rights achievements and gaps, and empowered rights-holders to hold institutions accountable through international frameworks.

Cross-Cutting Results

Across all pillars, the programme consistently:

- Promoted **intersectionality**, notably gender and disability inclusion.
- Fostered **strategic partnerships with CSOs, state actors, and international donors**.
- Ensured a **presence in conflict-affected provinces**, where human rights violations were most acute.

However, sustainability of these results is contingent on stronger institutional anchoring, resource mobilization, and decentralized programming capacity.

2.5 Impact

EQ: Are the results, achievements, and benefits of the programme likely to be durable?

This section examines the extent to which the programme contributed to systemic, sustainable, and transformative changes in the DRC's human rights landscape over the 2022–2024 period. It explores institutional, legal, societal, and behavioural outcomes with the potential to outlast the programme's implementation cycle.

1. Institutional and Legal Reforms

The programme contributed significantly to legal and institutional reforms that lay a foundation for long-term protection and promotion of human rights:

- The **Presidential Decree on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** marks a major legal milestone. It signals state recognition of the need for inclusive policies and rights-based planning for persons with disabilities.
- The **Ministerial Decree on HRD Protection**, adopted with OHCHR support, institutionalizes the role of the state in protecting civic actors under threat and creates a framework for prevention and response.
- Through support to **judicial and military institutions**, the programme helped strengthen accountability for CRSV and other serious violations, embedding improved procedures into case management and investigation practices.
- The programme also contributed to the **National Transitional Justice Roadmap**, which, if effectively implemented, could facilitate redress and reconciliation in a country still facing widespread impunity.

While these reforms are promising, they remain vulnerable to political shifts and underfunding. Institutional uptake varies between central and provincial levels, with implementation gaps particularly acute in conflict-affected provinces.

2. Systemic and Structural Changes

The programme catalysed structural improvements in how human rights are monitored, reported, and addressed:

- The **revitalization of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH)**, supported through technical advice, visibility efforts, and capacity building, bolstered its legitimacy and operational capacity.

- OHCHR strengthened inter-institutional coordination, linking **military justice actors, civil courts, and police units** in shared strategies to address CRSV and arbitrary detention.
- The integration of **human rights monitoring into MONUSCO field operations** enhanced coherence in the UN system's response to protection threats, especially during electoral and post-conflict periods.

These systemic changes reflect growing internalization of human rights principles among public institutions, though further efforts are needed to ensure consistency and accountability, particularly at the local level.

3. Changes in Access to Justice and Protection Mechanisms

The programme facilitated tangible and context-specific improvements in access to justice and protection for vulnerable groups, especially in conflict-affected areas and marginalized communities:

- **CRSV survivor access to justice** improved through OHCHR-supported mobile courts in provinces such as **South Kivu, Ituri, and Kasai-Central**, where victims had previously faced geographic and financial barriers to legal recourse. These courts ensured proximity and speed in addressing cases, with a demonstrable increase in **case resolution rates and victim participation**. The programme also supported survivor accompaniment services, legal aid, and referral systems in collaboration with CSOs and legal clinics.
- **Detained individuals**, particularly pretrial detainees in **Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, and Kisangani**, benefitted from **legal aid**, mediation mechanisms, and coordinated advocacy for early release. These interventions followed OHCHR's detention monitoring and contributed to the **reduction of unlawful detention durations**, especially for juveniles and women.
- **Judicial protection mechanisms** were progressively mainstreamed in proceedings involving **CRSV and HRD protection cases**, including:
    - **Anonymization of victim and witness identities** in sensitive cases, in cooperation with magistrates and registrars.
    - Use of **remote testimonies** or **protected witness hearings**, particularly in mobile court sessions held in insecure zones.
    - Involvement of **psychosocial professionals and victim advocates** during interviews and hearings to safeguard survivors' well-being.
    - Strengthened coordination between OHCHR, **military justice authorities**, and **victim support units** to ensure that victims could testify without fear of retaliation.
- **Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)** and journalists under threat accessed **emergency protection pathways** supported by the Joint Office, including **temporary relocation**, **legal assistance**, and **psychosocial support**. These interventions not only protected individuals but also established precedents for **non-repressive and rights-compliant state responses** to peaceful activism and investigative journalism.

While these mechanisms have contributed to increased trust in the justice system and more inclusive access for vulnerable groups, their sustainability is fragile. Most rely on external financing and OHCHR's facilitation role.

4. Societal and Behavioral Changes

The programme helped catalyse shifts in public perception, institutional behaviour, and community engagement:

- **Legal literacy and community dialogues** led to increased rights awareness, especially among youth, women, and persons with disabilities.
- Local leaders, teachers, and media actors reported **greater readiness to address taboo issues** such as CRSV, enforced disappearances, and police brutality.
- Prison officials and magistrates demonstrated **improved compliance with due process standards**, partly attributable to training and joint monitoring practices.

