



# INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION CUBA



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**IEO** | INDEPENDENT  
Evaluation Office

United Nations Development Programme

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non-governmental organizations, and bilateral  
and multilateral development partners



# Foreword

I am pleased to present the first UNDP Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) of the Republic of Cuba. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted the ICPE in 2018 and it covers the current country programme for the period 2015-2019.

UNDP's programme in Cuba has contributed to sustainable economic and local development, food security and nutrition; environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction; population dynamics and sustainable social services. Important progress was made towards the country programme outcomes and UNDP made relevant contributions to the development of Cuba. UNDP has been flexible in adapting to the country context and timely in responding to national needs. Downstream, it efficiently implemented innovative projects aligned to Government priorities. Upstream, as a trusted partner, UNDP has added value in the development and implementation of national policies and strategies in key and at times sensitive and new areas through technical advice of the highly skilled local staff and partners and UNDP's global network. UNDP has been strategically positioned as an agency with a leading and integrator role, able to develop synergies among UN agencies. It is well placed to foster intersectoral partnerships and multidimensional approaches to contribute to the national challenges and opportunities for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including in areas such as currency unification, changes to the economic model, and building resilience to climate change.

The evaluation identified and presented recommendations for improvement in a number of areas related to UNDP's positioning to improve integration and sustainability, its programmatic focus and to further promote a gender-transformative and intergenerational approach to UNDP's future work in Cuba.

It will be important for UNDP to develop a clear theory of change that reflects adequate integration of the SDGs and strengthens cross-sectoral and inter-agency synergies. There is also space to more systematically promote the use of South-South and triangular cooperation introducing and exporting from Cuba to other countries new capacities, integrative approaches and innovative technologies. It will be vital to ensure the focus on leaving no one behind and preparing the country for the challenges and opportunities from forthcoming changes in the context of the updates to the economic model.

I trust this report will be of use to readers seeking to achieve a better understanding of the broad support that UNDP has provided, including what has worked and what has not, and in prompting discussions on how UNDP may be best positioned to contribute to sustainable human development in Cuba in the years to come.



**Indran A. Naidoo**  
Director, Independent Evaluation Office





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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>ARV</b>	Antiretroviral
<b>BASAL</b>	Environmental Foundations for Local Food Sustainability
<b>CCM</b>	Country Coordinating Mechanism
<b>CITMA</b>	Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment
<b>CNP</b>	National Prevention Centre for STI/HIV/AIDS
<b>CO</b>	Country office
<b>CPD</b>	Country programme document
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster risk reduction
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EWS</b>	Early warning system
<b>FORSAT</b>	Hydrometeorological early warning system project
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	Human immunodeficiency virus/Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
<b>ICPE</b>	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and evaluation
<b>MINAG</b>	Ministry of Agriculture
<b>MINCEX</b>	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment
<b>MINSAP</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>ONEI</b>	National Statistics and Information Office
<b>PADIT</b>	Articulated Platform for Integrated Territorial Development
<b>PAHO</b>	Pan American Health Organization
<b>PEN</b>	National Strategic Plan for STI/HIV/AIDS
<b>RBLAC</b>	Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDP)
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>STI</b>	Sexually transmitted infection
<b>TRAC</b>	Target for Resource Assignment from the Core
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



# Evaluation Brief: ICPE Cuba

Cuba is an upper middle-income country with high human development, above the average for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite good advancements on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Cuba still faces challenges in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since 2011 Cuba has embarked on a process to update its economic and social model to foster greater prosperity by addressing the country's main development challenges.

UNDP's partnership with Cuba began in 1965 but the cooperation was formalized in 1973. In its current 2014-2018 country programme, UNDP focused on the following thematic areas: sustainable economic development, food security and nutrition; population dynamics, quality, development, and sustainability of social and cultural services; and environmental sustainability and disaster risk management.

## Findings and Conclusions

UNDP made important progress towards the country programme outcomes and relevant contributions to the development of Cuba. UNDP has been flexible in adapting to the country context and timely in responding to national needs. Downstream, it efficiently implemented innovative projects aligned with Government priorities. Upstream, as a trusted partner, it has added value in the development and implementation of national policies and strategies in key and at times sensitive new areas through technical advice from its highly skilled local staff, partners and global network.

UNDP has strategically positioned itself as an agency with a leading and integrator role, able to develop synergies between UN agencies. It is well placed to foster intersectoral partnerships and multidimensional approaches to contribute to the national challenges and opportunities for achieving the SDGs, including in areas such as currency unification, changes to the economic model, and building resilience to climate change.

UNDP has been efficient in delivering results. Despite the improved delivery and management efficiency ratio, low execution rates persist. Compliance demands and the imperatives of the Cuban context have precluded the staff from paying greater attention to strategic programme support. Clearer theories of change with the proper systems thinking, reflecting a contextualized sequencing of SDGs integration and strengthening of cross-sectoral and inter-agency synergies, would have further strengthened UNDP's contributions.

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## Total Programme Expenditure, 2014-2018: \$80,206,072

FIGURE 1. Funding sources, 2014-2018

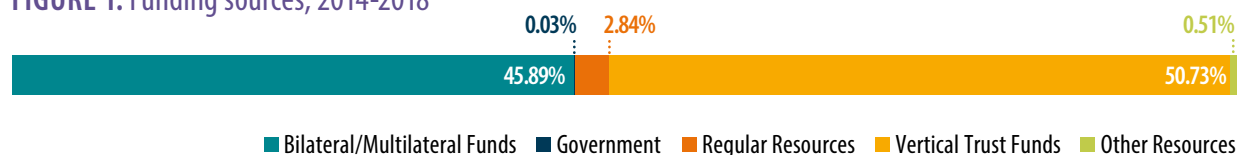


FIGURE 2. Programme expenditure by thematic area, 2014-2018 (\$ million)



UNDP made important contributions to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Cuba. Most results to which UNDP contributed were gender-targeted or -responsive but not yet transformative enough. There was limited integration of population dynamics throughout the programme, especially of intergenerational approaches, considering Cuba's growing concern with its ageing population.

Financed by the Global Fund, UNDP's support for Cuba's fight against HIV/AIDS, which was built upon partnerships between the Government, civil society actors, and the United Nations, was key to eliminating mother-to-child transmission and controlling HIV incidence in the country.

