

Executive Summary

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) carried out an Assessment of Development Results (ADR) in Cameroon in 2016. The ADR covers the period between 2008 and mid-2016, namely the entire 2008-2012 programme cycle and three and a half years of the current 2013-2017 cycle.

The assessment consists of two main parts: Firstly, the ADR analysed the effectiveness of UNDP's contribution to development results in Cameroon by thematic area. Particular attention was paid to examining this contribution in line with UNDP's global vision for the eradication of poverty as well as its contribution to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. Next, the ADR reviewed the quality of the UNDP contribution based on criteria relating to relevance, efficiency and sustainability. In addition, the strategic positioning of UNDP in Cameroon was analysed through the perspective of the Organization's mandate, the country's recognised or emerging needs and its national development priorities.

The assessment used a number of methods and approaches, notably a wide-ranging literature review, interviews with central, regional and local authority representatives, civil society, United Nations agencies and development agencies, donors and country programme beneficiaries (men and women), as well as field visits. These allowed a direct observation of the achievements of some projects as well as semi-structured interviews with local authorities and the beneficiaries of interventions supported by UNDP. The evaluation team consisted of two evaluation experts from the IEO, an international governance expert, a national local development expert and a national gender expert, with the support of two research assistants.

The main conclusions of the assessment are as follows:

- 1. Conclusion 1. UNDP actions within the context of the 2008-2012 and 2013-2017 country programmes are in line with Cameroon's development priorities. UNDP contributed innovative ideas and helped to develop knowledge by supporting diagnoses and analyses at both the strategic and local level. However, despite improving the targeting of the country programme since 2013, its efforts suffer from poor capitalization of lessons learned and, at the time of the evaluation, few lasting or profound changes had occurred as a result of the programme.**
2. By working on the subjects of inclusion, governance, poverty alleviation, resilience and sustainable development, as well as more recently on a rapid response to the crisis caused by Boko Haram, UNDP has positioned itself on the major challenges facing the country. From a strategic perspective, UNDP has contributed to the development of national strategies and plans in various areas as well as tools for analysis, planning and monitoring and new knowledge. At the local level, thanks to support from UNDP, certain groups have been able to increase their income and strengthen their resilience to erratic climate conditions. The CEOCA is a promising model.

3. Over the period under examination, UNDP has made efforts to improve the targeting of its programme. The CPD and the CPAP for 2008-2012 identified seven expected outcomes, whereas the 2013-2017 CPAP has narrowed its focus to four outcomes. In addition, the thematic approach of the second programme has been accompanied by a geographic concentration in the field, in the Far North. During the implementation of the 2013-2017 programme, with the escalation of the security and humanitarian crisis, UNDP's actions have once again been redirected to strengthen their work in the Far North.
4. Nevertheless, most of the results of UNDP support remain relatively intangible. Over the evaluation period, progress in terms of the political participation of social groups in situations of vulnerability and the integration of their concerns as well as gender or cross-cutting problems (the environment, HIV/AIDS) in the plans, policies and sectoral strategies remained marginal. Implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy is still a challenge. The results of fast-acting initiatives launched within the framework of the anti-corruption programme have not been sustained. The programme to improve public services supported the development and validation of a quality standard for public services; this is an important step, but one which has not yet been disseminated. The programme of poverty reduction at the grassroots (SPRPB) has not fully implemented its strategy of structuring profitable sectors, as outlined in the programme document. ORSEC disaster response plans have been drawn up using participation, but only in two municipalities, and simulation exercises still have to be organised. Certain agro-sylvo-pastoral practices have been introduced into pilot communities but wider dissemination remains to be done. The time allotted for the implementation of the CPAP (until the end of 2017) is unlikely to be sufficient to allow all planned activities to be implemented and evaluated, to take the lessons learned from them and disseminate this learning to a critical mass, in order to generate significant change. Pilot experiments risk becoming a goal in themselves, whereas in the programme logic they represent just one stage, the purpose being to promote their results in order to secure development on a larger scale.
5. **Conclusion 2. The strategic positioning of UNDP with regards to its development partners could be considerably improved. Many partners currently see UNDP as just another donor, meaning that it tends to be judged on the funding it makes available to the country. During the refocusing of its programme in 2012, UNDP showed itself to be timid in its choices in the area of governance.**
6. UNDP is perceived as defending values relating to gender issues and the concerns of vulnerable groups. This is an added value that is recognised by most of those interviewed. At the same time, it is generally seen as just another donor, meaning it tends to be judged on the funding it makes available to the country. As UNDP has been unable to counter this perception and has not adequately developed its image, the organisation lacks visibility in the development landscape of Cameroon.
7. At the end of the first programme (2008-2012), UNDP analysed the lessons learned from that period of cooperation, and recognised that it had to focus going forward on some key results, taking into account national priorities, available resources and its comparative advantages. Thus, for a number of subjects addressed during the first programme cycle in the area of governance (promoting human rights, the electoral process, fighting corruption), the analysis showed there had been a certain withdrawal by UNDP. Choosing to focus on improving public services, when assessed in terms of

