

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Assessment of Development Results (ADR) is an independent evaluation managed by the Evaluation Office (EO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Niger in 2012. It assesses UNDP's overall contribution to the development of the country over the two most recent programming cycles (2004-2008 and 2009-2013), as well as the strategy and performance of UNDP-Niger during the last two programme cycles and their action plans. The ADR team focused on evaluating the results of completed programmes and, the quality and scope of ongoing programmes. On the basis of the analysis, recommendations have been made with particular emphasis on the next programming cycle. This ADR is the first conducted in Niger. It was conducted in collaboration with the Government of Niger with a view to strengthening the ownership of the evaluation results by national partners, and thereby its credibility and utility. Its objectives are to: (i) identify progress made toward achieving the desired results for the programming cycles concerned; (ii) analyse how UNDP in Niger has positioned itself in order to provide added value to the country's own development efforts; and (iii) present conclusions and recommendations that will feed into new programming frameworks for UNDP in the country, and in particular the next Country Programme.

The evaluation used several methods and approaches, including an extensive document analysis, individual and group interviews, and site visits to the projects' operations in the three large regional divisions of the country. The evaluation team met with over 100 people during the data collection mission in May 2012 which concluded with a meeting in Niamey, during which preliminary findings were shared. The meeting brought together approximately 30 high-ranking representatives from government institutions, civil society, UNDP, and other technical and financial partners (TFPs). EO had

already met 32 strategic actors in UNDP, other partners, representatives of the Government, the University of Niamey and civil society, who together helped frame the evaluation during the preparatory missions to Niger in November-December 2011 and February 2012. Finally, after quality assurance was completed and the report validated, a stakeholder workshop was held on 27 November 2012.

## KEY FINDINGS

The evaluation shows that UNDP achieved tangible results during the 2004 and 2009 programme cycles. At the strategic level it assisted Niger in acquiring frameworks and tools to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate policies and development strategies, at both central and local levels. At the operational level, it provided solutions to development or survival problems experienced by the population. It also attempted to influence cross-cutting themes, such as gender, human rights, capacity development and results-based management (RBM), albeit with mixed results. Indirect contributions included the coordination of cooperation, resource mobilization and scalable pilot initiatives. Overall, the Country Office played a leading role in coordinating development in Niger and assisted to put in place and strengthen an arrangement for managing aid. Contributions were also made through experimental pilot projects which were then scaled-up by partners with more resources, as was the case with decentralization, which the Country Office managed in partnership with the Government.

Over the course of the 2004 and 2009 CPAPs, UNDP's strategic efforts in Niger shifted from poverty reduction to governance to adapt to the urgent situation caused by an institutional crisis in 2010. UNDP was forced to support its resolution through eight electoral ballots.

Governance is the largest portfolio in the current CPAP, while in the previous CPAP it came behind poverty reduction which was the largest. Crisis management was managed by the Governance Unit during the previous CPAP, but is now handled by a separate programme unit created specifically to take into account the importance of this dimension in view of the frequency of disasters and crises in the country. While execution during the first cycle was assisted by a support unit based in the Ministry of Economy and Finance, this arrangement was replaced by the principle of project focal points in counterpart national institutions. This was driven by a desire to strengthen national execution. In practice, this proved to be insufficiently prepared, showing the limits by the national counterpart in both the planning and monitoring of activities.

UNDP's interventions in Niger were **highly relevant in terms of their relation to strategic national priorities and community needs, and institutions benefiting from them on the ground, and in how the programme is implemented.** UNDP's direct (mainly project) and indirect or non-project interventions have had meaningful results. The balance between strategic/national and operational/local levels is not always understood by national partners, some asking for more strategic support, others for more operational action.

**In terms of effectiveness, the programme has generated tangible results at both strategic and operational levels in the areas of governance, crisis management and prevention, environment and natural resources, poverty reduction and promotion of UN values. However, the procedures and ability to deliver by the Country Office and the national authorities require strengthening.**

On a strategic level, UNDP has helped Niger develop central and local level frameworks and tools for the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of policies and development strategies. Institutional governance-related frameworks emerged which gradually

established stronger procedures for consultation, negotiation, arbitration, reporting and the administration of justice. In the area of economic development strategies and poverty reduction, strategic MDG-focused tools were developed covering critical issues such as gender. UNDP contributed to sectoral policy frameworks and processes that improved knowledge and management of natural resources and assisted Niger to meet with its obligations for greater communication to the international community on the theme of environment. Furthermore, warning and crisis management systems were strengthened in response to the increased frequency of such events.