UNDP's assistance to banking modernization contributed to greater access to finance for development in Cuba's key productive sectors. In alignment, UNDP's support to territorial development management (PADIT project)

and agricultural value chains production built local governance capacities and improved productivity of key products, which, to a modest extent, helped some municipalities with import substitution.

UNDP's contributions have strengthened national capacities for integrating environmental considerations in local and sectoral development and disaster risk management and reduction at the territorial level. Insufficient attention was devoted to water contamination and availability issues and energy efficiency – both important for climate change adaptation – and to seismic risks in Havana.

Although there has been limited documentation of experiences and lessons learned, UNDP has promoted South-South and triangular cooperation. Cuba has been introduced to and has exported new capacities and technologies that have been successfully adapted to different contexts for sustainable results and national ownership.

## Recommendations

- **RECOMMENDATION 1.** UNDP should develop a clear theory of change for the new country programme document that reflects a contextualized sequencing of strategic SDG integration and strengthening of cross-sectoral synergies, making better use of UN agencies' expertise.
- **RECOMMENDATION 2.** Building from PADIT's experience, UNDP should expand the use of platform approaches as a catalytic investment to leverage national efforts and resources to strengthen governments' capacities and systems to integrate and implement the SDGs in a holistic way, especially at the territorial level.
- **RECOMMENDATION 3.** Considering the restricted current execution rates, the announced monetary and exchange rate unification, and challenges with Internet connectivity, UNDP, with the support of the Regional Bureau, should continue to work with the Government to strengthen plans to expedite execution of, and agree, as partners, on mitigation measures to minimize the potential impacts on programme results and staff.
- **RECOMMENDATION 4.** As a key value proposition of the programme, UNDP should more systematically integrate South-South cooperation, expanding the use of existing Cuban expertise and knowledge and more proactively identifying opportunities to support Cuba's development and for Cuba to contribute to the development of other countries.
- **RECOMMENDATION 5.** Building on Cuban social equity results and the good capacities of UNDP staff for gender mainstreaming, UNDP should pursue more gender-transformative rights approaches, in all areas of work, to accelerate changes in social determinants and structural issues.
- **RECOMMENDATION 6.** Considering Cuba's growing elderly population, UNDP should mainstream an intergenerational approach throughout the programme. This should be done in collaboration with other national partners and agencies with expertise in the area.
- **RECOMMENDATION 7.** Given Cuba's transition from the Global Fund by 2020 and challenges linked to the blockade, UNDP should continue working with national partners to identify other viable solutions that ensure access to medications and to fund the work with social networks and the conduct of regular prevention and target population surveys.
- **RECOMMENDATION 8.** UNDP should support the formulation of policies related to the management model of territorial and intersectoral value chains from productive regions as a consolidation of innovations and changes initiated with the programme.
- **RECOMMENDATION 9.** Voiced as national priorities by the Government, UNDP should also reinforce the attention to issues of water resources and energy efficiency and mainstream a strategic risk management approach for disaster risk reduction throughout the entire programme.



# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Purpose, objective and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has conducted this Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) in Cuba to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national effort for achieving development results. The purpose of ICPEs is to:

- Support the development of the next UNDP country programme document (CPD);
- Strengthen accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders, and to the Executive Board.

This is the first country-level evaluation conducted by UNDP in Cuba. The results from this ICPE, which aims at answering three main evaluation questions (see Box 1), will serve as an input for the formulation of UNDP's new CPD for 2020-2024.

The ICPE covers the current CPD 2014-2018, extended to 2019, and examines UNDP's performance in the country from 2015 to September 2018. The evaluation team considered all UNDP activities in the country and interventions financed by all sources, including UNDP core resources, donor funds and government funds. The ICPE also covered non-project activities – such as coordination and advocacy – considered important for the country's political and social agenda.

## 1.2 Methodology

**Methodology.** The evaluation was guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms & Standards<sup>1</sup> and the ethical Code of Conduct<sup>2</sup>. A theory-of-change approach was used in consultation

### MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
2. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
3. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP's performance and, eventually, the sustainability of results?

with the UNDP country office focusing on mapping the assumptions behind the programme's desired change(s) and the causal linkages between the intervention(s) and the intended country programme outcomes. As part of this analysis, the CPD's progression over the review period was also examined.

The effectiveness of UNDP's country programme was analysed through an assessment of progress made towards the achievement of the expected outputs and the extent to which these outputs contributed to the intended CPD outcomes. In this process, both positive and negative, direct and indirect unintended results were also considered.

To better understand UNDP's performance, the specific factors that have influenced – both positively or negatively – UNDP's performance and the sustainability of results in the country were examined. In assessing the CPD's evolution, UNDP's capacity to adapt to the changing context and respond to national development need and priorities were examined. The utilization of resources to deliver results (including managerial practices), the extent to which the country office fostered partnerships and synergies with other actors (i.e. through South-South or triangular cooperation), and the extent to which the key principles of UNDP's Strategic Plan<sup>3</sup> have been applied in the CPD design and implementation are some of the aspects assessed<sup>4</sup>.

1 <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>

2 [www.uneval.org](http://www.uneval.org)

3 These principles include: national ownership and capacity; human rights-based approach; sustainable human development; gender equality and women's empowerment; voice and participation; South-South and triangular cooperation; active role as global citizens; and universality.

