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1 Introduction

Violent conflict continues to rise globally. Around 2 billion people live in countries affected by conflict and this number is growing daily. The number of coups, failed transitions, and political deadlocks continue to rise, as do the challenges of building and keeping the peace. Sources of instability are ever more complex and interdependent. According to UNHCR, about 110 million people were forcibly displaced in 2023. Unless these trends can be reversed in the Decade of Action, more than 80% of the world's poor are expected to live in countries affected by fragility and high levels of violence by 2030.

Prevention saves lives and money. Yet, spending on crisis response, humanitarian efforts and recovery far outweighs spending on prevention. The UN-World Bank report 'Pathways for Peace'¹ suggests that, over the medium to long term, development partners would save between 2 and 7 USD for each 1 USD invested in prevention-related activities. Moving away from simply addressing outbreaks of violence and conflict and moving towards greater measures for prevention would save development partners billions. At the same time, to achieve peace, we must actively invest in peace. And to make peace sustainable, we must invest in development, recognizing the central role that institutions – formal and informal alike – play in ensuring that solutions are nationally-owned, long-term and effective.

Not all fragile situations are violent. Yet, the risk of violence is often higher in fragile settings with ineffective governance institutions. Such institutions constrain development and risk derailing hard-won development gains. Violent conflict shatters the capacity of core governance institutions to cope with, recover from and prevent future crises, leaving the public progressively more vulnerable to increased inequality and exclusion. This is compounded by a confluence of crises – natural disasters, climate change, pandemics like COVID-19, and financial crises – that reach around the globe impacting rich and poor countries alike, stretching already malfunctioning institutional capacities to breaking point. Lasting consequences are witnessed in worsening state provision of basic services and growing inequalities, especially for millions of the world's most vulnerable people, costing billions of dollars in damages and lost potential.

Given the urgent development challenges posed by fragility and conflict, it is important for UNDP to continue supporting Member States and societies in strengthening responsive, accountable and inclusive institutions at national and local levels to promote sustainable peace and development. This is crucially important to help (re) build an inclusive social contract, ensure effective service delivery, and restore public trust in core governance institutions that leave no one behind. The heightened significance of this work is evidenced by its inclusion in UNDP's Strategic Plans for 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, the UNDP Crisis Offer, the UN Sustaining Peace Agenda and the Secretary General's "Our Common Agenda". It contributes to UNDP Signature Solutions 2 and 3, which seek to build inclusive, effective, and accountable institutions and mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflict and for advancing social cohesion, and explicitly speak to crisis prevention and building resilience to diverse shocks and crises.

During the current Strategic Plan period (2022-2025), UNDP is working towards greater integration between those two signature solutions to provide countries with more holistic approaches to recovery and resilience while recognizing the need for tailored solutions. A crucial component is UNDP's work on strengthening and investing in accountable, inclusive, and responsive institutions for conflict and crisis prevention, sustainable peace, and development. To shape this future, and to understand UNDP's investments in these areas, it is useful to analyse the volume and focus of UNDP's past work in this area under the previous Strategic Plan (2018-2021).

¹ United Nations; World Bank. 2018. "United Nations; World Bank. 2018. Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>

For this purpose, the analysis below explores projects and budgets attributed to five outputs under UNDP's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 that are linked to strengthened institutions and capacities for conflict prevention and sustainable peace:



Output 1.1.2:

Marginalized groups, particularly the poor, women, people with disabilities and the displaced are empowered to gain universal access to basic services and financial and non-financial assets to build productive capacities and benefit from sustainable livelihoods and jobs (hereafter referred to as “inclusive access to basic services and assets”).



Output 2.3.1:

Data and risk-informed development policies, plans, systems and financing incorporate integrated and gender-responsive solutions to reduce disaster risks, enable climate change adaptation and mitigation, and prevent risk of conflict (hereafter referred to as “development policies for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), resilience, and conflict prevention”).



Output 3.1.1:

Core government functions and inclusive basic services restored post-crisis for stabilization, durable solutions to displacement and return to sustainable development pathways within the framework of national policies and priorities (hereafter referred to as “core government functions and service provision for recovery”).



Output 3.2.1:

National capacities strengthened for reintegration, reconciliation, peaceful management of conflict and prevention of violent extremism in response to national policies and priorities (hereafter referred to as “national capacities for peaceful conflict management and prevention of violent extremism”).



Output 3.3.2:

Gender-responsive and risk-informed mechanisms supported to build consensus, improve social dialogue and promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies (hereafter referred to as “mechanisms for peaceful societies”).

For the purposes of the analysis, projects and budgets allocated to these outputs are assessed in their entirety with acknowledgment that not all projects under these outputs directly relate to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and responsive institutions.

Main Takeaways

- ➔ There was a total of 2,017 projects recorded across the five outputs linked to strengthening institutions and capacities for conflict prevention and sustainable peace between 2018 and 2021. **A total budget of 8,048,352,210 USD was allocated to the five outputs over the same period.**
- ➔ **In comparison, a total of 7,758 projects were recorded for all Strategic Plan outputs from 2018 to 2021, with a total allocated budget of 24,114,326,317 USD. Thus, the five outputs linked to strengthening institutions and capacities for conflict prevention and sustainable peace made up more than a quarter (26%) of UNDP projects across all outputs in the last Strategic Plan period. These projects accounted for over a third (33%) of UNDP's budget in 2018-2021.**
- ➔ Among the five outputs, most of the implemented projects (916) contributed to inclusive access to basic services and assets (Output 1.1.2) and accounted for the greatest share of budget allocation (4.05 billion USD). In terms of number of projects, it was followed by development policies for DRR, resilience, and conflict prevention (Output 2.3.1) with 463 projects, whereas core government functions and service provision for recovery (Output 3.1.1) had the second largest allocated budget at 2.1 billion USD. This is likely due to stabilization programming with large corresponding budgets that fell under Output 3.1.1.
- ➔ Over the time span of the Strategic Plan between 2018 and 2021, the number of projects attributed to the five outputs barely changed. Only Output 2.3.1 (development policies for DRR, resilience and conflict prevention) saw a steady increase from 204 projects in 2018 to 293 projects in 2021. In contrast, budget allocations fluctuated more strongly between 2018 and 2021, especially for Outputs 3.1.1 and 1.1.2. While budget allocations for inclusive access to basic services and assets (Output 1.1.2) more than doubled from 880.3 million USD in 2018 to 1.2 billion USD in 2021, budget allocations for core government functions and service provision for recovery (Output 3.1.1) were cut by almost 60% from 813.5 million USD in 2018 to 345.2 million USD in 2021. These findings suggest a shift in priorities over the years.
- ➔ Overall, the different regions had similar numbers of projects attributed to the five outputs in question, apart from the Africa region which had a significantly larger number of projects (696). It is worth noting that different regional groupings include different numbers of countries, with Africa being the largest region. However, the Arab States region had the highest budget allocated to the five outputs (2.7 billion USD). This is likely due to stabilization projects that are focused on the Arab States region with large corresponding budgets.
- ➔ Judging by the number of implemented projects and corresponding budgets, each of the regions had a different focus in terms of thematic areas and outputs, which gives an indication of their priorities. In three regions, namely Africa, Europe and Central Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, the focus was on inclusive access to basic services and assets (Output 1.1.2) both in terms of number of projects and budget. In the Arab States region, UNDP and its partners prioritized core government functions and service provision for recovery (Output 3.1.1), including stabilization projects. The Asia and the Pacific region, on the other hand, focused on inclusive access to basic services assets (Output 1.1.2) and development policies for DRR, resilience and conflict prevention (Output 2.3.1), with more funding being allocated to output 1.1.2 while more projects were attributed to 2.3.1.