Despite these encouraging signs, behavioral change remains uneven, especially in provinces where civic space is under intense pressure. Cultural norms and impunity still present barriers to transformative societal shifts.

5. Sustainability and Local Ownership

While several programme achievements rest on solid institutional foundations, the sustainability of results remains uneven and context-dependent across the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

- **Legal and policy reforms**—such as the HRD Protection Decree and the Transitional Justice Roadmap—have been formally adopted. However, their implementation has been limited by **inadequate domestic funding**, weak institutional coordination, and the absence of systematic **monitoring and accountability mechanisms**. These gaps have hindered the translation of legal frameworks into tangible protections for rights holders.
- **Provincial-level institutions and local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)** have become key implementing partners of the programme, reflecting increasing local ownership. For instance, in **Kisangani**, the local bar association and women's organisations have taken proactive roles in legal aid and civic education, following capacity-building support from OHCHR.
- In contrast, in **Kasai-Central and Tshikapa**, provincial authorities and human rights focal points cited severe **human resource and budgetary constraints**, limiting their ability to lead transitional justice dialogues or provide victim services independently.
- In **Ituri and North Kivu**, persistent armed conflict and insecurity continue to severely restrict state presence and ownership, particularly for services protecting **HRDs, journalists, and survivors of sexual violence**. Here, **OHCHR and MONUSCO's field teams remain critical to service continuity**.
- Despite strong engagement from some actors, most **protection and accountability services—especially those supporting HRDs and CRSV survivors—remain heavily reliant on donor funding and technical assistance**. The lack of clear transition or sustainability strategies risks undermining long-term impact once external support diminishes.
- Furthermore, there is **limited evidence of state-led scale-up** of successful pilot interventions supported by OHCHR (e.g., mobile courts, early warning systems),

particularly at subnational levels where **coordination and institutional absorption capacity remain weak**.

In sum, while there are **positive signs of local leadership**, particularly among CSOs and some provincial institutions, the durability of programme results will depend on:

- **Increased national and provincial budget allocations** for human rights institutions;
- **Strengthened institutional partnerships and coordination frameworks** between OHCHR and state actors;
- The development of **phased exit strategies and co-financing models** to gradually shift ownership to Congolese institutions and communities.

6. Long-Term Impact on Human Rights Trends

The programme's contributions are evident in the broader human rights trends in the DRC:

- **Monitoring data from 2022–2024** shows a modest decline in arbitrary detention cases in provinces where OHCHR conducted regular oversight.
- **Increased reporting to international mechanisms** (e.g., UPR, treaty bodies) reflects improved compliance and willingness to engage globally.
- Political authorities, particularly at the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Human Rights, now cite **OHCHR findings and recommendations** in public statements and policy forums.

Although structural challenges—such as political volatility, insecurity, and weak rule of law—continue to limit progress, the programme laid foundational work for longer-term change. Its dual focus on upstream (policy and institution) and downstream (community and individual) interventions offers a model for comprehensive impact.

2.6 Sustainability

EQ: Are the results, achievements, and benefits of the programme likely to be durable?

This section assesses the extent to which the results and benefits of the programme are likely to be sustained after the end of the funding cycle. It considers institutional, financial, technical, legal, and social dimensions, along with the role of risk mitigation strategies and external influencing factors.

1. Institutional Sustainability

The programme has achieved significant gains in embedding human rights protection into the mandates and practices of key institutions:

- The **National Human Rights Commission (CNDH)** has increased its visibility and operational footprint, thanks to targeted support and capacity building from the programme.
- Several **military and civil justice institutions** have integrated human rights into their daily work, especially in addressing conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and detention-related violations.
- However, in the absence of clear **institutional commitments and budget lines** from national and provincial authorities, much of the institutional engagement remains **donor-driven**.

Institutional sustainability will depend on the government's political will and capacity to adopt and internalize human rights mandates and practices at all levels.

2. Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability remains a major challenge:

- Many protection services for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), survivors of CRSV, and detainees are still **financed entirely through donor contributions**.
- No concrete plans were observed to **transition funding responsibilities to state institutions**, although some co-financing options were discussed with Ministries of Justice and Human Rights.

Without a strategic transition and cost-sharing plan, there is a risk that essential services and coordination platforms will cease or shrink after external funding phases out.

3. Human and Technical Capacity Sustainability

The programme invested in training and mentoring a range of actors:

- Over 500 stakeholders (magistrates, police officers, CSO members, OPDs, local authorities) received thematic training in CRSV, civic space, detention monitoring, and non-discrimination.
- Capacity transfer efforts were more effective when **accompanied by institutional follow-up** (e.g., HRDs focal points in Ministries, peer learning groups among magistrates).
- However, **staff turnover** in national institutions and lack of systematic refresher training limit long-term retention of skills.

Efforts to institutionalise training curricula (e.g., within the École de la Magistrature or Police Academies) should be scaled up to enhance technical sustainability.