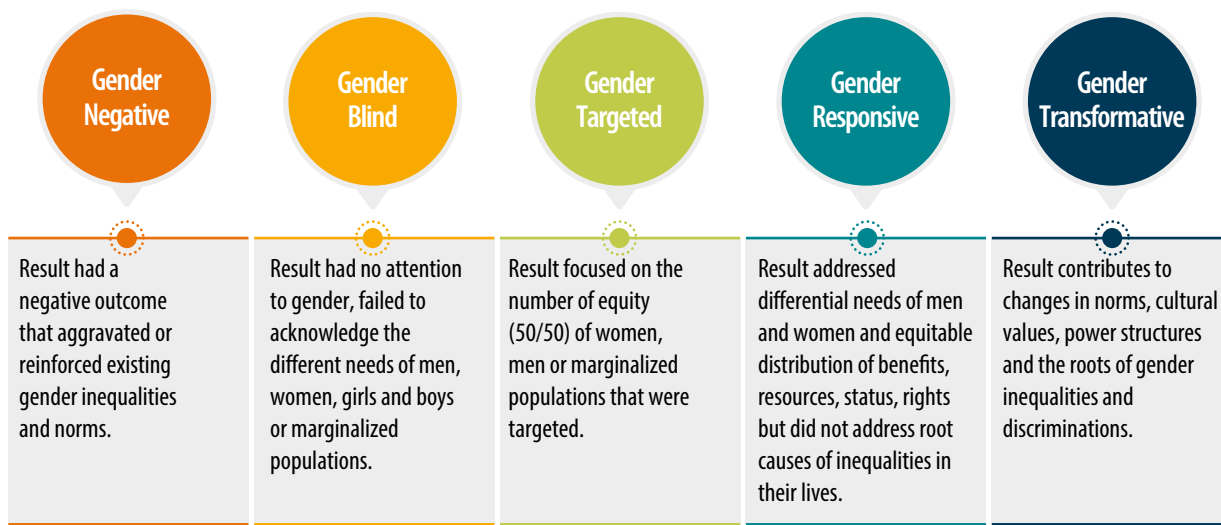
4 This information is extracted from analysis of the goals put in the Enhanced RBM platform, the financial results in the Executive Snapshot, the results in the Global Staff Survey, and interviews with the management/operations in the country office.



Special attention was given to integrating a gender-responsive evaluation approach to data-collection methods. To assess gender across the portfolio, the evaluation considered the UNDP gender marker<sup>5</sup> assigned to the different project outputs and the IEO's

gender results effectiveness scale (GRES). The GRES classifies gender results into five categories: gender-negative, gender-blind, gender-targeted, gender-responsive and gender-transformative.

**FIGURE 3. Gender Results Effectiveness Scale**



The evaluation used data from primary and secondary sources, including a portfolio analysis, desk review of corporate and project documentation and questionnaires. A multistakeholder approach was followed, collecting views from a diverse range of stakeholders on UNDP's performance and contributions at the national level. Face-to-face and telephone/Skype interviews were conducted with 250 people, including representatives of the Government, civil society organizations, UN agencies, bilateral donors, the UNDP country office, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC) and beneficiaries of the programme. Data and information collected from different sources and through various means were triangulated before the evaluation reached conclusions and recommendations. Field visits were carried out in nine provinces, namely La Habana, Granma, Santiago de Cuba, Guantanamo, Holguin, Artemisa, Pinar del Rio, Cienfuegos and Sancti Spiritus, to interview local

government authorities and beneficiaries and undertake direct observation of project sites.

For the analysis of results by subject area, an illustrative sample of interventions was selected reflecting the work of UNDP during the period 2015-2018. As the evaluation is outcome driven and not a sum of project evaluations, however, the evaluation team consulted all key stakeholders regardless of the project sample. To ensure that the selected sample considered the full range of actions in the UNDP portfolio, the following selection criteria were applied:

- Initiatives implemented during the 2015-2018 period.
- Initiatives with good performance and initiatives with performance issues.
- Projects implemented by both the NIM and DIM (national/direct implementation) modalities.

<sup>5</sup> A corporate monitoring tool used to assign a rating score to project outputs during their design phase and track planned expenditure towards outputs that may include advances or contributions to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. The gender marker does not reflect the actual expenditures assigned to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. As the gender marker is assigned by project output and not project ID, a project might have several outputs with different gender markers.

- Initiatives underway and initiatives already completed, i.e., closed projects.
- Pilot and non-pilot projects.
- High-budget projects and projects of a low budget.
- Initiatives executed with the Government, as well as initiatives with civil society.
- Interventions that incorporated elements of South-South cooperation.
- Initiatives implemented in the capital and in the rest of the country.

**Process.** Following the development of the terms of reference for the ICPE (Annex 1) in January 2018, the IEO recruited two national experts to support the outcome assessments. A pre-mission questionnaire was sent to the country office in July 2018 as a self-assessment and reflection tool. A two-week data-collection mission was carried out by the IEO Lead Evaluator, Associate Evaluator, Director, Operations Chief and the two experts between 9 and 25 September 2018. At the end of the mission, preliminary findings and results were shared with the country office for joint reflections and validation purposes. Subsequently, the team drafted separate outcome reports which served as input for this final ICPE report.

The draft ICPE report was quality assured by two IEO internal reviewers, as well as an external expert (a member of IEO Evaluation Advisory Panel), then submitted to the country office and the RBLAC to check for factual errors and finally to the Government and other national partners for comments. A stakeholders' workshop was held in Havana in March 2019 to bring together key stakeholders and present the evaluation results, providing an additional opportunity to discuss results and recommendations, and to obtain feedback and clarification on the ICPE report prior to its finalization.

**Limitations.** The evaluation team faced no significant limitations during the data collection mission, other than a paucity of previous evaluations available, which required more thorough data collection

of primary sources. Also due to limited Internet access, the final stakeholders' meeting could not be conducted virtually and required an additional trip to Havana to present the final report.

### 1.3 Overview of the country context

The Republic of Cuba is an archipelago between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean with a population of 11.2 million people (2016). Since 2011, the country has embarked on a process to update its economic and social model with the aim of fostering greater prosperity by addressing the country's main development challenges. This process attempts to balance the unification of Cuba's currencies while opening space for new investment. The ongoing modernization process is implemented through a government-wide effort by the Economic and Social Policy Guidelines, 'Lineamientos', on the development model of Cuba. In the 'Lineamientos', recently updated for the 2016-2021 period and approved by Congress in April 2016, the Government of Cuba has established a new economic policy to achieve greater efficiency, rationalization and sustainability.

In 2014, as a measure to boost investment, the Cuban Government also announced a new foreign investment law. The country is now working on a process of monetary and exchange rates unification to enhance its international economic integration and the competitiveness of its economy while preserving social inclusion and equity. There have been advances in institutional change and decentralization, giving new and greater powers to the territorial governments (provinces and municipalities). A greater degree of autonomy is expected to provide a more solid base for economic productivity.

This modernization process, however, has been constrained by both external and endogenous factors. These include the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States Government<sup>6</sup>, the conjunction of the several global crises, and the occurrence of extreme weather events.

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6 Cuba has had an economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States for over 50 years negatively impacting its economy, people and environment, with national authorities estimating that until 2012, the damage was more than \$1.66 billion.