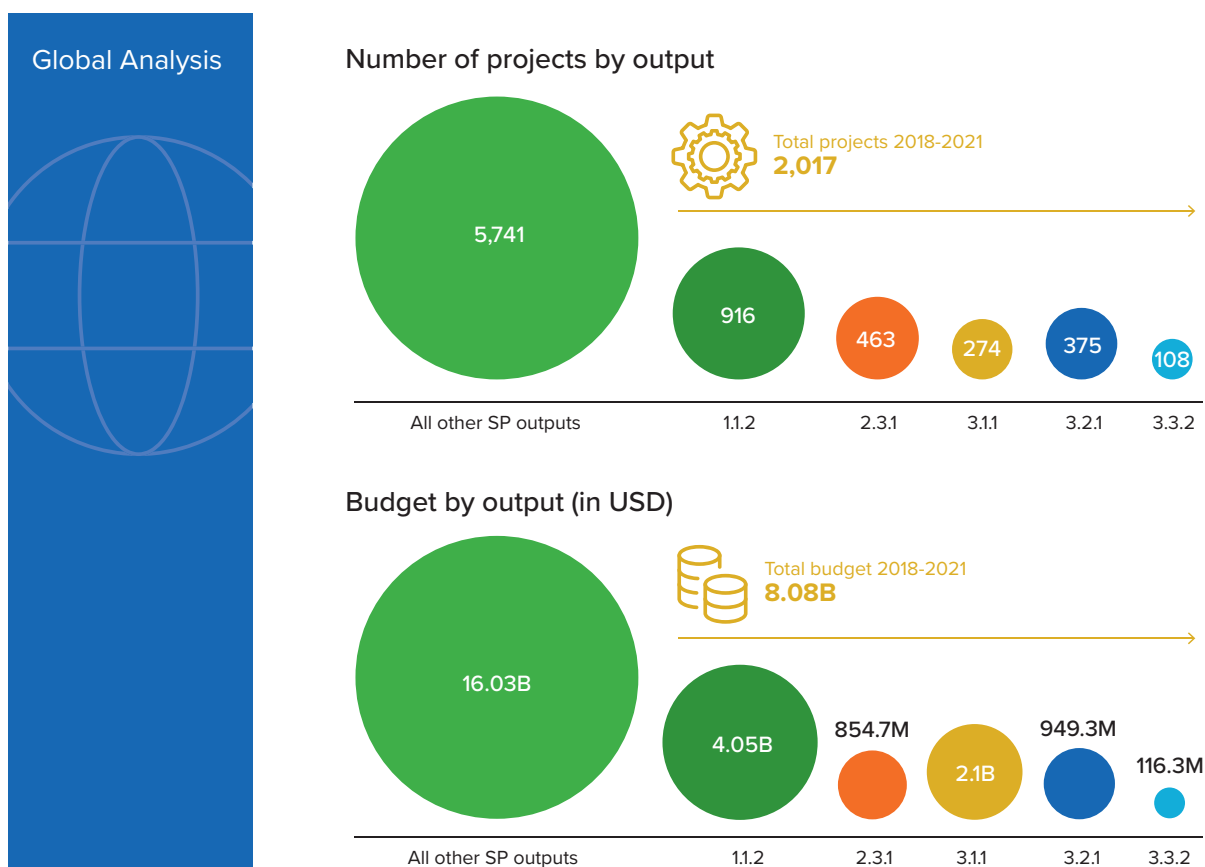
- ➔ Projects undertaken jointly by Country Offices and Regional Hubs in different regions as well as with other UNDP Bureaux and departments - such as the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS), Crisis Bureau (CB), Bureau of Management Services (BMS), Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy (BERA), the Human Development Report Office (HDRO), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and others – fairly evenly spread out over inclusive access to basic services and assets (Output 1.1.2), development policies for DRR, resilience and conflict prevention (Output 2.3.1), and national capacities for peaceful conflict management and prevention of violent extremism (Output 3.2.1). However, there was a striking imbalance in terms of budget allocations, with the allocated budget for Output 1.1.2 representing a manifold of the amounts attributed to the other outputs.
- ➔ Work by other UNDP entities, including BPPS, CB, BMS, BERA, and the HDRO covers all five outputs (although with considerably less projects than those delivered by Regional Bureaux) with most projects in the areas of core government functions and service provision for recovery (Output 3.1.1) and development policies for DRR, resilience and conflict prevention (Output 2.3.1). However, the budget allocation of these other UNDP entities is mainly attributed to Output 3.1.1.
- ➔ However, a high number of projects in a specific area is not always accompanied by a large budget as shown throughout the analysis. For example, looking at all five outputs taken together, while the Africa region had the highest number of projects, the Arab States region had the largest budget allocations. These differences are explored in more detail below.
- ➔ Overall, the findings emphasize that it is important for UNDP to invest in strengthening institutions and capacities for conflict prevention and sustainable peace. Prevention saves lives and money, and to achieve peace we must actively invest in peace and development, recognizing the central role that institutions – formal and informal alike – play in ensuring that solutions are nationally-owned, long-term and effective.
- ➔ Arguably, UNDP should continue to focus on these areas of work. During the current Strategic Plan period (2022-2025), UNDP is working towards greater integration of Signature Solutions 2 and 3, which seek to build inclusive, effective, and accountable institutions and mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflict and for advancing social cohesion, and explicitly speak to crisis prevention and building resilience to diverse shocks and crises.
- ➔ However, the stark drop in budgets for core government functions and service provision for recovery (3.1.1) while the number of projects remained steady might be an indication that UNDP had to work with reduced funding in this particular area. If we are serious about prevention and stabilization efforts, which are a key prerequisite for lasting peace and development, we need to intensify our efforts, develop partnerships, and mobilize the needed resources.