4. Local Ownership and Stakeholder Commitment

Local stakeholders, including CSOs and some provincial authorities, showed strong ownership:

- Local organisations co-designed and implemented many activities, particularly around transitional justice, HRD protection, and detention monitoring.

- OPDs (Organisations of Disabled Persons) demonstrated increased advocacy capacity and engagement with policymaking spaces.

However, full local ownership was **constrained by structural barriers**, such as lack of funding autonomy, limited formal recognition, and insufficient access to national decision-making platforms.

5. Legal and Policy Frameworks Supporting Long-Term Impact

The programme made tangible contributions to the legal framework for human rights:

- The **Presidential Decree on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities** and the **Ministerial Decree on HRDs** create a policy foundation for continuity.
- The **National Roadmap on Transitional Justice** represents a strategic opportunity to institutionalise truth-seeking and reparations.

Nonetheless, the **gap between legal frameworks and implementation** remains significant. Delays in adopting enabling decrees, allocating implementation budgets, or assigning responsible agencies undermine the potential for sustained impact.

6. Social and Behavioral Change

The programme contributed to measurable changes in awareness, attitudes, and behaviours related to human rights at various levels:

- **Increased awareness and public discourse on sensitive issues** such as conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs), and protection of human rights defenders (HRDs) was observed across multiple provinces. For instance, in **Kananga**, public radio programmes co-produced with local youth organisations addressed taboo topics such as sexual violence and stigma, prompting call-in debates and community dialogues involving traditional leaders and survivors.
- **Progressive shifts in attitudes among judicial actors** were reported, especially in areas where OHCHR facilitated joint trainings and mentoring. In **Kisangani**, magistrates and prison officials participating in CRSV capacity-building activities adopted more rights-respecting practices, such as improving the conditions of pre-trial detainees, documenting rights violations, and increasing compliance with due process standards.
- In **Lubumbashi**, following OHCHR-led workshops on disability rights, local civil society partners documented increased openness from municipal officials to include OPDs in planning meetings, and physical access improvements were initiated at a provincial courthouse to accommodate wheelchair users.
- In **Tshikapa**, traditional leaders who had previously opposed women's participation in transitional justice hearings were reported to have supported inclusive consultation processes after engagement with OHCHR and local CSOs, marking a notable attitudinal shift.

These examples demonstrate that the programme not only influenced policy and institutional frameworks but also contributed to **gradual normative and cultural shifts**, particularly among state actors and community gatekeepers. Nonetheless, the scale and consistency of

these changes vary by region and are often contingent upon continued engagement and support.

7. Risk Mitigation and External Factors

Several contextual and operational risks were managed effectively:

- **Election-related volatility** and shrinking civic space were addressed through early warning systems and contingency planning.
- The programme showed **adaptability** in responding to armed conflict dynamics and COVID-19-related constraints in 2022–2023.

Nonetheless, external risks remain high:

- **Political instability**, especially post-elections, may reverse some human rights gains.
- The **planned withdrawal of MONUSCO** raises questions about the continued capacity for joint field monitoring and protection.
- Donor fatigue and shifting geopolitical priorities may affect future funding levels.

A forward-looking sustainability strategy—integrated into programming from the outset and linked with national development plans—is crucial for safeguarding and scaling the programme's gains.

EQ: Are local stakeholders able and committed to continue working on human rights issues addressed by the programme?

8. Stakeholder Ownership and Motivation

The evaluation found strong indications of stakeholder ownership and commitment across civil society and selected public institutions, though the depth and sustainability of this ownership vary by actor and context.

- **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)**, including Human Rights Defenders' networks, women's groups, and OPDs, demonstrated high motivation to continue advocacy and monitoring activities. Many of these groups were closely involved in programme planning and implementation, which fostered a sense of co-responsibility for outcomes. Several CSOs have independently continued outreach campaigns and legal aid clinics in Kasai and Haut-Katanga even after the formal end of OHCHR-supported activities.
- **Provincial authorities and decentralized judicial actors**, particularly in Kananga, Lubumbashi, and Kisangani, expressed increased willingness to support local human rights initiatives. In Kananga, for example, the prosecutor's office partnered with civil society to hold public legal education sessions, inspired by training received under the programme.
- **Organisations of Disabled Persons (OPDs)** and transitional justice survivors' associations showed a high level of commitment and mobilization capacity. Their ability to contribute to legal reforms (such as the disability rights decree) and to engage in shadow reporting illustrates growing organisational maturity.

However, challenges persist:

- Many local actors lack **independent funding sources** or reliable access to capacity-building opportunities, making their continued action vulnerable to resource constraints.
- Some **duty-bearers (e.g., police, military justice authorities)** remain passive or reactive in the absence of donor-funded incentives or direct OHCHR involvement.
- **Institutional inertia**, turnover, and low prioritization of human rights by central authorities limit national-level follow-up on provincial initiatives.

Despite these challenges, the evaluation concludes that there is a solid base of **locally driven momentum**, particularly among rights holders and civil society. Sustained support through small grants, accompaniment, and inclusion in national planning processes will be key to maintaining this positive trajectory.