management considerations and the efficiency of the action, can be considered to be relevant. In contrast, when assessed in terms of UNDP strategic positioning, the thematic areas of the UNDP strategic plan and those of the GESP in the areas of improving governance and strategic State management, this choice can be considered to be lacking boldness.

8. **Conclusion 3. UNDP demonstrates reactivity to changes in context. Focusing its work since 2013 on the poorest regions in the north of the country and the introduction of early recovery programmes in 2014 are judicious choices. However, this refocusing of the programme has not been accompanied by an increased presence in the region, and UNDP strategic planning procedures limit its capacity to adapt quickly in an unstable context.**
9. UNDP has responded to the emerging crisis in the Far North with new rapid response programmes, adapting its ongoing programmes in order to work in the communities most affected by the conflict and strengthening its own human resources. At the time of the evaluation, it was too early to assess the effectiveness of the new actions, but the stakeholders interviewed appreciated the early recovery approach as well as the commitment to the most vulnerable communities. However, this refocusing of the programme has not been accompanied by an increased presence in the region, with the exception of the staff of the rapid response projects, who are not authorised to carry out any monitoring or coordination outside of these projects. The other UNDP staff and the technical advisers for the main programmes are based in the capital. The lack of clarity on the procedures for revising the country programme in order to better respond to the new context and the requests from the Government generated delays in the planning and designing of annual work plans in 2016.
10. **Conclusion 4. The lack of resources and the low efficiency of the country programme have had consequences on results.**
11. UNDP is strongly dependent on a limited number of sources of funding. By far its most important financial partner since 2011 is Japan: between 2011 and 2015, 46% of total spending came from UNDP core resources with Japanese funding providing 37%. A number of constraints relating to the mobilisation of resources have been identified during the evaluation (general development aid environment, global economic crises, the fact that as a middle-income country, Cameroon is not a priority for traditional donor countries). In 2013, UNDP developed a resource mobilisation strategy, which has yet to show any notable effects.
12. The Government of Cameroon, the second largest financial partner of the country programme, provided 10% of total programme resources between 2008-2012, but less than 1% between 2013-2015, and this despite the fact that the 2013-2017 CPAP expected the government contribution to reach around one-third of total expected resources. Even when taking the form of Government “compensation” (awarded to interventions supported by UNDP but not paid directly into the UNDP bank account), this sum was poorly mobilised (other than for the SPRPB). Thus, a number of activities were unable to be implemented. UNDP did not adapt its strategy in light of the uncertainties weighing on its mobilisation of resources.
13. UNDP did not use its limited resources in an efficient manner. Despite the refocussing of its programme for the 2013-2017 period, with a reduction in the number of outcomes and a geographic

concentration, it was characterised by very long preparation phases, delays in signing off annual work plans and disproportionate programme management costs. Indeed, operating expenses for the main interventions since 2013 represent almost half of total spending. The National Implementation Model (NIM) as applied in Cameroon, where UNDP did not advance funds to the Government, means that UNDP programme managers spend a disproportionate amount of their time on management tasks, rather than on substantive work and the development of strategic partnerships.