Cuba is an upper middle-income country.<sup>7</sup> In 2016, its Human Development Index (HDI) was 0.775, ranking it 68th out of 188 countries. Cuba's HDI is above the average for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, positioning the country in the high human development category. Despite the advancements made on the MDGs, Cuba faces several challenges now in meeting the SDGs. Social programmes rely on food imports, straining the national budget. To ensure the sustainability of its social safety nets, the Government announced plans in 2011 to make social protection more streamlined, putting more emphasis on the most vulnerable groups in society. Ensuring continued food security still implies significant challenges, such as modernizing outdated farming technology and increasing access to inputs and credit. In addition, the country has an ageing population with no generational replacement since 1978.<sup>8</sup> The majority of senior citizens are women. There is also a steady rise in young people emigrating.

In terms of gender equality and women's empowerment, Cuba has made significant strides over the last 20 years, and the country continues to work towards strengthening women's participation and decision-making power. Cuba's gender inequality index is 0.304,<sup>9</sup> ranking it 62nd out of 159 countries. In the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report, Cuba ranks 25th out of 144 countries, well above the average with a score of 0.745. Women occupy nearly half, or 48.9 percent, of the positions in Parliament. Cuba is a signatory to numerous international agreements related to women's rights and the country's Constitution includes articles that prohibit discrimination based on gender and enshrines the equality of sexes as the State's duty. Nonetheless, gaps exist in some relevant dimensions of gender equality. Challenges remain in the area of health and survival of women, in which Cuba ranks 103rd out of 144 countries. There are

also gender disparities in the labour markets. Labour participation of women was only 51 percent in 2017, while male participation was 79 percent. There is still insufficient data to calculate gender indicators related to earned income and wage equality.<sup>10</sup>

On the social front, the Cuban Government has also shown a strong commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS and to the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, such as the lesbian, gays, bisexuals and transgender (LGBT) community. Cuba's public health system provides free medical coverage to the Cuban people, focusing on preventive care, community care and intersectoral collaboration to improve the social and environmental determinants that impact health. Cuba's public health and social assistance budget represents 22 percent of the total State budget and 9.7 percent of the gross domestic product.

## 1.4 Overview of UNDP in Cuba

UNDP's partnership with Cuba began in 1965, and formal cooperation in 1973. In alignment with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), UNDP's 2014-2018 CPD identifies seven outcomes, aligned to the Government's priorities. In this evaluation, the outcomes were grouped into three thematic areas (see Figure 4).

Of these thematic areas, sustainable economic development was the largest in terms of delivery, followed by HIV/AIDS and environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction (see Figure 5). During the evaluation period, UNDP implemented 81 projects. The planned resources for the five-year programme cycle amounts to around \$116 million.<sup>11</sup> As of mid-2018, the country office (CO) had implemented projects worth around \$80 million, with an average execution rate of 67 percent. Reasons for low execution will be discussed in chapter 2.

7 Based on the World Bank's classification.

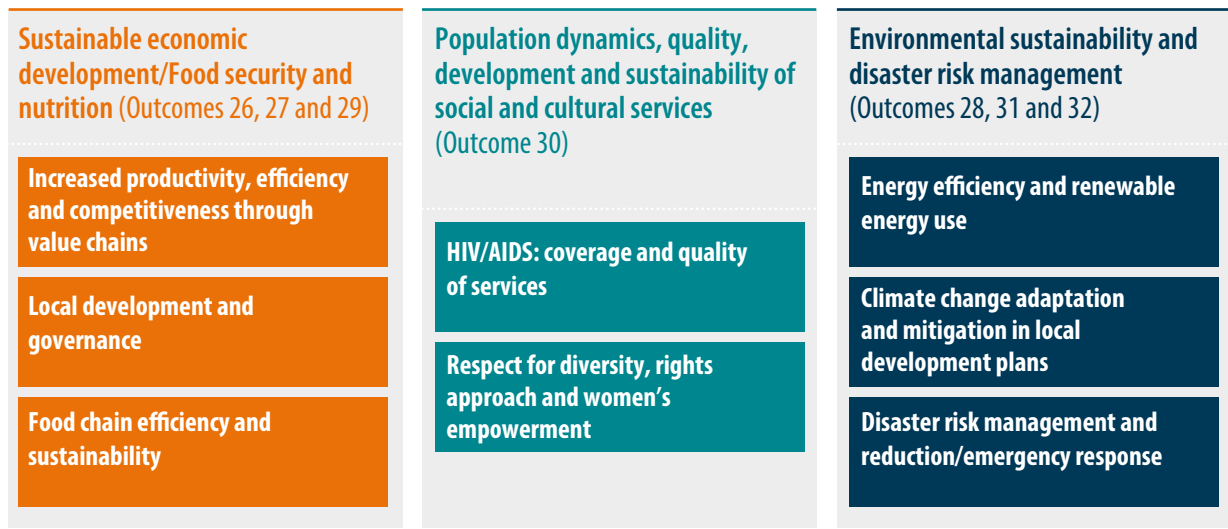
8 *Granma*, 21 November 2018.

9 Gender Inequality Index for 2016.

10 Global Gender Gap Report (2017): [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf)

11 Data from the project table validated by the country office (source: PowerBi/Atlas). CPD planned data was \$92.05 million. Financial data used in the report is from the project table (source: PowerBi/Atlas).

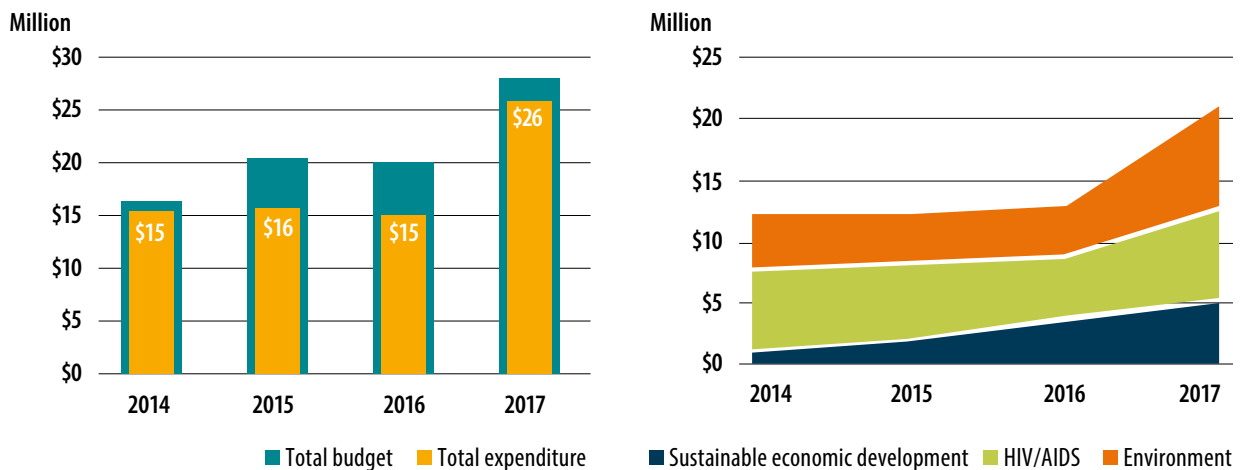
**FIGURE 4. UNDP Cuba programme: main thematic areas**