2 Global Analysis

There was a total of 2,017 projects recorded across the five outputs between 2018 and 2021.² A total budget of 8,079,540,916 USD was allocated to the five outputs, linked to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and responsive institutions, over the same period.

In comparison, a total of 7,758 projects were recorded for all Strategic Plan outputs from 2018 to 2021, with a total allocated budget of 24,114,326,317 USD. Thus, the five outputs linked to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and responsive institutions made up more than a quarter (26%) of UNDP projects across all outputs in the last Strategic Plan period. These projects were valued at over a third (34%) of UNDP's budget across the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan. Of that amount, the Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Responsive Institutions (CPPRI) Global Programme only received 11.9 million USD, or 0.15%, of that budget in 2018-2021. The majority of funds were allocated to Regional Bureaux and Country Offices, including for projects where CPPRI was involved.

Of the five outputs, Output 11.2 (i.e., inclusive access to basic services and assets) had most projects attributed (916) and the greatest budget allocation at the global level (4.05 billion USD). In terms of projects, it was followed by development policies for DRR, resilience and conflict prevention (Output 2.3.1) with 463 projects, whereas core government functions and service provision for recovery (Output 3.1.1) had a much higher allocated budget (2.1 billion USD). This is likely because large stabilization projects, for example in Iraq³, Somalia, and Sudan, with large corresponding budgets, fell under Output 3.1.1.



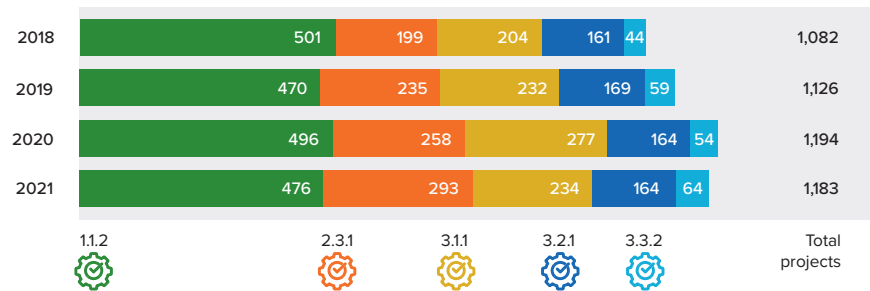
² For the purposes of the analysis, projects and budgets allocated to the five reviewed outputs are assessed in their entirety with acknowledgment that not all projects under these outputs directly relate to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and responsive institutions. Due to the way that projects are captured in the dataset, some projects covering several thematic areas may be recorded more than once under different outputs. Therefore, the following analysis and infographics provide an overview of how many projects were recorded under each output, understanding that the total number of projects may differ from the sum of projects under each output. Rather than providing exact figures, this analysis seeks to showcase priorities and trends on the basis of available data.

³ Particularly large budgets were allocated to the Funding Facility for Iraq and the Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience project, with partial involvement of the Colombo Regional Centre (CRC).

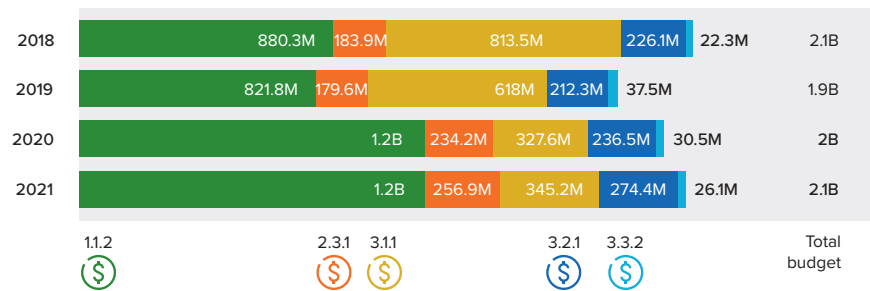
Over the time span of the Strategic Plan between 2018 and 2021, the number of projects attributed to the five outputs barely changed. Only Output 2.3.1 (development policies for DRR, resilience and conflict prevention) saw a steady increase from 204 projects in 2018 to 293 projects in 2021. In contrast, budget allocations fluctuated more strongly between 2018 and 2021, especially for Outputs 3.1.1 and 1.1.2. While budget allocations for inclusive access to basic services and assets (Output 1.1.2) more than doubled from 880.3 million in 2018 to 1.2 billion in 2021, budget allocations for core government functions and service provision for recovery (Output 3.1.1) were cut by almost 60% from 813.5 million in 2018 to 345.2 million in 2021. These findings suggest a shift in priorities over the Strategic Plan period.