2.7 Gender, disability, and human rights integration

EQ: Did the programme contribute to gender equality, disability inclusion, and LNOB, ensuring benefits for women, PWDs, indigenous peoples, LGBTQI, and vulnerable groups?

This section assesses how effectively the programme integrated a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to inclusion and equality, with a focus on gender, disability, and marginalized populations. It explores both policy-level and operational achievements, grounded in the principle of **Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)**.

1. Programme Accessibility and Participation

The programme prioritized outreach to and inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized populations across its six thematic pillars. Measures taken to enhance accessibility included:

- **Decentralized implementation** in marginalized and conflict-affected provinces (e.g., Tshikapa, Kananga, Kolwezi), enabling local communities to participate in transitional justice consultations and HRD protection dialogues.
- **Partnerships with grassroots organisations** representing women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and indigenous peoples, especially in Kasai, Haut-Katanga, and Tshopo.
- FGDs confirmed that **language adaptation, physical accessibility, and local facilitators** were used in select initiatives, but coverage remained uneven due to logistical and funding limitations.

2. Institutional and Policy Impact on Gender Equality and Inclusion

The programme contributed to strengthening the legal and policy environment for gender and disability inclusion:

- Supported the **adoption of the Presidential Decree on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities**, a landmark policy advancing the rights of PWDs.

- Contributed to the **mainstreaming of gender equality in transitional justice processes**, through technical inputs to the national roadmap and coordination with the Ministry of Gender.
- Collaborated with provincial and national stakeholders to enhance **representation of women and PWDs** in public consultations and reporting to international human rights mechanisms.

However, **intersectional approaches** to inclusion—particularly targeting LGBTQI persons and indigenous communities—remained underdeveloped, with few dedicated initiatives or disaggregated data collection.

3. Capacity Building and Training

The programme implemented targeted capacity building to strengthen inclusion practices among both duty bearers and civil society:

- Over 200 actors (including magistrates, police officers, civil society leaders) received **training on gender-sensitive investigation and protection of vulnerable populations**.
- OPDs were capacitated to **participate in national reporting mechanisms** (e.g., CRPD, UPR) and to contribute to national policy dialogues.
- While general human rights training was inclusive of LNOB principles, **specialized modules on LGBTQI rights, intersectionality, and indigenous peoples** were rare or ad hoc.

4. Programme Services and Support for Marginalized Groups

The programme ensured service delivery to high-risk groups:

- **Women survivors of CRSV** benefitted from legal aid, referrals, and mobile court access in Kananga, Tshikapa, and Lubumbashi.
- **HRDs from vulnerable communities** (e.g., youth, women, LGBTQI) received psychosocial support, risk assessments, and safe relocation where necessary.
- Despite these services, many participants in FGDs reported a **lack of consistent follow-up, especially in rural and displaced populations**.

5. LNOB and Community Engagement

The LNOB principle was reflected in the programme's participatory processes:

- **Community consultations**, including with displaced persons and minority groups, informed policy and legal reform processes such as the HRD and transitional justice frameworks.
- The programme helped **amplify local voices in international spaces**—e.g., via shadow reports and testimony during special procedures or treaty body reviews.
- However, there was limited systematization of **monitoring disaggregated outcomes** for groups like LGBTQI persons or indigenous populations, which limits accountability for inclusive impact.

6. Perceived Effectiveness and Satisfaction

Stakeholders interviewed during field visits widely recognized the programme's role in raising awareness, access, and protection for marginalized populations:

- **Women leaders and OPD representatives** expressed appreciation for OHCHR's commitment to inclusion and requested long-term institutionalization of such support.
- **Some youth and LGBTQI participants** felt their needs were insufficiently addressed, citing tokenistic engagement or lack of tailored programming.
- Overall satisfaction with inclusion practices was high among direct partners, but **broader population-level perception of impact remains modest** due to communication and outreach constraints.

Summary of Key Achievements and Gaps

Area	**Achievements**	**Remaining Gaps**
Gender Equality	Legal and policy engagement; survivor support	Inconsistent integration across all pillars
Disability Inclusion	Decree adoption; OPD capacity building	Weak provincial-level implementation
LNOB	Strong CSO engagement; local consultation	Limited intersectional programming and data tracking

3. Lessons Learned

This section presents key lessons drawn from the implementation of the programme, with implications for OHCHR, national partners, donors, and other stakeholders. These lessons are intended to inform future human rights programming in fragile, conflict-affected, and transitional contexts like the DRC.