Of the \$80 million in disbursed funds, only 3 percent came from UNDP core resources. Major contributing partners to non-core resources have been the Global Fund (32 percent of expenditures), European Commission (18 percent) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF, 12 percent). More detailed information on the country programme is available in annex 3 ('Country office at a glance').

Core resources expenditure increased in 2017 (from \$477,427 in 2016 to \$977,998 in 2017) but then decreased significantly in 2018 to \$95,583 (although the year is not over yet, the budget for core funding in 2018 is still low comparatively, at \$335,289). Non-core resources expenditure increased significantly, from \$14.9 million in 2016 to \$25.9 in 2017.

**FIGURE 5. Evolution of programme budget and expenditure 2014-2017, by year and thematic area**



Source: Atlas validated with UNDP office



# CHAPTER 2

## FINDINGS

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## 2.1 Sustainable economic and local development, food security and nutrition

In sustainable economic and local development, food security and nutrition, UNDP has committed to contributing to the following outcomes:



### RELATED OUTCOMES

**Outcome 26:** Key productive sectors increase productivity, efficiency and competitiveness, and activate value chains, in support of increased exports and import substitution (planned resources \$11,330,000).

**Outcome 27:** Governments and other local actors improve the management of their socio-economic and cultural development, with emphasis on youth and women (planned resources \$7,330,000).

**Outcome 29:** The food chain increases in efficiency and sustainability, with a satisfactory level of hygiene, and an intergenerational and gender-based approach is taken in order to boost the consumption of nutritionally adequate food and replace imports (planned resources \$16,884,923).

Cuba's food programme aims to guarantee at least 50 percent of the nutritional requirements of the country's population through food rationing, price subsidies or social programmes. Cuba currently imports about 80 percent of its food products.<sup>12</sup> The country's economic and social modernization process aims to prioritize the transformation and development of the productive sector to substitute imports and increase exports while ensuring food security and nutrition. The goal is to develop autonomous municipalities with a solid productive and economic base capable of using their resources and potentials sustainably.

In alignment with these national priorities and the UNDAF, the CPD of UNDP focused on promoting and disseminating methodologies, instruments and innovative technologies for the development of local and national value chains. It also concentrated on local initiatives to increase agricultural production in a competitive way, through greater energy efficiency, the sustainable management of the environment and a gender approach. In addition, the programme aimed at strengthening capacities and promoting tools and methodologies on local planning and management for the implementation of local development strategies. Finally, UNDP's programme also envisaged the promotion of knowledge-sharing and management processes through South-South cooperation to strengthen human capital and promote a culture of cooperatives or entrepreneurship with an interest in youth and women's empowerment.

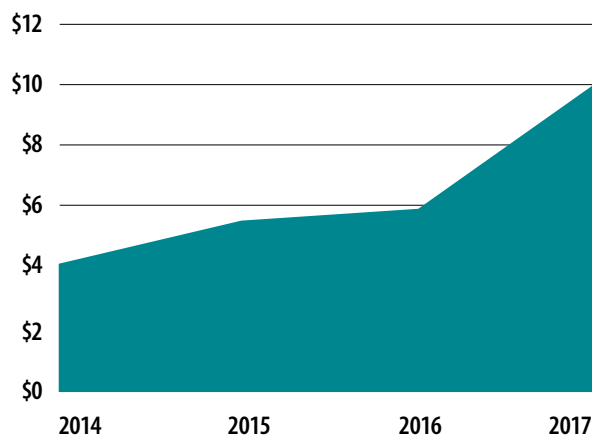
A total of 28 projects with 35 project outputs were implemented between 2014 to mid-2018 under this thematic area. The estimated budget amounted to \$41 million and expenditures to \$29.28 million, reaching a 71 percent execution rate.<sup>13</sup> In terms of resources, this was the largest thematic area, representing 37 percent of total programme delivery for the evaluation period.

12 Project document 'Agrocadenas', p.6.

13 Data on budget and expenditures are based on UNDP's financial system – Atlas.



**FIGURE 6. Sustainable economic development, food security and nutrition: total expenditure (\$ million)**



In line with the principles of national ownership, 22 projects used the national implementation modality (NIM), covering 97 percent of the expenditures under this area. As for gender, 49 percent of project outputs had committed to gender equality as a significant objective (GEN2), while the other 49 percent committed to contributing in some way, or in a limited way, to gender equality (GEN1, GEN0). Only one project output envisaged gender equality as the main objective (GEN3).

Interventions were implemented with a wide array of national counterparts and institutions including the Ministries of Agriculture (MINAG); Economy and Planning (MEP); Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA); Foreign Trade and Investment (MINCEX); Food Industry (MINAL); the Central Bank and three commercial banks (Banco de Crédito y Comercio, Banco Popular de Ahorro and Metropolitan Bank); the National Institute for Economic Investigations (INIE); the Agency for the Environment (AMA); the Cuban Research Institute for Sugar Cane-derived Products; the National Statistics and Information

Office (ONEI); the University of Havana; the Cuban Association of Agriculture and Forest Technicians; the Institute of Tropical Floriculture Research (IIFT); and the Institute of Tropical Geography (IGT), among others. Similarly, some actions were coordinated with multilateral institutions such as the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Food Programme (WFP). The main resource partners were the European Union, Switzerland, Canada, Spain and Italy, as well as the multilateral fund for the implementation of the Montreal Protocol. Partnerships were also established with the provincial and municipal governments of Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, Granma, Holguín, Camagüey, Sancti Spíritus, Villa Clara, Cienfuegos, Matanzas, Mayabeque, Artemisa and Pinar del Río.