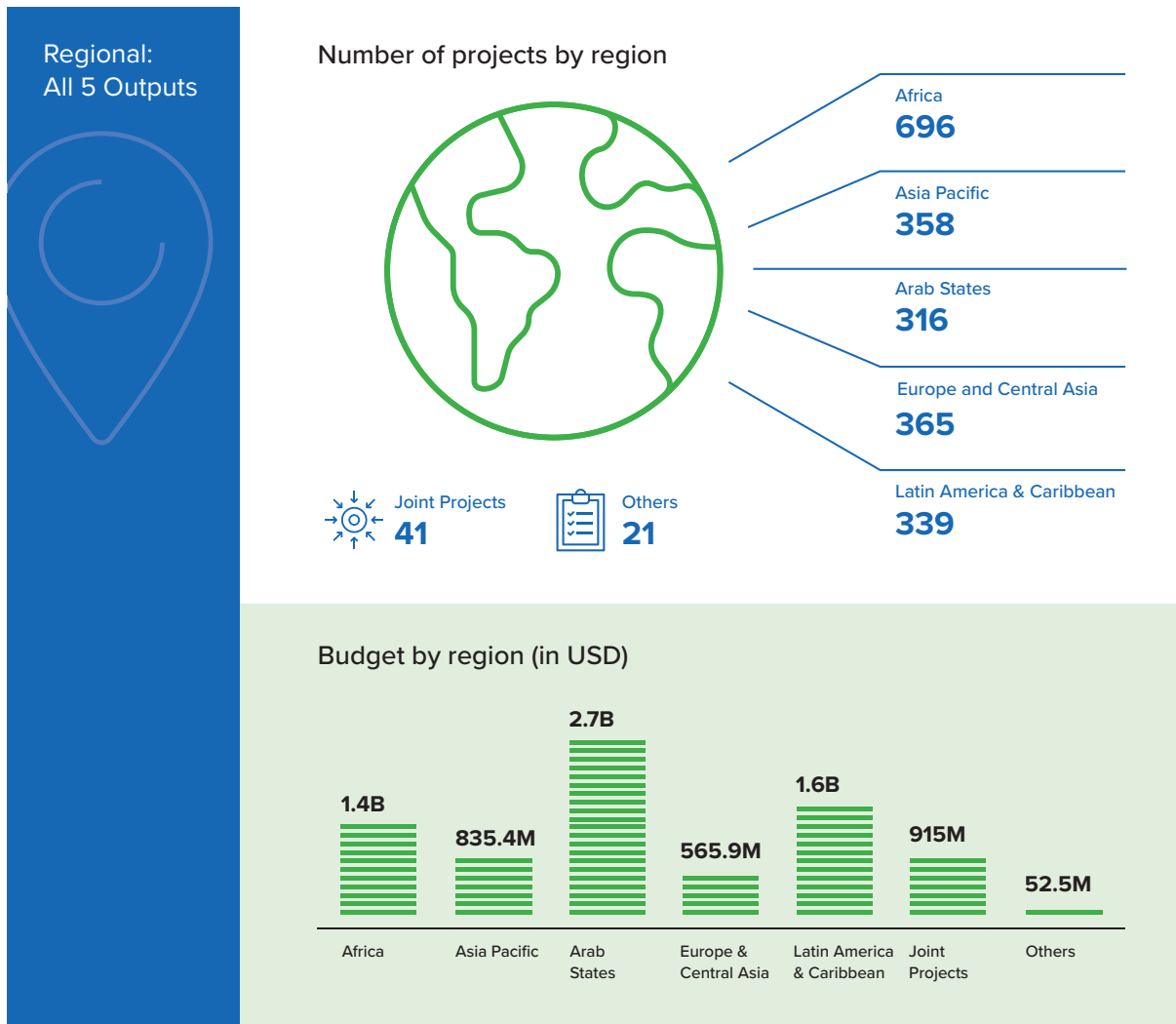
Number of projects by output over time (2018-2021)



Budget by output over time (2018-2021)



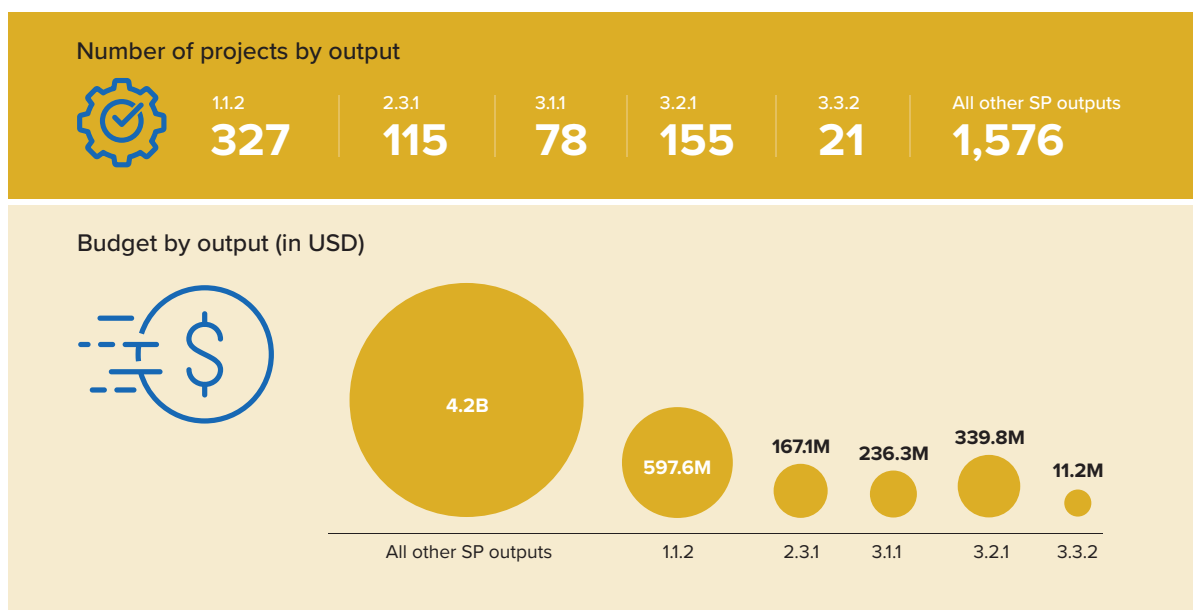
The different UNDP regions had a similar distribution of projects attributed to the five outputs with the exception of the Africa region, which had a significantly larger number of projects (696). It is worth noting that different regional groupings include different numbers of countries, with Africa being the largest region. However, the Arab States region had the highest budget allocated to the five outputs (2.7 billion USD). Again, this is mainly due to big budget stabilization programming targeting the Arab States region.



3 Regional Analysis

Judging by the number of implemented projects and corresponding budgets, each of the regions had a different focus in terms of thematic areas and outputs, which gives an indication of their priorities.⁴ As seen in the following graphics, the Africa region focused on inclusive access to basic services and assets (Output 1.1.2) both in terms of number of projects (327) and budget (597.6 million USD). Together, the five outputs made up 31% of projects and 24% of budget allocations across the Strategic Plan in the region.

