

# Evaluation Brief: ICPE Comoros

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted an independent country programme evaluation (ICPE) in the Union of the Comoros in 2018. The ICPE covered the period from 2015 to mid-2018, namely, three-and-a-half years of the current 2015-2019 programme cycle.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), the Comoros is characterized by its small size, remoteness, lack of resources and exposure to global environmental crises. The 2015-2019 UNDP programme in the country includes three components: (i) political, administrative and economic governance; (ii) employment, and inclusive and sustainable economic activities; and (iii) resilience to climate change and crises. The three components are interdependent, and revolve around the resilience of individuals and institutions, and the fight against poverty.

## Findings and Conclusions

For the 2015-2019 programme cycle, UNDP has maintained the programmatic approach it adopted in the previous cycle, aimed at refocusing its interventions to target geographical areas and groups; seeking synergies and complementarities between its projects; and capitalizing on results achieved. The planned interventions are relevant to the specific challenges of a least developed country and a SIDS, including productive capacity, rural development, access to international markets and environmental vulnerability. However, UNDP has set very ambitious objectives that will be hard to achieve in the given time and context, which is characterized by governance challenges.

The results of UNDP interventions are variable: low for the governance component, and more promising for the sustainable development and resilience components. Most of the results under the governance component are limited to activities or achievements with impacts that are difficult to measure because of their one-off nature, their

fragility or the fact that project activities have not been finalized. Some efforts could have been consolidated and scaled up, like the National Citizen's Watch Platform, which could be the reference mechanism for citizen engagement in the prevention and management of conflicts.

Regarding the sustainable development and resilience components, UNDP interventions at the central level have effectively strengthened and operationalized several public institutions. If they continue to receive financial support, structures such as the Vanilla Office, the Directorate General of Civil Security, the Centre for Analysis and Processing of Information, the National Agency of Civil Aviation and Meteorology, and the registry of cooperatives will be able to put new know-how into practice. This is also the case at the local level for UNDP-supported pilot Rural Economic Development Centres (CRDEs) and producers' cooperatives. Incomes and resilience to climate change have increased through the adoption of new practices and technologies for adaptation and mitigation. In terms of biodiversity protection, behavioural changes related to protected animal and plant species have stemmed from awareness-raising. Yet efforts to promote renewable sources of energy remained modest, comprising support to the Government to devise its energy strategy and prepare a request for Global Environment Facility (GEF) assistance in developing geothermal energy. At the local level, solar panels for autonomous power generation were provided to certain beneficiaries such as the CRDEs.

The sustainability of UNDP interventions is generally weak. The strategy for sustainability is essentially based on UNDP's capacity to find additional external funding for the consolidation or the continuity of project activities. The difficulties encountered by UNDP in mobilizing resources, particularly for the governance component, have led the country office to orient its interventions around the priorities of donors, at the risk of undermining the real needs of the country and national ownership.

The UNDP programme has made notable efforts to promote gender and human rights despite cultural resistance. Mainstreaming of both occurs in programme design and implementation. The programme has also been relatively successful in developing diverse partnerships, such as between public institutions, to foster collaboration and reduce compartmentalization. It has called on services and know-how from national media, foreign partners, United Nations agencies, and other technical and financial partners. With the last, communication gaps have sometimes led to redundancies and inefficiencies. Some partnerships have been developed

with entities located in neighbouring countries or other countries facing similar challenges. These promoted South-South cooperation to fill skill gaps and allow several Comorian institutions to benefit from the experiences of other countries.

UNDP adequately monitors the implementation of its programme and projects, but it is not sufficiently results-oriented and does not rely on evaluations, of which there are too few. National counterparts' monitoring capacity remains weak at all levels, due to a lack of resources and monitoring culture.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** Good governance is essential for sustainable development and is the main challenge facing the Comoros. UNDP needs to review and strengthen its governance programme. It should also further develop cross-cutting interventions supporting governance.

**Recommendation 2:** As electricity is an essential factor of production for the country's economic development, and given high renewable energy potential in the Comoros, UNDP should strengthen its support to renewable energy development.

**Recommendation 3:** UNDP needs to design its next country programme on the basis of a theory of change that will enable it to formulate realistic objectives across a programming cycle, based on allocated human and financial resources, and the identification of factors over which it can have an influence.

**Recommendation 4:** UNDP should advocate for greater national ownership based on dialogue with all stakeholders and develop a strategy for scaling up its successful pilot experiences. In the field, UNDP needs to better prepare communities to accept new concepts such as payment for services, including ecosystem services and credit repayment, among others, by sensitizing them and strengthening their capacities.

**Recommendation 5:** UNDP should make greater efforts to improve project management by national partners, involve them more in project formulation and budgeting, and develop the culture of results-based monitoring in national and island-level institutions through advocacy and institutional capacity-building.

**Recommendation 6:** In terms of resource mobilization, UNDP should explore unconventional sources such as the Comorian diaspora and develop a reflection on ways to channel its money transfers to investment projects and/or the development of innovations in the productive sector. It must also improve communication with other development partners in the country for better coordination of interventions, and the mobilization and more effective management of official development assistance.

**Recommendation 7:** UNDP should further reinforce its gender and human rights efforts, and use expertise and/or tools to better address these dimensions in its programme.