**BOX 1. Key factors contributing to results in the sustainable economic development area**

- High national ownership of and commitment to the development of local capacities and productive sectors;
- Long-standing donor support for the promotion of a territorial platform approach, decentralization, and value chain management;
- UNDP's programmatic continuity, territorial presence and durable relationship with national and local governments;
- Effective articulation and coordination of multisectoral actors at different levels (national, regional, local);
- Strategic partnerships with research centres and universities for programme implementation;
- Assertive use of South-South cooperation for knowledge exchange and innovation transfer on value chain.

**Finding 1.** UNDP has played a pivotal role in strengthening national capacities for decentralization development through an articulated platform for integrated territorial development, setting up a multilevel intersectoral governance mechanism, introducing catalytic ideas into national decentralization strategies and policies and improving tools and methodologies to measure territorial development.

The Articulated Platform for Integrated Territorial Development (PADIT)<sup>14</sup> was piloted in Artemisa and later the rest of the provinces were incorporated in the following order: Artemisa (2014), Cienfuegos and Pinar (2015), Holguín (2016), Guantánamo and Sancti Spiritus (2018). National partners have recognized PADIT as one of UNDP's successful flagship programmes. PADIT is fully owned by national counterparts as a multilevel and intersectoral governance mechanism for local governance and decentralization in an effort to integrate national planning concepts with territorial development. UNDP has been key in introducing tools and methodologies with the provision of technical support and knowledge transfer and management and facilitating Cuba's access to international and regional experiences relevant to the country's context. With UNDP's support, the platform facilitated the formulation and implementation of development planning and financing tools such as the methodological guide for the formulation of the municipal economic and social development strategy (EDM), the provincial development strategy (EDP) and the integrated procedure for territorial financing. This work led to the integration of the environmental dimension in six spatial and local planning tools and has fostered the use of a more strategic approach by local governments, "changing the urgent for the important", as expressed by local authorities. As a result, local governments are now applying a more comprehensive and articulated management model.

Field data identified PADIT in Pinar del Rio as a champion of this process. With UNDP's contribution, the provincial government created an integrated

local development management model with the participation of several local actors. This model is characterized by a long-term vision, a territorial development strategy, several prioritized programmes and the participation of the university as implementing partners, knowledge providers and advisers. Cuba's President visited the Pinar del Rio initiative in September 2018. Lauding the achievements, he announced that the platform model would be upscaled to the rest of the country. Seven municipal development strategies that articulate local priorities with national strategies have been developed or updated in this province. As part of this process, UNDP has also helped to institutionalize communication for development in local governments, developing territorial capacities and facilitating tools that have allowed for better communication between local governments and citizens. Through communication for development, citizens have greater access to information and are encouraged to actively participate in local development processes.

Relevant contributions were also found in the development and strengthening of capacities to measure national development, improving country statistics on local territorial development. UNDP facilitated the construction of the Territorial Development Index with the Physical Planning Institute and ONEI, which is the indicator defined in the territorial axis of the 2030 National Development Plan to measure and compare the level of development in the territories, facilitating political and budgetary decisions regarding territorial equity. Likewise, national statistical capacities have been enhanced to improve the collection of territorial economic information for the statistical information system, and for the national accounts. UNDP has also shared the international methodology to measure the multidimensional poverty index as another measurement tool. The capacities of local institutions for local economic development were also developed, but results are still incipient. UNDP facilitated the development of methodologies to enhance the articulation of local economic actors and supported

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14 Over \$7.5 million has been allocated to support PADIT. Main donors have been the EU, Switzerland, Italy and the Netherlands.



the establishment of microcredit managers and business advisory services. So far, these interventions have had a limited impact on the development of territorial economy. Investments in strengthening capacities in public and non-state entities have been insufficient to achieve this transformation. Larger scale investments focused on improving productive capacities and the use of new technologies would be required at the local level to boost the local economy at a level that would impact the exports and imports of the country. The ongoing US blockade, however, may continue to affect development in this area. As for localizing the SDGs, even though some specific actions incorporate that approach, tools for multidimensional analysis and management of local development have not been yet been generated and applied holistically. However, matters are moving forward. The PADIT offers a dynamic and inclusive platform to integrate the SDGs approach in a more systematic and integrated way at the local level.

**Finding 2.** UNDP's support in value chain development has introduced and developed the value chain management approach for key products such as meat, milk, corn and beans, in pilot municipalities, leading to a reported increase in productivity and a reduction in imports for some agricultural products.

Through the initiative called 'Agrocadenas', UNDP has provided technical assistance and the transfer of knowledge and experiences for the development of diagnostic and intersectoral management tools and mechanisms for value chains. In addition, UNDP has helped to bring together relevant national and local actors to improve value chain coordination. An example is the municipal intersectoral management councils for the different value chains that were created and institutionalized with UNDP's support. Led by municipal governments, these councils bring together different national and local institutions in the municipality, including state-owned entities. As a result, there has been a reported production and yield increase in four agricultural value chains that reduced

imports and enhanced sector competitiveness in the seven pilot provinces. Based on project estimates, for corn the yield increased by 7 percent between 2014 to 2017 (from 1.4 tons/ha to 1.5) and by 20 percent for beans (from 1 ton/ha to 1.2 tons/ha). Meat production reportedly increased by 500 tons, compared to 2014 estimates, whereas milk production increased by 300,000 litres.

Along the same lines, UNDP effectively contributed through the initiative called BASAL (Environmental Foundations for Local Food Sustainability) to the development of institutional capacities in three pilot municipalities through the creation of interdisciplinary teams that have incorporated climate change adaptation criteria to agricultural production techniques and methods for rice, crops and livestock. The new agricultural practices help manage natural resources in a more sustainable manner: agricultural practices and technologies for soil conservation and improvement; water efficiency for irrigation and animal use; integrated management of pests and invasive species; and energy efficiency in agricultural production by replacing wasteful energy technologies with more efficient ones that use renewable sources of energy.