1. Strategic Lessons for OHCHR and Partners

- **Long-term presence and decentralized implementation build trust and local legitimacy.** The sustained presence of OHCHR field offices (e.g., in Kananga, Kisangani, Lubumbashi) allowed for deep engagement with provincial actors and communities. This geographical anchoring enhanced access, visibility, and responsiveness. Future programming should preserve and expand decentralized deployment to strengthen territorial coverage and risk mitigation.
- **Linking upstream policy engagement with downstream service delivery increases impact and credibility.** The programme effectively bridged high-level legal reform (e.g., disability decree, HRD protection decree) with practical interventions (e.g., legal aid, mobile courts). This dual approach generated visibility, beneficiary confidence, and policy traction.
- **Joint programming within UN missions (e.g., MONUSCO) adds value but requires clearer coordination protocols.** While the OHCHR–MONUSCO Joint Office benefitted from synergies, field evidence suggests that coordination in planning, reporting, and resource allocation remains uneven. Clearer delineation of roles and formal coordination frameworks would enhance joint effectiveness.

2. Thematic Lessons on Human Rights Programming

- **Inclusion strategies must be intersectional and context sensitive.** While women, youth, and PWDs were generally well represented, LGBTQI persons, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups were less systematically targeted. Future programmes should embed intersectional analysis in all phases—from design and risk analysis to monitoring and evaluation.
- **Transitional justice initiatives require long-term investment and institutional anchoring.** The national roadmap on transitional justice is a significant achievement. However, provincial uptake remains limited. Lessons from community dialogues, survivor associations, and legal clinics should inform a national strategy focused on reparations, truth-seeking, and institutional reform.
- **CRSV and detention-related interventions are effective entry points for broader rule of law reform.** Interventions targeting these violations not only improve accountability but also catalyse systemic changes in judicial and security institutions. Scaling up these entry points can strengthen state legitimacy and justice system responsiveness.

3. Operational Lessons from Field Implementation

- **Multi-stakeholder engagement enhances relevance and sustainability.** Successful interventions (e.g., detention monitoring, HRD protection) involved

coordinated action between CSOs, magistrates, prison officials, and security forces. Structured platforms and co-designed activities increase ownership and impact.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems must include qualitative, disaggregated data.** While the programme produced solid quantitative reporting, disaggregated data (by sex, age, disability, etc.) and outcome-level indicators were insufficiently integrated. Future M&E frameworks should be adapted to track change in complex and sensitive human rights contexts.
- **Flexibility and adaptive management are essential in fragile settings.** The programme demonstrated strong adaptability—reprogramming activities in response to conflict, elections, and civic space shrinkage. This agility is a key strength to maintain in similar contexts.

4. Context-Specific and Transferrable Insights

- **In contexts of fluctuating political will, legal reform must be paired with bottom-up pressure and watchdog mechanisms.** Legal gains in the DRC risk stagnation without civil society monitoring and international advocacy. Future support should reinforce both institutional and citizen accountability mechanisms.
- **Small-scale, high-visibility interventions can trigger broader change.** Mobile courts, site visits (e.g., FRIVAO memorial), and HRD support initiatives—though modest in scale—had outsized influence in demonstrating state responsiveness and elevating human rights narratives.
- **Human rights programmes should embed conflict sensitivity and do-no-harm approaches as standard practice.** Given the DRC's volatile environment, further investment in conflict analysis, local perception mapping, and participatory risk mitigation is necessary to avoid unintended consequences.

4. Good Practices

This section highlights notable practices that proved particularly effective or innovative during the implementation of the programme. These practices offer replicable models for other human rights programmes in fragile or transitional settings, and are aligned with OHCHR's global strategic objectives.

1. Mobile Courts for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) and Detention Cases

The deployment of **mobile courts** in remote or underserved areas (e.g., Tshikapa, Kananga, Lubumbashi) enabled the prosecution of serious human rights violations, including CRSV and prolonged unlawful detention. These courts served both a **justice delivery** and **symbolic function**, bringing accountability closer to affected communities.

- **Innovative aspects:** Legal support to victims, community outreach, and media coverage to reinforce deterrence and awareness on the one hand, but also (and mainly) judicial protection to avoid retaliation through anonymization of the witnesses on the other hand.
- **Impact:** Reinforced public trust in judicial institutions, reduced case backlog, and empowered survivors, particularly women, to seek redress.
- **Replicability:** Mobile court models can be scaled to other provinces and institutionalised within national judicial strategy frameworks.

2. Survivor-Led Transitional Justice Consultations

The programme facilitated **community-level transitional justice dialogues**, especially in conflict-affected areas, ensuring survivor voices informed the **national roadmap on transitional justice**.

- **Innovative aspects:** Inclusion of marginalized voices (e.g., widows, ex-detainees, victims of CRSV), use of culturally sensitive dialogue methods, and linkage between grassroots consultations and policy drafting.
- **Impact:** Enhanced legitimacy of the transitional justice process; strengthened survivor associations and community-based truth-seeking networks.
- **Replicability:** The model can be replicated in other post-conflict regions with appropriate localization and support for long-term follow-up.

3. Protection and Accompaniment Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

The programme supported a **multi-layered protection framework for HRDs**, including legal aid, psychosocial support, temporary relocation, and coordination with national authorities.