14. **Conclusion 5. UNDP focuses on women and vulnerable groups in all its programme documents, and ensures their participation in the activities it supports. While some of its work seeks to achieve transformative changes, the approach tends to remain “gender specific”, or focused on the ratio of men to women, rather than addressing the different needs according to gender throughout its interventions, or by seeking to bring about in-depth changes in the norms or the structures of power.**
15. UNDP is implementing a specific programme seeking to improve integration of the concerns of women and other vulnerable groups in its development plans, policies and strategies, which in time could produce transformative results. In addition, it ensures that the gender dimension and other types of vulnerability are integrated into almost all programme documents, project documents and the terms of reference for specific activities or outcomes. During the diagnoses and baseline evaluations, women and members of other vulnerable groups were consulted. However, subsequent stages did not always take into account the specific needs of women or other groups. For example, during the development of the communication strategy on adapting to climate change, women were consulted but the strategy that was adopted did not include the communication channels that they use, nor a method for formulating messages in order to increase their participation. Within the context of the ongoing programme, the funding of micro-business projects or income-generating activities have not reached as many women as men. The construction of livestock markets has particularly benefited livestock farmers, most of whom are men.
16. **Conclusion 6. During the period covered by the evaluation, UNDP made much progress in monitoring and evaluation but monitoring is mainly focused on implementation and the use of budgets, and not on progress towards outcomes. Monitoring in the field remains inadequate, particularly in a context of armed conflict and incertitude.**
17. The country office has made great progress in the area of monitoring and reporting, particularly since the start of the current programme. Monitoring using the Atlas management system is detailed, with regular updates covering risks and problems and the application of quality criteria. The country office regularly organises monitoring meetings. However, this monitoring focuses on technical and financial execution, rather than on an overall analysis and the relationship between actual and expected outcomes. The indicators mainly concentrate on the former and provide little information on the latter. Field visits, other than visits by the Resident Coordinator / Resident Representative and those of the rapid recovery team (based in the Far North) are rare. The context of the zone where the interventions take place is very different to that of the capital and is in constant evolution as a result of the conflicts, which means that careful monitoring is required in order to ensure the relevance of

the interventions in the long term. This monitoring is also necessary to ensure that the interventions encourage inclusion and do not inadvertently contribute to exclusion.

The ADR formulates the following recommendations:

18. Recommendation 1: UNDP should concentrate more on results, strengthen its strategic positioning and cultivate its image. To achieve this, it should identify a limited number of areas where, as a result of its mandate or its experience, it has comparative advantages. It should then define ambitious and realistic outcomes and design and implement interventions, whilst at the same time achieving a good balance between targeted actions that are likely to rapidly produce concrete results, and interventions that address deeper problems. It must communicate on its positioning and its role.

19. UNDP must draw on the values of the United Nations, its institutional assets, its experience and its capacities to make strategic choices for its new country programme. Given its very limited resources, UNDP should limit its efforts to a few areas of intervention where it can really make a difference or where it has a clear comparative advantage. It should seek to capitalise on the lessons learned and the outcomes of past experiences, but without hesitating to revise its approach when the previous interventions have not resulted in real changes.

20. Once the areas of intervention have been identified, UNDP should find a balance between those that can produce fast and visible results, and the longer-term work needed to ensure the sustainability of their outcomes. In parallel, UNDP should design its programme so as to be able to perform its interventions from end-to-end and obtain real results within the initial budget, independently of any eventual additional resources which may allow existing efforts to be developed or completed or other initiatives to be implemented. While recognising the importance of an in-depth analysis, UNDP should focus on the essential knowledge needed to guide its interventions, and then should concentrate on actions, experimenting, obtaining and disseminating outcomes as well as on advocacy work. In an uncertain context, UNDP should be agile and reactive whilst remaining attentive to the progress of its outcomes, continuing its advocacy so that its work produces changes in outcomes.