With UNDP's technical assistance, local entities also developed innovative territorial services that help improve the productivity, efficiency, sustainability, resilience and management of agricultural value chains. Some examples of both initiatives, mentioned below, include the creation of technical assistance brigades (BAT) for the development of business plans and projects to access local funds;<sup>15</sup> the water use and quality brigades of (BUCA) for the efficient management of irrigation water; the agrometeorological and productive information network (RIAP) that facilitates producers' access to meteorology and plant health information for more effective decision-making on planting and harvesting seasons; and the use of machinery and equipment for agricultural production and processing.

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15 According to UNDP reports, a total of 268 business plans were formulated through the Agrocadenas project. The evaluation team could not collect data on the number of approved and implemented business plans.

These services have generated an important integration of the cooperative sector and farmers with the state-owned agricultural territorial companies, becoming an innovative partnership experience among several cooperatives, which now share equipment and machinery, named 'inter-cooperation'. UNDP supported this process through knowledge transfer and exchange, especially through South-South cooperation, technical assistance and backstopping, capacity-building and financing for activities. With UNDP's financial and technical support, municipal centres for capacity-building and knowledge management were also created, and the agricultural extension system (SEA) and the municipal environmental information systems (SIAM) were enhanced.

Upstream, UNDP has also made contributions to national institutional strategies. UNDP supported the design and implementation of the Gender Strategy for the Agricultural System, MINAG's Strategic Plan until 2030, the road map for the generalization of conservation agriculture, MINAG's programme to address climate change and the agricultural mechanization policy. Criteria for climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability were also incorporated into various planning and territorial decision-making tools, such as municipal development strategies, environmental management models or energy sustainability models. Even though the intersectoral value chain management approach has been effective in mobilizing relevant actors within the sector and in achieving innovative results with high replication potential at the municipal level, for more significant impact and sustainability, it has yet to be adopted as a tool in the national agricultural and food security policy, or at the provincial level.

**Finding 3.** Changes in key government entities and difficulties in accessing resources limited UNDP's engagement to transform other key productive sectors of Cuba's economy (industry and tourism) for import substitution and export increase as initially planned in the CPD.

UNDP's strategy aimed at supporting the Government's national priority of increasing the productivity, efficiency and competitiveness of key productive sectors to increase exports and substitute imports. While important contributions were made to the agricultural sector by enhancing selected value chains and promoting local territorial development, there was limited work with other key productive sectors that play an active role in import substitution and export increase.

Outcome 26 of the CPD, which initially envisaged work with these sectors, estimated \$11.33 million in planned resources for its implementation. By mid-2018, UNDP had only been able to mobilize around \$2.2 million for this outcome. Despite the initial engagement with several sectors, no further initiatives could materialize due to national priorities that were focused on food security and agri-food sector (included in outcome 29) and not in other sectors covered by outcome 26. UNDP's investment for the development of the other key productive sectors seems marginal vis-à-vis the ambitious targets.

Some interventions<sup>16</sup> promoted small biotechnology initiatives, pursuing the development of vaccine observatory, and obtaining small-scale results. A rural habitat improvement initiative also had limited local impact. While it has increased the production of construction materials in two municipalities from local resources and technological capabilities, developing value chains, the effort has not yet led to an increase in exports or reduction in imports.

**Finding 4.** UNDP has helped to modernize the banking system and strengthen the national statistical system in preparation for the currency unification and the promotion of microcredit financing for local development, important milestones of the ongoing update of Cuba's socioeconomic model.

The banking sector and the National Statistical Institute (ONEI) have taken a more predominant role in local development with the update of Cuba's social and economic model and the upcoming currency

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16 Projects 83233, 83236, 83237, 99419, 109468.

unification. The banking system is a key player in the promotion of greater access to finance for the development of Cuba's key productive sectors, while ONEI plays a crucial role in coordinating and improving national statistics on local development.

UNDP together with ECLAC has provided technical support, facilitated capacity strengthening of the Central Bank staff and promoted the exchange of knowledge and experience through South-South cooperation. As a result, the Central Bank of Cuba developed monetary policy tools in view of the future monetary unification, and three commercial banks (Banco de Crédito y Comercio, Banco Popular de Ahorro and Banco Metropolitano) fostered banking policies directed to the non-state economic sector. UNDP's contribution has also contributed to information to help manage: i) interbank market development; ii) macroeconomic balance and coordination; iii) inflation control; iv) access to relevant estimation technologies; v) development of the necessary accounting standards for international comparability; vi) microcredit use increase in the non-state sector through the microcredit managers; and vii) payment channels development.

Similarly, in collaboration with ECLAC, UNDP has been supporting ONEI in strengthening its capacities since 2011. UNDP facilitated exchange visits and trainings for ONEI staff to other countries in the region (Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Colombia, Chile and Costa Rica) to enhance their knowledge and skills on national accounts and the process to estimate quarterly and annual accounts. As a result, ONEI, in collaboration with the Central Bank, is now in the process of transforming its National Statistical Information System (SIEN) in alignment with the national accounts.

By strengthening the banking sector and the national statistical system, UNDP is also helping to create a more enabling environment for the development of the productive sector. Moving forward, UNDP has the challenge and the opportunity to continue helping Cuba's banking system successfully implement currency unification.

## 2.2 Population dynamics and quality, development and sustainability of social and cultural services

In population dynamics and quality, development and sustainability of social and cultural services, UNDP has committed to contributing to the following outcome:



### RELATED OUTCOME

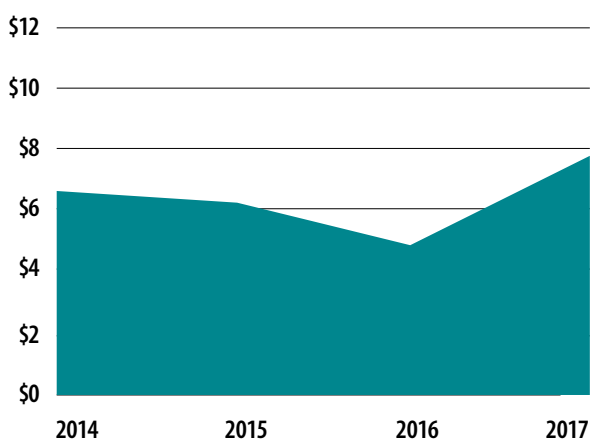
**Outcome 30:** Development programmes enhance the integration of gender-based and generational population dynamics with specific local features.