- **Innovative aspects:** Establishment of HRD focal points in provincial authorities; use of secure referral pathways; and sustained engagement with Ministries of Justice, Interior, and Human Rights to promote the **Decree on HRD Protection**.
- **Impact:** Mitigated risks to frontline defenders, reduced arbitrary arrests, and increased the visibility and credibility of HRD work.

- **Replicability:** A protection mechanism that integrates legal, psychological, and institutional components is a good practice for other fragile contexts.

4. Disability-Inclusive Legal Reform and Empowerment

OHCHR's support to OPDs culminated in the **Presidential Decree on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, one of the most inclusive legislative gains of the programme.

- **Innovative aspects:** Use of inclusive participatory methods to engage OPDs in legal drafting; technical support for shadow reporting under the CRPD; and advocacy capacity building of grassroots OPDs.
- **Impact:** Institutionalisation of disability rights within national policy; stronger OPD representation in public discourse and monitoring.
- **Replicability:** The model of pairing legal reform with grassroots empowerment is replicable in other contexts aiming for inclusion and legislative change.

5. Memorialization and Public Awareness Campaigns (FRIVAO Memorial – Kisangani)

The support to the **FRIVAO Memorial** in Kisangani, a site commemorating victims of state-led repression, served as an anchor for **memory, public education, and reconciliation**.

- **Innovative aspects:** Community-led design and maintenance; integration of storytelling and art-based documentation of past atrocities.
- **Impact:** Strengthened local ownership of reconciliation efforts; helped survivors and communities reframe historical trauma and promote non-recurrence.
- **Replicability:** Memorials can be important peacebuilding tools when designed with communities and linked to justice and education efforts.

5. Conclusions

This chapter synthesises the key findings of the evaluation and offers a summative judgement on the programme's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. It also reflects on the design logic and operational model of the programme, highlighting its overall contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights in the DRC.

1. Overall Contribution to Human Rights in the DRC

The OHCHR–MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Programme made a **significant and strategic contribution to the advancement of human rights in the DRC** during the 2022–2024 implementation period. The programme responded to core protection needs, supported institutional reform, and helped shape legal and policy frameworks at both national and provincial levels.

By embedding human rights work within a fragile and conflict-affected context, the programme addressed immediate protection needs while laying the groundwork for long-term transformation. Key areas of impact include transitional justice, CRSV accountability, the protection of human rights defenders (HRDs), legal empowerment of persons with disabilities, and enhanced human rights monitoring and reporting capacity.

2. Findings by Evaluation Criteria

Summary

- **Relevance:** The programme was highly relevant to the national human rights context, OHCHR's mandate, and the priorities of rights holders and duty bearers alike. It aligned with the SDGs and donor strategies, especially Sweden's emphasis on civic space, gender equality, and justice.
- **Coherence:** The programme demonstrated effective coordination with local and international actors, though internal communication and synergies between OHCHR units and MONUSCO could be further optimised.
- **Effectiveness:** Despite resource constraints, the programme achieved strong results across all six thematic pillars. Its field presence and partnerships enabled it to reach marginalized groups and influence both state and non-state actors.
- **Efficiency:** Human and financial resources were well utilized, with some limitations in staff continuity and M&E systems. Administrative flexibility allowed the programme to adapt rapidly to changing conditions on the ground.
- **Impact:** The programme contributed to structural and systemic changes, including institutional reforms, legal protections, and shifts in access to justice for vulnerable groups.
- **Sustainability:** While many achievements are durable, continued support is needed to consolidate gains, especially in provincial jurisdictions and civil society. The commitment of local actors was strong, though challenged by capacity and funding gaps.
- **Gender, Disability and Human Rights integration** : targeted interventions for women, survivors of CRSV, and persons with disabilities.

Relevance

The programme demonstrated a high degree of relevance to the DRC's dynamic and often volatile human rights context. It was explicitly aligned with OHCHR's global mandate to promote and protect human rights and addressed critical thematic priorities for the country, including the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), the protection of civic space, the promotion of transitional justice, and the inclusion of marginalized populations such as persons with disabilities (PWDs) and women.

The programme was also tailored to respond to national and regional frameworks, including the DRC's legal reform agenda, national transitional justice roadmap, and disability rights commitments. At the donor level, it closely matched Sweden's Development Cooperation Strategy in emphasising civic engagement, gender equality, access to justice, and protection of human rights defenders (HRDs). Stakeholders interviewed—including CSOs, judicial actors, and victims' groups—confirmed the programme's relevance to their lived realities, reinforcing its grounding in local needs and priorities.

Coherence

The programme was generally coherent with existing UN frameworks, national plans, and donor priorities. It complemented other human rights and rule-of-law initiatives by UNDP, MONUSCO, and EU partners, though coordination mechanisms varied in quality and formality. At the local level, the programme worked collaboratively with magistrates, the military justice system, Civil Society Organisations, and local government representatives. This contributed to greater synergy and reduced duplication.