21. Once the main themes of the new programmes have been clearly outlined, UNDP should actively communicate its positioning. UNDP will never have an advantage in terms of resources, which is why it must adopt another position and clearly communicate it. It must cultivate its specific features and stand out from other technical and financial partners. It must promote its role as an institution working for the universal values of peace, the rule of law, national cohesion and sustainable development. It must remain focused on reducing poverty and inequality and communicate about these efforts. By targeting rapid results, it can then publicise these results and the lessons learned, in order to highlight its role, which is to act as a catalyst, a facilitator and a guide, and not as a donor or an executing agency. Once this has been achieved, this role can develop into one of observation, advocacy, and national capacity-building, facilitating development cooperation between the country

and donors and with other countries (south-south cooperation). Lastly, UNDP must strengthen its coordinating role, in the capital as well as in the Far North region.

22. *Response from the Country Office management:*

23. Recommendation 2: UNDP must consider the possibility of investing again in the subjects that have been identified as the greatest challenges facing the country and where, as a result of its neutrality as well as its experience internationally and in Cameroon, it has a comparative advantage: strengthening democratic processes and the rule of law.

24. During its discussions on the strategic orientations of the new country programme, UNDP must think very carefully about its role, its experience in the area of democratic governance as well as any possible links with sustainable development and resilience, within the new global framework of the SDGs and notably SDG 16 (peace, justice and efficient institutions) and its specific experience in Cameroon. It must strive to capitalise on the results achieved in the areas of promoting the rule of law, the fight against corruption, strengthening the democratic process (electoral process, role of Parliament and other counterweight institutions, strengthening civil society), support for strategic State management (planning and monitoring at the global, sectoral, regional and local level) as well as crisis prevention and response.

25. UNDP's capacity to work in an inter-sectoral manner and its experience in the areas of environment management and resilience to climate change and conflicts (inter-related challenges which mutually exacerbate each other in the northernmost regions of the country) also give it a comparative advantage, on which it can draw when developing its new programme.

26. *Response from the Country Office management:*

27. Recommendation 3: UNDP should continue to concentrate its efforts on the poorest and most vulnerable municipalities in the country, while striking a balance between upstream interventions (of a political or strategic nature) and downstream work (with target populations). It should not limit itself to the role of an agency executing rapid recovery projects.

28. It is an appropriate choice for the current programme to concentrate on the Far North, which is by far the poorest and most vulnerable region in the country, in that it allows the work of UNDP to have a greater impact on the reduction of inequalities and to benefit the most disadvantaged. In addition, this choice allows UNDP to address the question of young people from this region who are massively turning towards radicalisation and terrorism, a phenomenon that is in the process of becoming one of the greatest challenges for the country and the wider region. Geographical concentration also enhances efficiency, synergies and the visibility of results. This choice should be maintained in the next country programme.

29. UNDP can also play a more important role in the coordination of interventions in the Far North region. It should ensure that its forthcoming interventions and those of other partners can capitalise on the learning that has already been acquired, partly by disseminating studies and analyses performed as part of the current country programme.