On an operational level, UNDP has provided solutions to benefit the population by providing target communities with basic social services, education, healthcare, water supply, community infrastructure, alleviating the workload of women, offering employment and income alternatives, and in some cases, allowing access to modest sources of credit with flexible terms. Progress is slow in terms of gender equality, judging by the few women holding positions of leadership in Niger. Significant results have been achieved in human rights and the judicial system is gradually opening up to this, with growing awareness among the citizens.

Problems of national ownership have hindered capacity development and raised questions over the effectiveness and sustainability of outcomes. Results of capacity-building are uncertain as there is still much to be done before capacity development has real impact. Gender issues are not given sufficient visibility and progress has been slow. The programme retained flexibility and has been responsive to changing conditions and needs, and thus remained relevant.

**Regarding efficiency, resources are planned, implemented and justified following UNDP procedures, which are of international high standards, suggesting that the programme in Niger is efficient.** Procurement protocols are both transparent and fair, which suggests a

degree of rationality that can only contribute to the efficiency of the programme. Yet, abnormally long delays caused by UNDP protocols and processes detract from the overall efficiency of the programme and lead to additional costs.

**With regards to sustainability, the programme's performance depends on the quality and strength of ownership and national abilities. The country, however, is still facing problems at these levels.**

**Problems have been encountered with the formulation, coherence and organizational structure of the programme. There are ambiguities in the formulation of an outcome related to the poverty-MDG and in the positioning of the economic governance.** The institutional location of the key M&E function is not appropriate. Operating methods are based on national execution in most interventions. Managing relations with donors is highly effective, as shown by good results in mobilising funds. Yet there are still areas where improvements can be made, such as the communication and management of procedures.

**Major difficulties have been noted in the management of procedures to deliver the programme's products and lengthy procedures cause significant delays.** There are bottlenecks in the production of annual work programmes (AWPs) which are now published biennially, as well as the availability of funding and delivery of reporting documents. These implementation problems have a direct impact on performance since, from the start, the programme is forced to operate and deliver in a significantly shorter timeframe than originally foreseen. Stresses at the operational level due to insufficient availability of time and capacities are affecting quality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1: Improve strategies for national capacity development.** Actions should be taken jointly by the Country Office and national partners to identify the minimum level

of activity required to stimulate further and more appropriate development of national capacity, while continuing with conventional training and workshops.

**Recommendation 2: Improve the handling of gender issues within the CPAP.** The way in which gender issues are dealt with is not yet sufficiently effective, even though it is a cross-cutting issue of the utmost importance. In general, gender issues should be more adequately reflected in programme documents (in terms of context analysis, target setting and strategies).

**Recommendation 3: Strengthen, clarify and restructure economic governance** in the programme, especially in the crucial area of public financial management, building on the efforts made to promote the use of Mid-Term Expenditure Frameworks in the different ministries. At the same time, a choice should be made between continuing to dilute the theme in the poverty reduction strategy and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or giving it more visibility in a wider governance programme.

**Recommendation 4: Improve the wording of the CPAP outcome covering poverty reduction,** gender and the MDGs to overcome the ambiguity undermining its coherence. The wording of this outcome is too restrictive and should include 'actions' or 'activities' to achieve the MDGs and reduce poverty, as well as 'reforms'.

**Recommendation 5: Improve quality assurance.** Programme managers and project teams spend considerable time controlling the quality of implementation procedures leading to delays, and time and energy spent on catching up which is a less efficient use of resources. The Country Office should focus more on the core substantive work of the programme and less on managing procedures.

**Recommendation 6: Strengthen human resources in the programme.** Although recent efforts had been made to improve human resources in the Country Office, with the recruitment of financial

and administrative assistants, programme units are stretched to the limits and further recruitment efforts are needed.

**Recommendation 7: Improve communication with national partners.** This is a top priority for any cooperation-based partnership. The Country Office needs to take action to communicate its mandates and strategies more effectively, and give more visibility to the national counterpart over UNDP's prospects in the country. Such greater clarity would also strengthen national ownership.

**Recommendation 8: Be more proactive and improve communication on procedures.** UNDP's procedures appear too complicated, cumbersome and inflexible to partners and donors. Although

UNDP procedures and regulations cannot be significantly changed at the Country Office level, the Country Office should become more proactive in operating and communicating its procedures.

**Recommendation 9. Give the M&E function greater autonomy.** While a fully-autonomous M&E unit would be the best solution, the Economic Analysis and Development Strategy Division could take on this function to ensure some degree of independence.

**Recommendation 10. Improve national ownership.** National ownership is an important issue and needs to be managed throughout the entire programme cycle and can be achieved by designing specific strategies to be included in AWP.