However, the evaluation identified **coordination challenges between OHCHR units and MONUSCO structures**, particularly in relation to planning cycles, financial management, and administrative processes. While the Joint Human Rights Office format offers potential for integration, more structured internal coordination protocols are needed to ensure strategic coherence and efficiency.

Effectiveness

The programme delivered strong results across its six thematic pillars, notably in:

- Advancing legal reform (e.g., the Decree on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the HRD Protection Decree),
- Supporting judicial follow-up on CRSV and arbitrary detention through mobile courts,
- Promoting transitional justice at national and community levels,
- Enabling survivors and PWDs to engage in policy processes.

These achievements were made possible despite resource constraints and a volatile operational context. The **field presence of OHCHR**, especially in conflict-affected provinces (e.g., Kasai, Haut-Katanga), played a crucial role in reaching marginalized groups. Feedback from rights holders and duty bearers confirmed the programme's contribution to improving access to justice, protection mechanisms, and institutional responsiveness.

Efficiency

The programme made good use of available human, financial, and technical resources. The flexible and adaptive management approach allowed for real-time adjustments in response to security developments, political changes, and civic space dynamics. For example, activities were redirected to safer provinces during electoral unrest, and support to HRDs was reprogrammed to address new patterns of risk.

However, challenges in **staff continuity**, particularly in technical and administrative support roles, affected institutional memory and implementation timelines. Similarly, **M&E systems were functional but not fully optimised**, with some gaps in outcome-level tracking and data disaggregation. Nevertheless, partners noted the responsiveness and accessibility of OHCHR teams, highlighting the programme's comparative advantage in being both technically competent and operationally agile.

Impact

The programme's contributions extended beyond outputs to measurable **systemic and structural impacts**. These include:

- The establishment of legal frameworks (e.g., HRD and disability rights decrees),
- Institutional changes in the justice and security sectors (e.g., magistrate trainings, prison monitoring),
- The empowerment of survivor groups and grassroots organisations,
- Enhanced civic engagement and public awareness of rights.

While attributing long-term impact solely to OHCHR is difficult due to the presence of multiple actors, the programme's role in convening, capacity building, and norm-setting was widely acknowledged. Several interviewees cited the programme as a catalyst for broader reforms and as a source of technical guidance that strengthened institutional credibility.

Sustainability

The programme made meaningful investments in the **institutional, legal, and social foundations for sustainability**. Legal frameworks developed with OHCHR support are now part of national policy architecture. In several provinces, stakeholder networks (e.g., HRD platforms, transitional justice coalitions) have shown capacity to continue independently, albeit with resource constraints.

Nonetheless, sustainability remains uneven:

- **Institutional absorption** of new norms and practices is slower at the central level due to political instability and limited budgetary allocations.
- **Civil Society Organisations**, while motivated, struggle with financial sustainability and risk exposure.
- **Provincial authorities** expressed willingness to sustain initiatives but lack dedicated funding or formal mandates.

The durability of programme outcomes will depend on continued accompaniment, funding for local actors, and political will to uphold human rights commitments.

3. Reflections on Programme Logic and Design

The programme's design was grounded in a comprehensive Theory of Change linking institutional reforms with local protection mechanisms and inclusive policy engagement. This logic proved sound and adaptive, particularly in the context of persistent insecurity, limited state presence, and shrinking civic space.

However, the evaluation identified a few areas for improvement:

- **Stronger integration of intersectional inclusion strategies**, particularly with respect to LGBTQI persons, indigenous communities, and youth.
- **Clearer internal coordination mechanisms** between OHCHR field offices, thematic units, and administrative units to ensure coherent implementation and learning.
- **Enhanced M&E systems** with better outcome-level indicators and disaggregated data to track real-time progress and enable evidence-based adjustments.

4. Final conclusions

The programme met and, in many cases, exceeded expectations in delivering on its human rights mandate in a challenging operating environment. It combined **strategic policy work, community engagement, and responsive protection mechanisms** in a coherent and context-sensitive manner.

Its greatest strengths lay in:

- The **territorial decentralisation** and proximity to vulnerable populations.
- Its ability to **influence legal and policy reform** while supporting grassroots action.
- Its role as a **trusted convener and technical authority** in the human rights landscape of the DRC.

The programme stands as a compelling model for OHCHR's field engagement in complex settings and offers numerous lessons for replication and scale-up.

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions and lessons learned mentioned above, the evaluation suggests the following recommendations emphasizing sustainability, transition planning, protection mechanisms, and the continuation of core human rights functions beyond MONUSCO's withdrawal.

A. Strategic and Cross-Cutting Recommendations

1. Establish a Transitional Coordination Mechanism with MONUSCO

- **To:** OHCHR DRC, MONUSCO, UNCT
- **Action:** Formalise a transitional unit for knowledge transfer, data-sharing, and handover of joint protection functions.
- **Timeframe:** Immediate (within 6 months)

- **Rationale:** Sustain human rights monitoring capacity post-MONUSCO and avoid gaps in protection and advocacy.