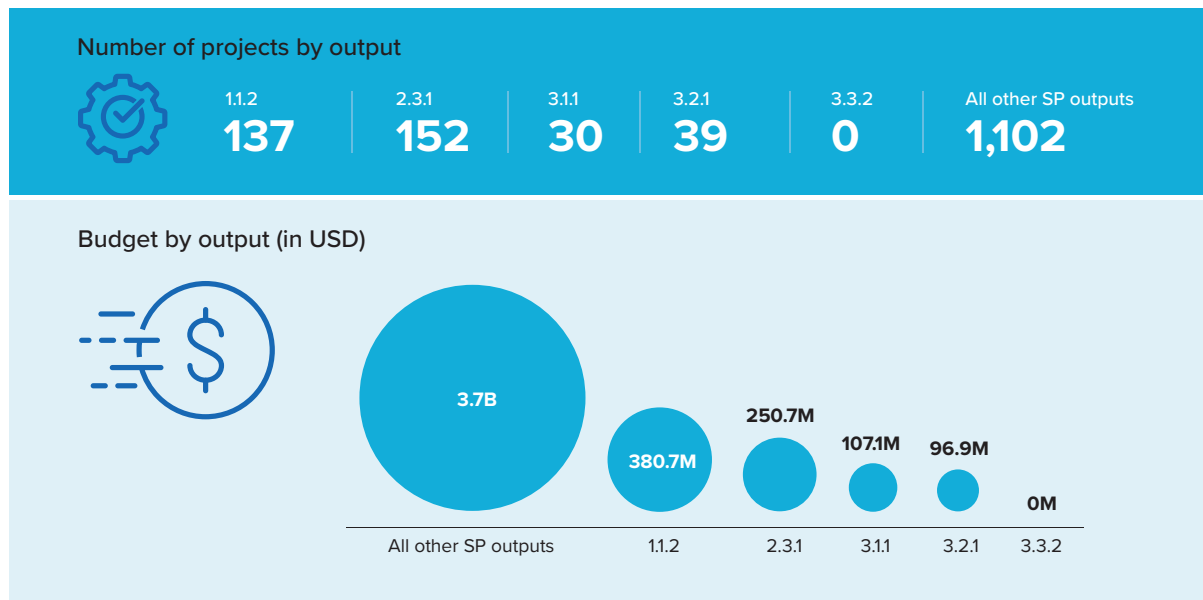
Regional Analysis: Africa



⁴ For this analysis, the indicated numbers of projects and budget allocations per region reflect those projects that were implemented under the umbrella of each UNDP Regional Bureau. In addition, budget allocations and number of projects were also analyzed for i) "joint projects", i.e. projects that were implemented across different regions or with involvement other UNDP Bureaux and units such as BPPS, CB, BMS, BERA, HDRO, and others; and ii) projects that were implemented by "others", i.e. projects with sole responsibility by BPPS, CB, BMS, BERA, HDRO, and others.

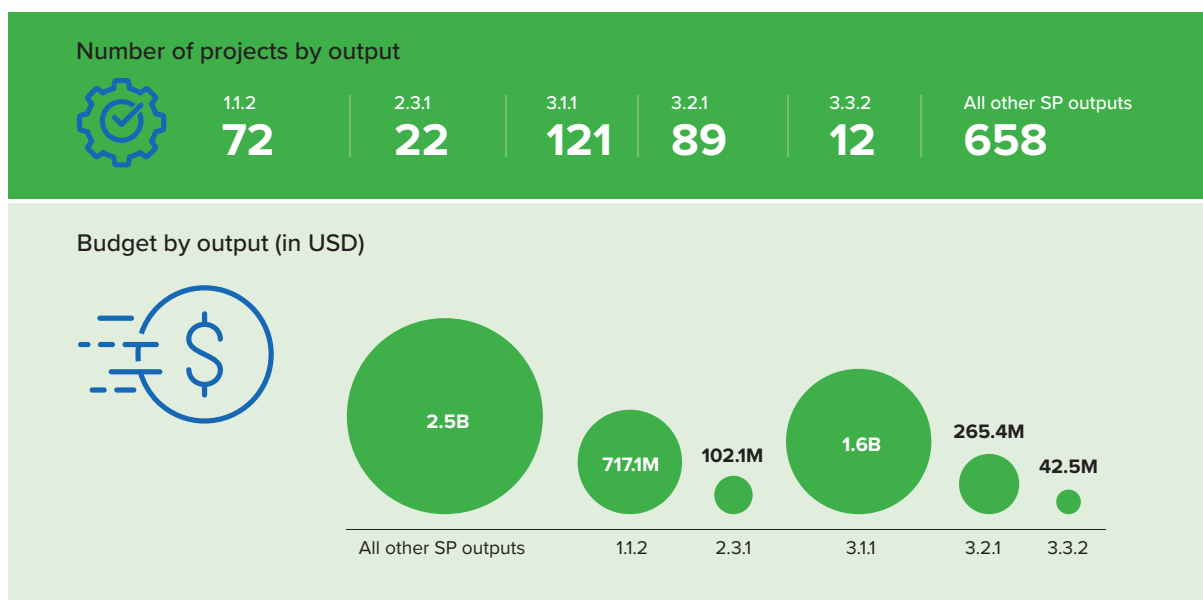
Similarly, the Asia and the Pacific region also prioritized inclusive access to basic services and assets (Output 1.1.2) in terms of budget allocation (380.7 million USD), whereas a larger quantity of projects (152) was attributed to Output 2.3.1 (i.e., development policies for DRR, resilience and conflict prevention). Together, the five related outputs made up 25% of the projects and 18% of budget allocations across the Strategic Plan in the region.

Regional Analysis: Asia Pacific



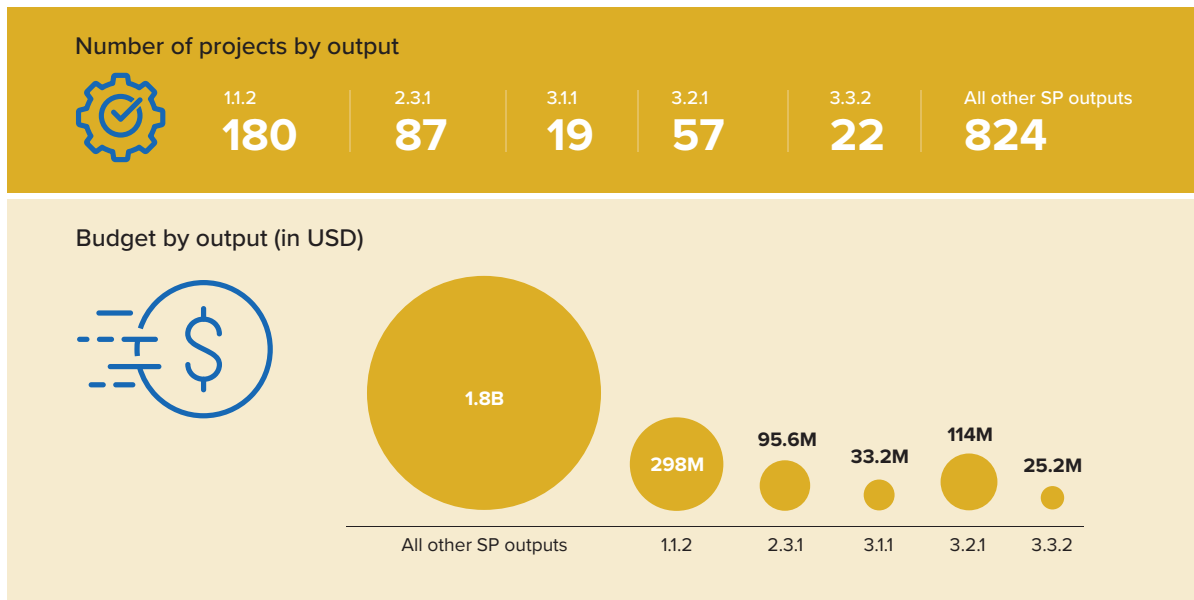
In contrast, the Arab States region placed its focus on core government functions and service provision for recovery (Output 3.1.1) both in terms of the number of projects (121) and budget (1.6 billion USD). While 32% of RBAS projects were attributed to the five outputs related to strengthened institutions and capacities for conflict prevention and sustainable peace, the Arab States region stood out among the region as 52% of its overall budget across the Strategic Plan (5.2 billion USD) were allocated to its own projects under these five outputs, with a clear focus on core government functions and service provision for recovery (Output 3.1.1) and inclusive access to basic services and assets (Output 1.1.2). In addition, it is worth noting that UNDP Arab States contributed a large chunk of the 96.8 million USD budget allocated to joint projects with other UNDP entities and Bureaux under Output 3.2.1 (see figure below), especially through the Iraq Social Cohesion Programme and the Strengthening Capacities for Conflict Prevention project in Iraq.

