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## UNDP IN CAMEROON

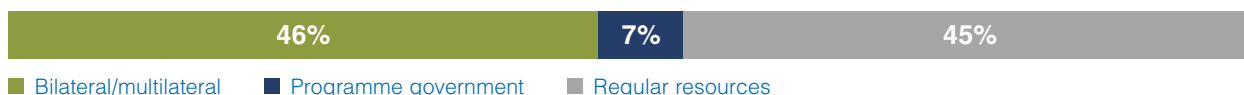
Cameroon has shown resilience despite economic stagnation, and security and humanitarian crises. But economic growth remains below national targets, prompting a three-year emergency acceleration plan. Poverty has declined only marginally overall, and has increased in rural areas and some regions, resulting in widening inequalities.

UNDP has supported poverty reduction, gender equality, improved governance, better environmental

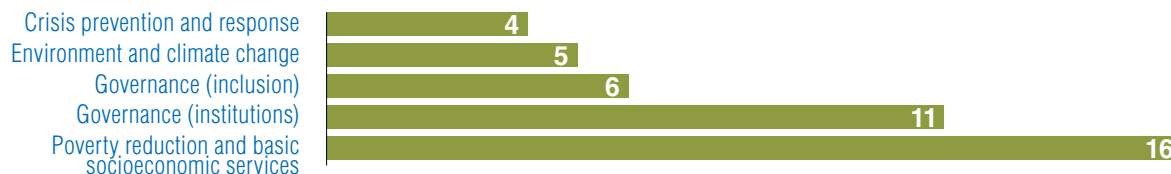
resource management, and greater resilience, including to climate change and natural disaster. Since the most recent programme cycle began in 2013, there has been a growing emphasis on improving participation and access to essential services among vulnerable groups, particularly in the crisis-affected north of the country. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered work from 2008 through mid-2016.

### TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2008-2015: \$40.7 MILLION

#### FUNDING SOURCES, 2008-2015



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



## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP actions aligned with Cameroon’s development priorities, and contributed to national strategies and tools. Institutional capacities were strengthened, including at national commissions for elections, anti-corruption and human rights. At the local level, some communities have increased their income and strengthened their resilience to erratic climate conditions, including through a communal services model that uses service centres in local town halls to mobilize partnerships for local economic development.

Most of the results of UNDP support remain relatively intangible, however. Progress in the political participation of social groups in situations of vulnerability has been marginal. Implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy is still a challenge; specialized cells have been set up in some ministries, but without budgets, for instance. The programme to improve public services supported the development and validation of a quality standard, but this has not yet been disseminated. Disaster response plans have been drawn up in only two municipalities. Pilot experiments risk becoming a goal in themselves, whereas their purpose was to demonstrate results for replication on a larger scale.

While UNDP is perceived as defending values relating to gender issues and the concerns of vulnerable

groups, it is also seen as just another donor, judged on the funding it provides. It has not adequately countered this perception and lacks visibility in the development landscape, despite efforts to sharpen its comparative advantages. Most interventions were not maintained across programme cycles, although it was a judicious choice to target the poorest regions in the north starting in 2013. New rapid response interventions were extended to communities most affected by conflict.

UNDP helped establish a committee on gender equality in the National Assembly and backed a process leading to a doubling in the share of women-held parliamentary seats, to over 30 percent in the 2013 elections. Programmes have sought to improve the integration of the concerns of women and other vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities in development policies and strategies. In time, these could produce transformative results. But even though gender dimensions and other types of vulnerability are integrated into almost all programme and project documents, in practice, programmes have not always taken these into account. For example, women were consulted on a communication strategy on adapting to climate change, but it did not include the communication channels they use.

Overall, limited resources have hindered programme

results. UNDP depends heavily on a few funding sources that are under increasing pressure, for reasons that include Cameroon being a middle-income country less attractive to traditional international donors. Government commitments, expected to reach one-third of resources for 2013 to 2017, remained at less than 1 per cent from 2013 to 2015. Amid these shortfalls, a resource mobilization strategy has yet to show any notable effects, while resources that are available are not efficiently used. Work has been characterized by very long preparation phases, and delays in signing off annual work plans. Operating expenses for the main interventions since 2013 represent almost half of total spending. UNDP programme managers devote a disproportionate amount of time to management tasks, rather than to substantive work and the development of strategic partnerships.

UNDP has made much progress in monitoring and

evaluation, particularly since 2013. Detailed monitoring features regular updates covering risks and problems, and the application of quality criteria. Yet it mainly focuses on implementation and budgets, and not on progress towards outcomes. In the field, monitoring is inadequate. Particularly in a context of armed conflict and uncertainty, where the situation is constantly evolving, careful monitoring is imperative to ensure relevance and inclusive programming.

The situation in Cameroon continues to be a challenging one, with its complex mix of declining resources, deepening inequalities and conflict-related instability. UNDP has moved to reorient its response, but could go much further in grounding programmes in a clearly defined notion of its comparative advantage. A more rigorous rationalization of costs could accompany scaled-up efforts to mobilize new and existing funding options.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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, while 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 (UNDP's) Gender Equality Seal.
- UNDP should update its partnership and resource mobilization 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 Country Programme Action Plan 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.
- 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.

## 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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