2. Update the Programme's Theory of Change and Risk Matrix

- **To:** OHCHR DRC, HQ
- **Action:** Reflect shifting conflict dynamics, electoral risks, and state fragility in programme planning tools.
- **Timeframe:** 6–9 months
- **Rationale:** Enable adaptive programming in response to escalating conflict and civic space constraints.

3. Strengthen M&E Systems and Disaggregation Practices

- **To:** OHCHR DRC M&E Unit
- **Action:** Align with the OHCHR Management Plan and Performance Monitoring System (PMS); ensure gender, age, and disability disaggregation in reporting.
- **Timeframe:** 6–12 months
- **Rationale:** Improve programmatic learning and accountability across all thematic areas.

B. Thematic and Operational Recommendations

4. Operationalise the HRD Protection Decree at Provincial Level

- **To:** Ministry of Human Rights, OHCHR
- **Action:** Support provincial focal points, complaint mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder monitoring platforms.
- **Timeframe:** 12–18 months
- **Rationale:** Institutionalize HRD protection beyond policy.

5. Accelerate Implementation of the Transitional Justice Roadmap

- **To:** Ministry of Justice, OHCHR, TJ Committee
- **Action:** Scale up victim-led consultations and reparations dialogues in conflict-affected zones.
- **Timeframe:** 2024–2026
- **Rationale:** Embed TJ in peacebuilding efforts and foster inclusive reconciliation.

6. Institutionalise Mobile Courts and Judicial Protection Mechanisms

- **To:** Ministry of Justice, OHCHR
- **Action:** Allocate budget lines and integrate mobile courts and victim/witness protection systems in routine justice delivery.
- **Timeframe:** 2025
- **Rationale:** Ensure survivors of CRSV and HRDs access justice safely and consistently.

7. Expand Training for Security and Justice Actors

- **To:** Judicial and Police Training Institutes, OHCHR
- **Action:** Embed human rights, CRSV, and disability rights curricula into security and justice academies.
- **Timeframe:** 2024–2025
- **Rationale:** Promote sustainable behavioural change in duty bearers.

8. Implement the Presidential Decree on PWD Rights via Costed Action Plans

- **To:** Ministry of Social Affairs, OHCHR
- **Action:** Develop national and provincial action plans with clear indicators and budgets.
- **Timeframe:** 2024–2025
- **Rationale:** Translate legal advances into rights in practice.

9. Strengthen Legal Aid Services and Bar Associations

- **To:** OHCHR, Bar Councils, Ministry of Justice
- **Action:** Support legal aid in underserved regions (e.g., Ituri, Kasai, Tanganyika), including CRSV, PWD, and electoral justice.
- **Timeframe:** 2024–2026
- **Rationale:** Broaden access to justice for vulnerable groups.

C. MONUSCO Transition and Sustainability Recommendations

10. Formalise Exit and Handover Strategies for MONUSCO-Aligned Functions

- **To:** OHCHR, MONUSCO Human Rights Division
- **Action:** Map joint activities, assign institutional responsibilities, and define transition timelines.
- **Timeframe:** Aligned with MONUSCO drawdown schedule
- **Rationale:** Ensure continuity in provinces reliant on MONUSCO logistics and protection.

11. Enhance Strategic Communication and Policy Engagement

- **To:** OHCHR Comms Team, Donors
- **Action:** Produce briefs, infographics, and advocacy content highlighting programme results and challenges (especially CRSV, HRDs, inclusion).
- **Timeframe:** Ongoing
- **Rationale:** Raise visibility and influence policy amid shrinking civic space.

12. Safeguard Civic Space During the Electoral Period

- **To:** OHCHR, Ministry of Interior, CENI, CSOs
- **Action:** Support civic education, election monitoring, and emergency response mechanisms for electoral violence and repression.
- **Timeframe:** Immediate and until end of electoral cycle
- **Rationale:** Civic space is under acute pressure due to conflict and political tensions.

D. Regional and Community-Based Recommendations

13. Promote Regional Human Rights Dialogue and Coordination

- **To:** OHCHR Regional Offices, AU, ICGLR
- **Action:** Establish regional forums on CRSV, displacement, and cross-border POC threats.
- **Timeframe:** 2025
- **Rationale:** Regional spillovers require integrated response strategies.

14. Strengthen Digital Protection for HRDs and CSOs

- **To:** OHCHR, Digital Rights NGOs
- **Action:** Provide digital security training, develop secure online documentation systems, and monitor digital threats.
- **Timeframe:** 2024–2025
- **Rationale:** HRDs face rising digital surveillance and cyber-harassment.

15. Foster Youth Participation in Human Rights Monitoring and Advocacy

- **To:** OHCHR, Youth Networks, Local CSOs
- **Action:** Establish youth-led community monitors, peer education groups, and advocacy platforms.
- **Timeframe:** 2024 onward
- **Rationale:** Youth are vital actors in civic engagement and future rights protection.