Regional Analysis: Arab States



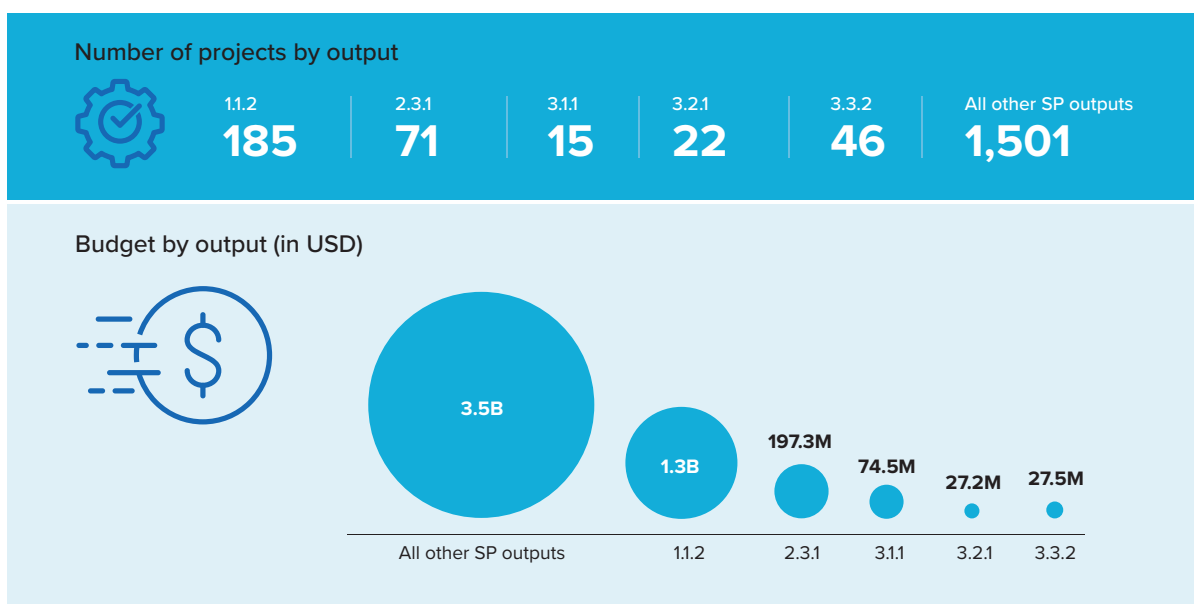
The Europe and Central Asia region had a very clear focus on inclusive access to basic services and assets (Output 1.1.2) both in terms of the number of projects (180) and budget (297.9 million USD). The budget allocated to the five outputs in question amounted to 24% of the overall budget allocations across all Strategic Plan outputs (2.4 billion USD) in the region, whereas 31% of the projects in the region fall under the five outputs related to strengthened institutions and capacities for conflict prevention and sustainable peace.

Regional Analysis: Europe & Central Asia



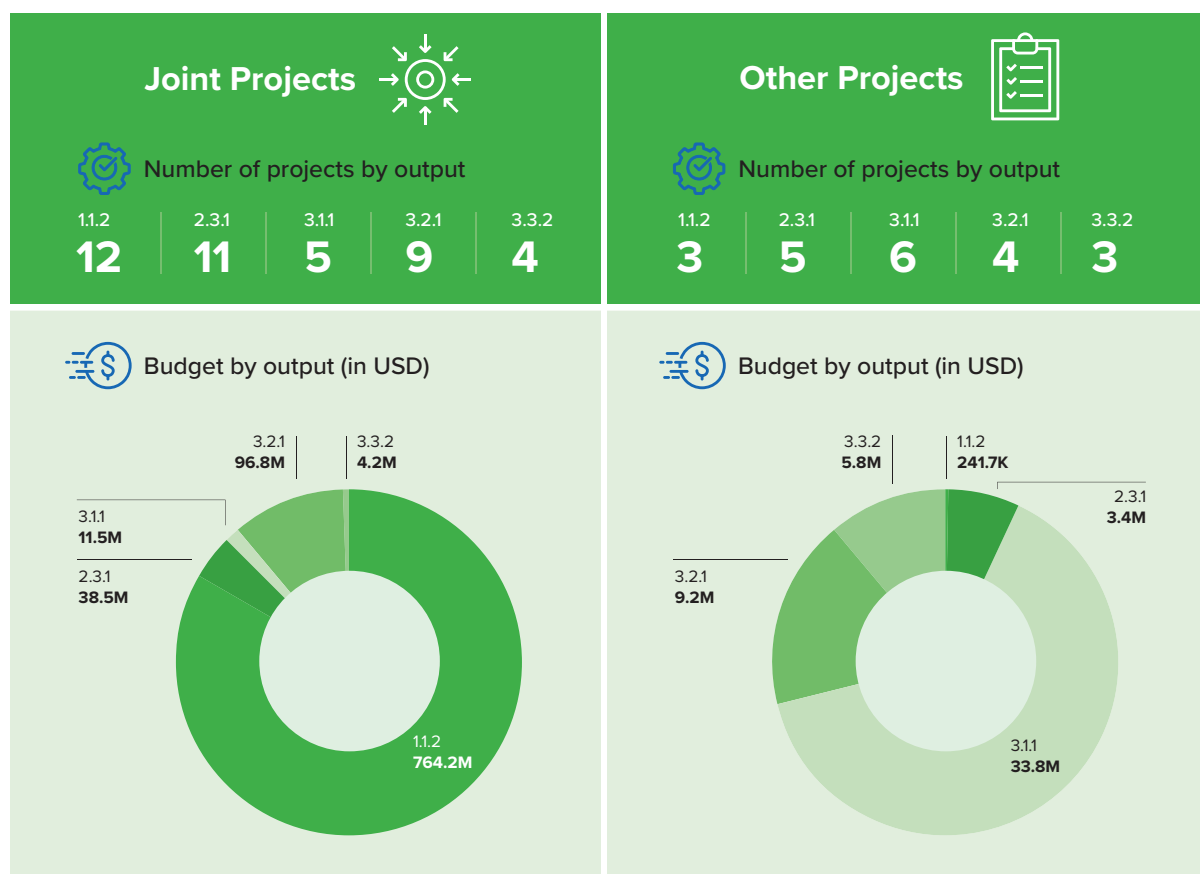
UNDP in Latin America and the Caribbean prioritized the area of inclusive access to basic services and assets even more clearly, especially in terms of budget – with 185 projects and a 1.3 billion USD budget for Output 1.1.2. Although only 18% of overall projects across the Strategic Plan in the region were attributed to strengthening institutions and capacities for conflict prevention and sustainable peace under the five outputs, 32% of the budget went there, with a strikingly clear focus on Output 1.1.2 (i.e., inclusive access to basic services and assets).

