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UNDP IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA

As the third-largest oil producer in Sub-Saharan Africa, Equatorial Guinea has experienced periods of high economic growth that have transformed it into an upper-middle-income country. But favourable macroeconomic indicators and a medium level of human development coexist with highly unequal development, between the capital and the continental territory, and rural and urban areas.

UNDP has oriented its support around socioeco-

nom ic well-being, with an emphasis on vulnerable populations; democratic governance, including to bolster public administration capacities; and the environment and sustainability, focusing on the legislative and institutional framework. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP's 2013-2017 programme cycle, also taking into account major interventions begun during the previous 2008-2012 cycle.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2008-2015: \$24.3 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2008-2015



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2008-2015 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Equatorial Guinea must tackle significant levels of poverty and inequality, and faces a critical need to formulate and implement holistic development policies. In this context, UNDP has contended with its own challenges, particularly limited resources. Equatorial Guinea is now classified as an upper-middle or high-income country, with fewer contributions from traditional donors.

One success, with UNDP support, was the approval of an administrative reform programme and review of the Law on the Judicial Regime of the Central State Administration. This marked a major step towards defining and reorienting the roles of the central and peripheral administrations. With the creation of the National Statistics Institute, the country now has a national system that provides data to develop and monitor public policies.

An initiative on youth employment has fostered their inclusion in a new economy, including through setting up ICT training centres. Two thousand underprivileged youth have gone through the centres so far; China is now helping to replicate them. A study trip to Rwanda for centre heads helped guide an orientation towards accompanying youth as they enter the labour market.

Another advance was the unification of ministries responsible for managing the environment and protected areas, and the launch of the National Institute for the Environment. A framework document was drawn up for joint public-private participation in carbon monitoring

in protected areas. The zones of each area have been mapped and catalogues of natural resources prepared, along with measures to protect them. All these tasks are preparatory, however, given serious problems in protected areas, such as the Monte Alen reserve. Described as the country's most important park, it is in a state of neglect.

On balance, UNDP's contributions were medium to high in relevance, medium in efficiency, and low in effectiveness and sustainability. Unfortunately, in addition to resource constraints, the organization seemed to address problems reactively, through unstructured national requests. Interventions mainly focused on activities and outputs, not on obtaining true development results aimed at promoting changes that improve people's quality of life and the environment. An unequal distribution of interventions occurred between Malabo, the main urban nucleus, and the rest of the country. This was a particular concern for the continental zone, home to many of those most in need of actions from UNDP.

Many valuable technical skills trainings took place, but without a specific purpose, resulting in efforts that in the end lacked substantial impact. Staff in public bodies improved their knowledge on promoting and protecting human rights and gender equality, for example, but do not have the mechanisms to carry out their functions or report on the monitoring of international commitments. Training courses on municipal management accompa-

nied the provision of office equipment to some of the more underprivileged municipal entities. But competencies were not sufficiently transferred to enable local authorities to help their populations.

Significant interventions in terms of financial resources were limited to procuring goods and services, without suitable strategies to develop national capacities. The provision of pharmaceutical products as part of the fight against HIV ran up against weak monitoring, for instance, and limited control over the way supplies were received on the ground.

Well recognized for representing United Nations values, UNDP kept up a good partnership with the Government and maintained a positive, credible image. Nevertheless, the organization is sometimes perceived as being too close to the public administration, which implied a risk to its credibility, impartiality and neutrality. Few actors were involved in designing and implementing interventions. A lack of groups representing beneficiaries and from civil society was particularly notable. Greater inclusion of development actors throughout the country could better respond appropriately to real needs.

Recent advances in UN inter-agency coordination were insufficient, with staff assigned ad hoc to drafting the new United Nations Development Assistance Frame-

work (UNDAF). There has not been progress in implementing inter-agency joint programmes, even when the UNDAF framework of results and resources identified various agencies to work on common outcomes.

Instability from high staff turnover rates in counterpart public institutions and at UNDP were some of the critical factors undercutting sustainability and effectiveness. In general, UNDP lacked the capacity to lead the design and formulation of quality projects, and practice results-based management. While staff numbers matched the existing level of programme implementation, a greater response would require at least one additional programme official and more administrative support. Talent retention has been affected by the lack of competitiveness in the current salary scale compared to what is offered in the national private sector.

UNDP has strong credibility in Equatorial Guinea, but achieving its objectives requires public policies and strategies that address real transformation systematically. Known as a leader sustainable human development, UNDP was not in a position to influence policies effectively and sustainably, for reasons that include a lack of national platforms and its own limited operational footprint. Its positioning has great potential for growth, but only with a suitable context and resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Moving into the next programming cycle, reduce the number of thematic areas of work and focus on two thematic areas- Poverty and Environment (by merging them together) and Promoting Democratic Governance with gender and human rights focus cutting across both themes. Further it should Establish a comprehensive communications strategy to improve UNDP's image highlighting its potential and added value.
- Ensure greater programmatic presence outside the island of Bioko and build synergies and join forces with other UN system agencies in their fight against poverty and inequality, and environmental issues in the continental and rural areas of the country.
- Make interagency coordination more effective in terms of the quality and quantity of interventions, inspiring collaboration among UN system agencies to promote coordinated capitalization of achievements and project a stronger, unified voice on relevant issues for greater impact and efficiency gains.
- UNDP should only implement the projects and activities for which appropriate conditions exist to make contributions in terms of development results, and have a high probability of having an impact in terms of real, tangible changes in the main development challenges at national level (promotion and guarantee of human rights, environmental sustainability, economic promotion / diversification, fight against corruption, promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals and youth employment.
- UNDP should reflect on its role in the country and revise its cooperation strategies and modalities with the Government so that it can creatively include other development actors and civil society in the country to consolidate interventions for lasting impact. If this does not occur, the organization will have to reflect upon and decide the reach of its supported actions in the country, defining strategies which limit its presence to occasional interventions and the provision of the essential, basic services that are normally provided by UNDP in support of the UN system.

ABOUT THE ICPEs

Independent country programme evaluations (ICPEs) are the backbone of the work of the Independent Evaluation Office. They capture evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results and the effectiveness of strategies supporting national development. They enable continued improvement in UNDP programmes, contribute to strengthened national ownership and evaluation capacity, and underpin accountability to national stakeholders and UNDP's Executive Board. To date, over 100 ICPEs have been conducted worldwide.

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