

Evaluation Brief: ICPE Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone continues to face numerous development challenges and remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with high poverty rates (76.5 percent), low life expectancy (52.2 years) and major challenges in addressing gender inequality as well as youth unemployment and underemployment. This development fragility was further strained during the 2014 Ebola outbreak across the region, which killed 4,000 people in Sierra Leone alone and had significant economic and social consequences, adding to the country's economic downturn, despite several years of high growth.

However, the country is successfully consolidating its peace and security following a devastating civil war from 1991 to 2002, and has successfully implemented four post-crisis elections, including the 2018 election of a new President, retired Brigadier Julius Maada Bio. These elections marked the peaceful transition of power from the previous government, which had ruled over the previous 10 years.

UNDP Sierra Leone's support to the country is guided by its country programme document (CPD) for 2015 to 2019, which is closely aligned to the Sierra Leone Government's Agenda for Prosperity 2013 to 2018.¹ At the same time, UNDP, along with the United Nations in general and other donors, have responded to emerging needs such as the Ebola crisis and the Freetown landslide. UNDP's CPD focuses on two priority areas: 1) inclusive and effective democratic governance and 2) inclusive growth and sustainable development over the CPD period.

This Independent Country Programme Evaluation covers UNDP's development work in Sierra Leone from 2015 to 2019.

Findings and conclusions

UNDP's programme in the current cycle has faced a number of external shocks and upheavals that have presented considerable challenges to implementation, including the outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in 2014, economic crisis due to a drop in the price of iron, floods and landslides in 2017 and the general elections in 2018. The country office has been able to respond effectively to these events by adjusting its activities and support, but it has struggled in the implementation of its planned goals under the programme outlined in its CPD.

UNDP's engagement during this cycle has been broad, but has lacked depth and strategic focus, further limiting UNDP's ability to effectively achieve intended and planned country programme objectives. UNDP could have been considerably more strategic and focused in its support to Sierra Leone's development to ensure it meets the country's priority needs, but also to make a lasting impact in areas where it chooses to work. Equally, UNDP could have captured the broad range of synergies that existed across its portfolio of projects to further improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

The country office needs to strengthen its use of results-based management practices. A number

Programme expenditure by thematic area, 2015–2018 (US\$ million)



¹ See: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Agenda%204%20Prosperity.pdf>.

of systemic issues have been identified throughout this report in relation to the poor quality of data and statistics, lack of results frameworks and theories of change, and the short-term perspective of activities. Although the country office has a good evaluation plan, evaluations are often weak and their results are not utilized effectively.

The country office has spent a significant amount of core resources in areas where it has not been able to leverage additional funds. The country office needs a more strategic approach to its use of TRAC (core) funding to ensure that this type of funding is used efficiently, sparingly and mainly to catalyse new activities, as opposed to sustaining long-running initiatives, as is the case now.

UNDP has been involved in a range of areas and activities in the governance sector in pursuit of its

objective of good governance and justice, with its most important contributions in the area of elections and in the rule of law and access to justice. Within the governance sector, there are areas where UNDP is currently well established, but the challenge going forward will be to consolidate its work by integrating all related activities into holistic programmes that point in one direction and are managed efficiently.

The country programme's pursuit of inclusive growth and good governance through multiple projects across clusters involving various government and non-governmental actors has enabled UNDP to conduct a wide range of activities related to local governance at the subnational level. This is an area where UNDP can be quite competitive, but it needs to rationalize its activities and integrate them into cohesive area-based programmes that are managed under one strategic framework and by one set of people.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: In developing the new CPD, care should be taken to: reflect UNDP's comparative strengths and identify areas it is able to deliver on effectively; develop clear and supporting theories of change for UNDP's work in the country; and prioritize interventions and resources. Included in the country programme development should be a detailed analysis of the use of core funding and a strategy for leveraging core funding for greater impact. The country programme development process should ultimately strengthen the strategic focus of the programme, develop synergies across projects and clusters, deepen interventions and ensure sustainability.

Recommendation 2: The country office should further strengthen its results-based systems and practices. These efforts should be driven by the need to establish clarity and

a clear sense of priority over what UNDP is seeking to achieve in Sierra Leone.

Recommendation 3: The establishment of a new Ministry of Planning and the finalization of a new National Development Plan provides UNDP with an opportunity to consolidate a number of activities, while working to strengthen a key new ministry. UNDP should also strengthen its support to the government and the new administration's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendation 4: UNDP has had a positive experience in recent years in convening and coordinating key stakeholders (including government, donors and UN agencies) in support of the last two elections and during the EVD outbreak. There is an appetite among donors and UN agencies

for improved and strengthened development coordination and cooperation within the country, and this presents an opportunity for UNDP to play a greater role.

Recommendation 5: Interlinked with support to planning is that of ongoing and expanded support to local governance. UNDP is well positioned to develop further support to local governance and to ground several ongoing or planned activities in local governance work.

Recommendation 6: In terms of positioning, UNDP should further consolidate its work in areas such as elections and rule of law, where it has had real impact and is currently well established; it should also strengthen its presence in areas where there is clear and strong potential for synergies among activities it has undertaken.