Regional Analysis: Latin America & Caribbean



Projects undertaken jointly across different regions as well as with global UNDP entities, such as BPPS, CB, BMS, BERA, HDRO and others, tended to focus on inclusive access to basic services and assets (Output 1.1.2) with 12 projects, development policies for DRR, resilience and conflict prevention (Output 2.3.1) with 11 projects, and national capacities for peaceful conflict management and prevention of violent extremism (Output 3.2.1) with 9 projects. However, there was a striking imbalance when it comes to budget allocations, with 764.2 million USD attributed to Output 1.1.2 – a manifold of the amounts attributed to the other outputs. Compared to the number of projects and budgets implemented by UNDP offices in each of the regions, the number of joint projects across regions and with global UNDP entities remained very small.

Regional Analysis:



Programming solely delivered by others, including BPPS, CB, BMS, BERA and HDRO without the involvement of Country Offices and Regional Hubs focused more on core government functions and service provision for recovery (Output 3.1.1) with 6 projects, but also emphasizes development policies for DRR, resilience and conflict prevention (Output 2.3.1) with 5 projects, and national capacities for peaceful conflict management and prevention of violent extremism (Output 3.2.1) with 4 projects. However, budget allocations in this case were clearly focused on core government functions and service provision for recovery (Output 3.1.1), with a budget of 33.8 million USD.

For a more thorough analysis by output, see Annex 1.

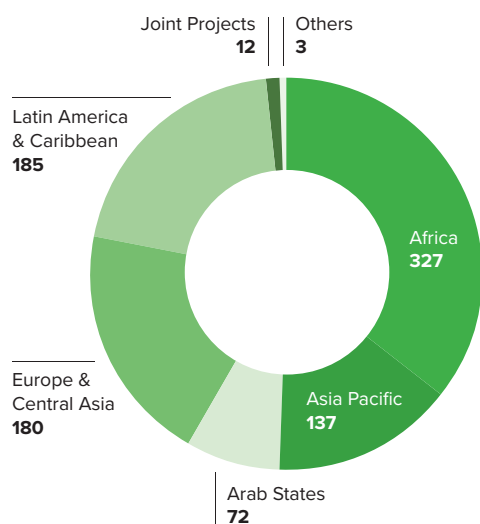
Annex 1:

Analysis by Output

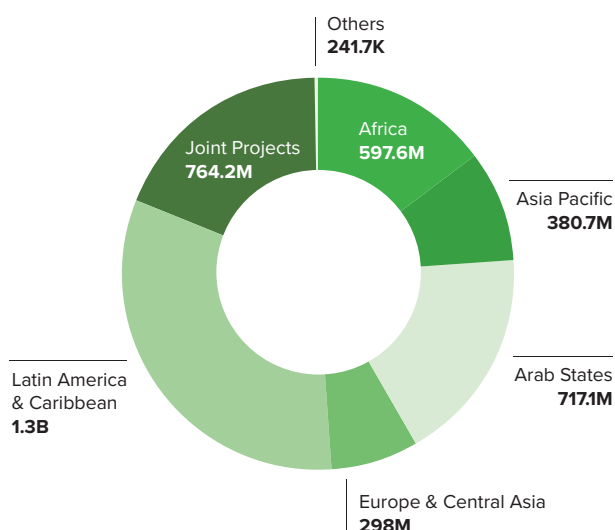
For Output 1.1.2 (i.e., inclusive access to basic services and assets), the Africa region had the most projects (327) followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (185) and Europe and Central Asia (180). Yet, UNDP in Latin America and the Caribbean had by far the largest budgets (1.3 billion USD). In contrast, Asia and the Pacific was the region with the most projects (152) and the highest budget (250.7 million USD) for Output 2.3.1 (i.e., development policies for DRR, resilience and conflict prevention), followed by the Arab States (with 115 projects) and Latin America and the Caribbean (with 197.3 million USD in allocated budget). Under Output 3.1.1 (i.e., core government functions and service provision for recovery), UNDP in the Arab States region implemented by far the most projects (121) and had a manifold of the budget (1.6 billion USD) attributed in all the other regions, which is likely linked to stabilization efforts in the Arab States region with large corresponding budgets that fall under Output 3.1.1. In contrast, UNDP in Africa had the highest number of projects (155) and largest budget (339.8 million USD) for Output 3.2.1 (i.e., national capacities for peaceful conflict management and prevention of violent extremism), followed by the Arab States region with 89 projects and a 265.4 million USD budget. Under Output 3.3.2 (i.e., mechanisms for peaceful societies), UNDP in Latin America and the Caribbean had the most projects (46), yet UNDP in the Arab States had the largest budget (42.5 million USD).

