



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

UNDP IN NIGER

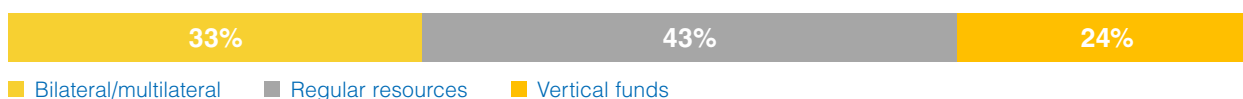
Niger, one of the largest countries in Africa in territorial size, ranks at the bottom of the global Human Development Index. It confronts a complex mix of challenges—among them, political instability, a fragile economy, inadequate technical capacities, scarce energy and environmental pressures.

UNDP has supported efforts across these areas, with programmes related to poverty and gender, the environ-

ment, crises and disasters, and governance. A focus on poverty reduction gave way to an emphasis on governance in the wake of a series of elections, and a call for UNDP to adapt its cooperation plans to support this critical process. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2004 to 2013.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2011: \$110 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2011



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2004-2011 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP achieved tangible results in assisting Niger to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate policies and development strategies at central and local levels. It provided solutions to development problems and attempted to influence cross-cutting themes, such as gender, human rights, capacity development and results-based management, albeit with mixed results. Interventions were highly relevant in relation to national priorities and community needs.

Contributions were made through experimental pilot projects that were scaled up, as was the case with decentralization. UNDP managed the first pilot project in this area, which laid the ground for larger-scale interventions by other partners, including the World Bank. The consolidation of the decentralization process through creating shared facilities built synergies among various actors. A Management Training Center for national, regional and municipal actors, for instance, marked a significant step towards establishing an overall management framework and building capacity. Local authorities benefited from the creation of an agency in charge of financing.

Institutional governance-related frameworks emerged that gradually established stronger procedures for consultation, negotiation, arbitration, reporting and the administration of justice. A national strategy and legal framework were adopted for legal assistance and legal

aid, while a statistical system now provides information for decision-makers on the structure of the judiciary and the functioning of the legal system.

For economic development and poverty reduction, strategic tools for implementing and monitoring development policies led to the incorporation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and human rights considerations in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Other interventions provided target communities with basic social services. They helped alleviate the workload of women, cultivate alternative employment and income, and open access to modest sources of credit.

Several sectoral policy frameworks and processes improved the management of natural resources and assisted Niger to meet international obligations. Warning and crisis management systems were strengthened in response to the increased frequency of such events.

Progress was slow on gender equality, which received insufficient visibility, although gender approaches were incorporated in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. UNDP supported the process leading to the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the adoption of a National Gender Policy. It also helped strengthen the response capacities of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, trained

women elected to female leadership, and trained national actors on stopping violence against women and advocating for the rights of women under CEDAW.

UNDP's direct (mainly project) and indirect (non-project) interventions have had meaningful results, but the balance between the two was not always understood by national partners. Some asked for more strategic support, others for more operational action. Ambiguities in the balance were particularly acute under the outcome related to poverty—where there was a commitment to implementing strategic reforms even as the majority of resources went to basic social service delivery.

While programme execution was initially assisted by a support unit in the Ministry of Economy and Finance, this arrangement was replaced by the principle of project focal points in counterpart national institutions. The shift was driven by a desire to strengthen national execution. In practice, it proved to be premature, given limits among national counterparts in both planning and monitoring activities. Problems of national ownership have hindered capacity development and raised questions over the effectiveness and sustainability of some outcomes. Capacity-building results are uncertain; there is still much to be done before it has real impact.

The programme was efficient, with procurement protocols judged transparent and fair. Yet abnormally

long delays caused by UNDP processes detracted from overall efficiency and added costs. Bottlenecks in work programmes, the availability of funding and the delivery of reporting documents forced programmes to deliver in a significantly shorter timeframe than originally foreseen.

UNDP played a leading role in coordinating development cooperation, including through an arrangement for managing aid. Managing relations with donors was highly effective, as shown by good results in mobilizing funds. Yet partners expressed disappointment that the expected drive towards harmonized procedures, per the Paris Declaration, had not materialized.

Given its fragile development status, Niger will continue to struggle with a number of chronic and emerging challenges. UNDP has shown the value of its assistance in generating both strategic and operational results, and offers clear comparative advantages in the areas in which it works. Its limitations are often linked to the weakness of its own resources. At the operational level, where demand is great, this is a particular handicap. Good resource mobilization strategies, effective communication and collaboration with other donors need to be part of clarifying the difference between initial implementation and scaling up, and coordinating efforts to avoid the kinds of abrupt interruptions in support that the people of Niger can ill afford.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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.
- Improve the handling of gender issues. In general, gender issues should be more adequately reflected in programme documents (in terms of context analysis, target setting and strategies).
- Strengthen, clarify and restructure economic governance in the programme, especially in the crucial area of public financial management. A choice should be made between continuing to dilute the theme in the poverty reduction outcome or giving it more visibility in a wider governance programme.
- Improve the wording of the outcome covering poverty reduction, gender and the MDGs to overcome the ambiguity undermining its coherence.
- Improve quality assurance. The Country Office should focus more on the core substantive work of the programme and less on managing procedures.
- Strengthen human resources; further recruitment efforts are needed.
- Improve communication with national partners on mandates and strategies, and to give more visibility to national counterparts. Greater clarity would also strengthen national ownership.
- Be more proactive and improve communication on procedures.
- Give the monitoring and evaluation 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.
- Improve national ownership. National ownership needs to be managed throughout the entire programme cycle; it can be achieved by designing specific strategies to be included in annual workplans.

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.

See the full reports at the Evaluation Resource Centre, erc.undp.org