30. However, and particularly if it proves to be easier to mobilise resources for crisis-response projects rather than for other types of work, UNDP must ensure that it is not limited to the role of an agency executing rapid-response projects. It must maintain a presence in the Far North, in order to act and understand, but also to learn and advocate with the national authorities and partners.
31. In addition, it must recognise that choosing to focus its actions on the poorest regions is not necessarily ideal for the development of scaled-up models at a national level, because the most advanced models cannot be used in the most disadvantaged regions. Resources permitting, and in order to continue to position itself as an actor working to reduce inequalities whilst being at the avant-garde of innovative experiments, UNDP could, in certain cases, consider working in two regions with different profiles: one very poor region and another region where the poverty level was lower, in order to gather learning for advocacy and scaling-up.
32. ***Response from the Country Office management:***
33. **Recommendation 4: UNDP should continue to work to reduce gender inequalities and promote female empowerment, as well as the reduction of other forms of inequality and exclusion. The participation of vulnerable groups and the taking into account of their priorities must be integrated into all programmes. A separate programme addressing cross-cutting issues is not recommended. The country office must strengthen its gender expertise and strive to satisfy the reference criteria of the Gender Equality Seal.**
34. UNDP must continue to focus on reducing inequalities and exclusion, by drawing on the framework of the SDGs and the global commitment that there will be "no-one left behind". However, in light of the experience of the PRINCES programme and the lack of concrete results, UNDP should ensure that gender and other cross-cutting issues are included in all its interventions, so that they play their part in strengthening the participation of the most vulnerable and reducing gender inequalities. UNDP efforts must go beyond consultations with women and representatives of vulnerable groups during analyses and baseline studies. Activities and interventions must address the specific needs of these groups. The country office must strengthen its internal expertise. If it is not possible to employ a specialist in this area, the country office must look for other solutions. It could envisage contracting a consultant on a long-term agreement to provide support in the reduction of gaps over time, but working part-time and only at key periods. The office should seek to comply with the reference criteria of the UNDP Gender Equality Seal.
35. ***Response from the Country Office management:***
36. **Recommendation 5: UNDP should update its partnership and resource mobilisation strategy. It should also strengthen its advocacy with the Government in order to increase the national contribution to the country programme, reminding the government that the 2013 – 2017 CPAP pledges to match the contribution of UNDP; if this is not possible, it should clearly outline what UNDP can and cannot finance. At the same time, UNDP should take measures to improve its efficiency and direct its resources towards priority programme activities.**
37. In collaboration with the Government, UNDP must explore new additional financing opportunities and partnerships, such as the new climate funds. It can facilitate consultations in the form of round

tables with donors on the reconstruction of the Far North. An initiative like this could be taken at the level of the country itself or within a cross-border approach bringing together the affected regions in Nigeria, Chad and Niger.

38. UNDP must also work closely with the Government to mobilise a national contribution to the country programme, drawing on the notion that the “government cost-sharing ... strengthens national ownership as well as contributes to the achievement of country programmes ”.¹ UNDP could experiment with a “sliding” planning schedule, where activities for a given year are planned for from the second half of the previous year, in order to allow enough time for advocacy with the authorities and to take these activities into account in budget decisions. With regard to its own resources, UNDP should clearly determine what it can or cannot finance, limiting its investments to the most relevant interventions that are the most likely to contribute to achieving the expected outcomes detailed in the country programme document.
39. UNDP should rationalise programme management costs as far as possible, for example by limiting the number of technical advisers to programmes. It should also look for innovative solutions to reduce the administrative tasks of programme managers so that they can dedicate more of their time to the core matters.
40. **Recommendation 6: UNDP should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation activities, placing the accent on the changes caused by these activities, as well as on the progress made in achieving the expected outcomes. UNDP should also structure its office according to the geographic concentration of its programming, allocating more staff to the Far North to strengthen coordination and monitoring.**
41. UNDP should pursue its positive trajectory of improving the monitoring and evaluation of its programme. Monitoring should not be limited to the use of budgets and the implementation of work plans, but should continually evaluate the relevance of interventions and the probability that they will generate tangible results. UNDP must develop suitable indicators within its programme documents, but must also recognise its limits, and ensure a real monitoring of changes caused by the outcomes achieved. Indicators must also be sensitive to the gender dimension. UNDP must not hesitate to evaluate the effectiveness of its models in order to improve them or change its approach if necessary.
42. UNDP should strengthen its presence in the regions where its activities are concentrated, particularly in the Far North, in order to ensure close monitoring of its work, consolidating potential synergies, encouraging coordination and the complementarity of efforts that it puts in place itself and with other partners, encouraging local ownership, improving efficiency and strengthening its credibility. Monitoring in the field must be sensitive to problems relating to peace and conflict, always taking into account the impact of armed conflict on programmes. It should also ensure that its programmes do not harm anyone. This enhanced monitoring will be even more important when UNDP’s actions will be less focused on analysis and audit and more on concrete actions and achievements.

¹ Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services Report of the Executive Board on its work during 2015, E/2015/35, p. 96/105.