Output 1.1.2

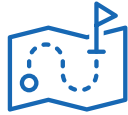
Number of projects by region



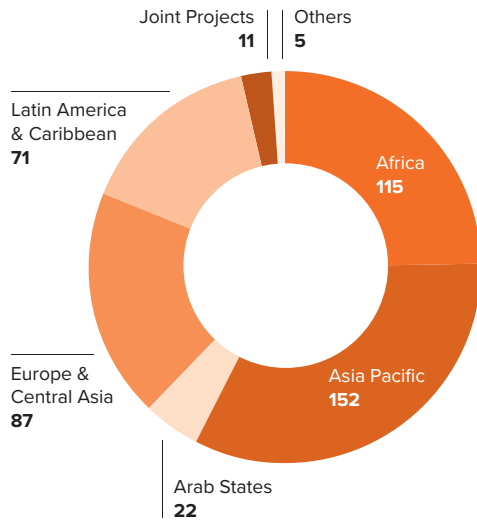
Budget by region (in USD)



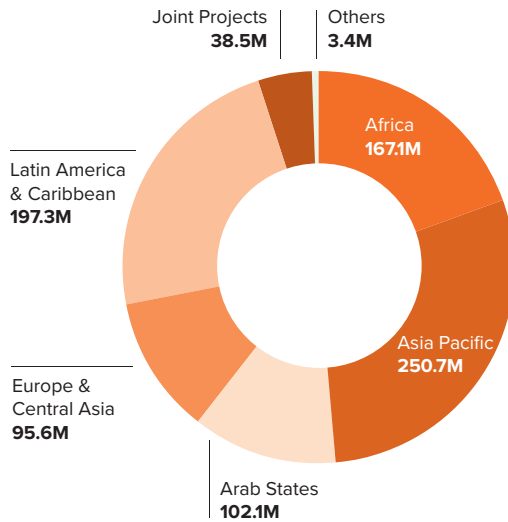
Output 2.3.1



Number of projects by region



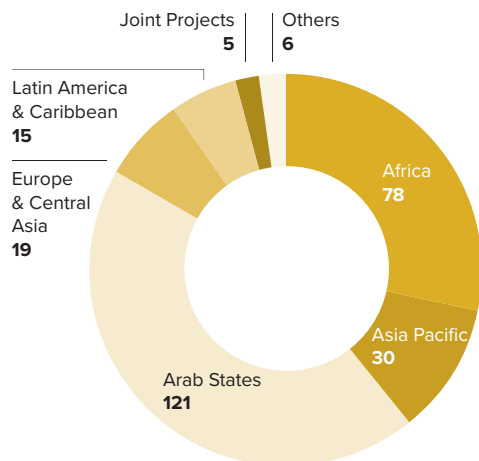
Budget by region (in USD)



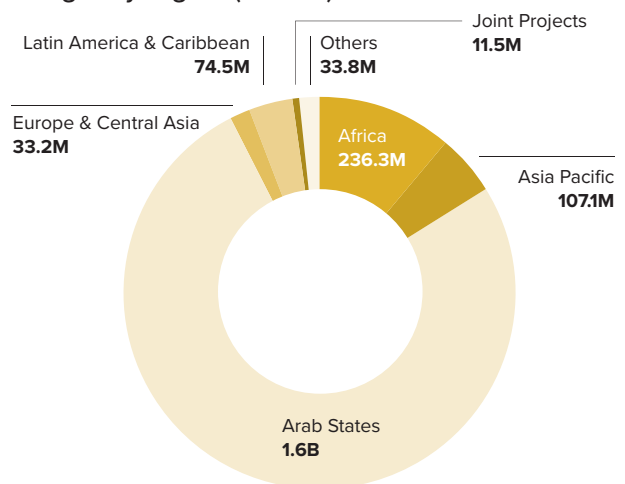
Output 3.1.1



Number of projects by region



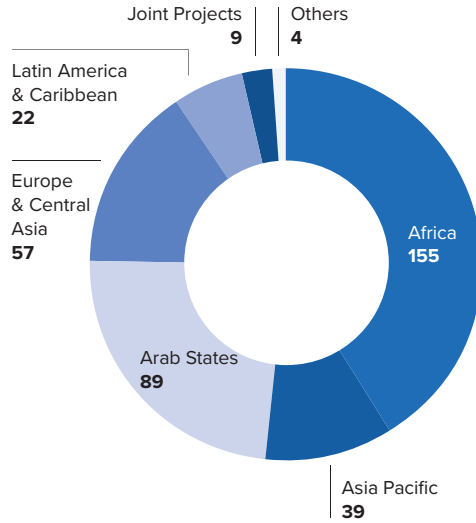
Budget by region (in USD)



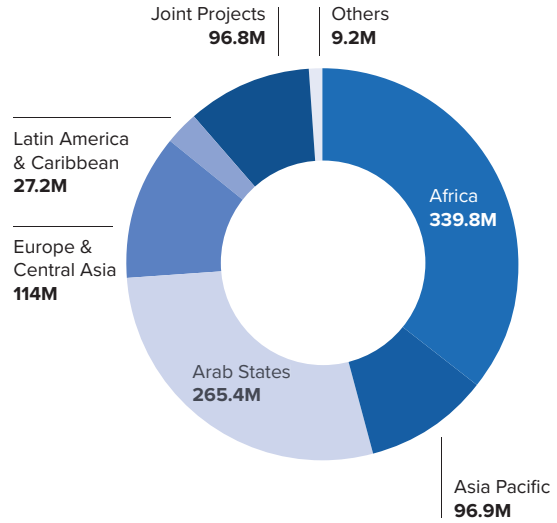
Output 3.2.1



Number of projects by region



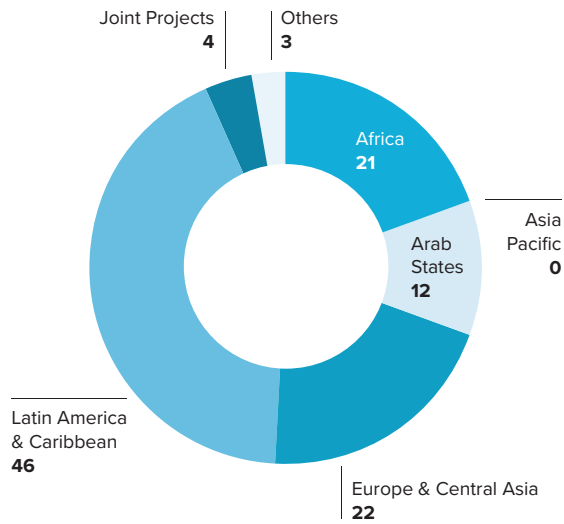
Budget by region (in USD)



Output 3.3.2



Number of projects by region



Budget by region (in USD)