In alignment with Cuba's universal access and inclusive growth priorities and the UNDAF, the CPD of UNDP made a commitment to support the Government in its efforts to strengthen national institutions and actors to sustain the social advances, with particular attention to specific vulnerable groups. To promote an inclusive, gender and rights approach, UNDP aimed at supporting national actors in the provision of differentiated services for the vulnerable target groups and the implementation of initiatives to promote women's empowerment and respect for diversity.

UNDP interventions under this outcome area focused on assisting the Government in the fight against HIV/AIDS through the implementation of its National Strategic Plan for STI/HIV/AIDS (PEN) for the 2014-2018 period. The overall cost for the PEN during this period was estimated at \$415 million. The Government has funded over 90 percent of the PEN implementation cost, while the Global Fund contributed to approximately 5.8 percent to 8.3 percent. As the main recipient and UN agency responsible for administering resources received by the Global Fund, UNDP has played a pivotal role in these efforts, working in close collaboration with the Government and civil society organizations.

Between 2014 and mid-2018, UNDP implemented six projects with nine project outputs under this outcome area. Planned resources amounted to \$39 million and expenditures to \$25.87 million, reaching a 66 percent execution rate.<sup>17</sup> Based on the gender marker, 78 percent of project outputs had gender equality as the main objective (GEN3) or as a significant objective (GEN2), while two remaining outputs committed to contribute in a limited way.

**FIGURE 7. Population dynamics - HIV/AIDS: total expenditure (\$ million)**



The projects were funded solely by the Global Fund. All the Global Fund projects in the country have been implemented by the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM), a mechanism established in 2002 and composed of 20 institutions, including UNDP. The main national counterparts have been the Ministry of Health (MINSAP) as the agency responsible for the national health system and the implementation of the PEN; the National Centre for Sexual Education (CENESEX); the National Unit for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (PROSALUD) and the National Prevention Centre for STI/HIV/AIDS (CNP) – all part of MINSAP; ONEI; and the key target groups: people living with HIV/AIDS, men that have sex with men, people that

practise transactional sex, transgender community, youth and women. Other international cooperation partners that supported the implementation of the National Strategy were the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), Hivos-Netherlands and Belgium.

Another important area of focus of this outcome relates to population dynamics with a concentration on intergenerational approaches, such as work with the elderly, a growing segment of the population and concern. Demographic trends such as growth, ageing, migration and urbanization not only affect development in these areas but are also influenced by development itself. There is an increase in youth migration and an ageing of the population in Cuba, with 19.8 percent of Cubans 60 years of age or more, and a forecast of the elderly representing 30 percent of the total population by 2030.<sup>18</sup> Despite this being an area of focus for other agencies, such as UNFPA, the integration of this aspect in UNDP’s programme was still identified as of relevance for the achievement of sustainable social results.

**Finding 5.** There was limited integration of intergenerational approaches in the UNDP programme as initially planned in the CPD. The country office lacks a strategy to mainstream intergenerational issues, including in partnerships with other UN agencies and relevant entities.

Ad hoc initiatives were found with the youth and elderly people throughout the programme. Under the HIV portfolio, and as part of the STI/HIV/AIDS National Plan, the CNP established a support line with the youth for HIV prevention, and since 2017, one for elderly people living with HIV/AIDS (+50)<sup>19</sup>. Both

17 Data on budget and expenditures are based on UNDP’s financial system – Atlas – downloaded by the evaluation team. The country office reported different figures, also from Atlas, showing a 75 percent execution rate (\$37.5 million budget and \$28.1 in expenditures).

18 Centro de Estudios Demográficos (CEDEM), Revista Novedades en Población, vol 11. No.22, julio-diciembre 2015, ‘La Población de Cuba hoy’.

19 In 2015, the CCM identified an increasing incidence of STIs/HIV/AIDS among elderly people.

groups were part of the awareness-raising workshops and campaigns carried out by the Government and sub-beneficiaries with UNDP's support.

Another initiative was carried out in Pinar del Rio through the PADIT project to increase job opportunities for the youth, improving their economic empowerment and contribution to local development. In 2016, the Pinar del Rio government and UNDP provided financial support to the Palacios Municipal University Centre (CUM) for the implementation of a career counselling system for higher education students. The CUM had also reached an agreement with the Tierra Brava Farm<sup>20</sup> for the employment of 10 of the 29 higher education agronomy students in their fruit production cycle. Although the goal was the insertion of the youth in the labour market, beneficiaries also reported feeling empowered, motivated and useful for society. The students themselves are now reaching out and attracting other students into the initiative.

Other small ad hoc initiatives were found in other areas without significant results. These initiatives did not have a concrete strategy or holistic theory of change that adequately considered Cuba's growing elderly population. Besides the PADIT and Agrocadenas partnerships with the Demographic Studies Centre (CEDEM), the programme has not sufficiently engaged with other national partners, UNFPA and other UN agencies, for larger and more synergic collaborations to address this growing concern.

**Finding 6.** UNDP contributed to Cuba becoming the first country to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV in 2015, and controlling the HIV incidence, by strengthening national health networks and HIV monitoring and evaluation capacities. UNDP helped ensure timely access to antiretroviral medication and enhanced differentiated social health services for key target groups. Important changes were made on legal frameworks to reduce labour barriers and the empowerment of HIV targeted vulnerable groups, strengthening their social support network.

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## BOX 2. Key factors that contributed to Cuba's successful STIs/HIV/AIDS strategy

- High national ownership of and government commitment to the provision of universal free health services;
  - Adequate financial support and investment by government and cooperation partners (Global Fund);
  - Strategic partnerships and cohesion between government, civil society actors and the UN, allowing more direct access to target populations;
  - Strong community movement, stable voluntary work for supporting groups and promoters, and peer-to-peer support mechanism;
  - Interest by all actors in promoting the rights approach focused on changing social determinants for non-discrimination.
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UNDP has been a key government partner for the successful implementation of the National Strategic Plan for STIs/HIV/AIDS. Its support has been continuous and holistic, covering several priority areas and vulnerable target groups. During the 2014-2018 period, UNDP's work focused on four work streams: (i) comprehensive prevention programmes for key target populations; (ii) equitable access to basic diagnostic, attention, treatment and monitoring services; (iii) strengthening of civil society response to reduce stigma and discrimination; and (iv) knowledge management and sharing. Across all work streams, UNDP played an important advisory role for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities of both the National Strategy and Global Fund work plans, the development and implementation of the HIV/AIDS Gender Strategy, and the transfer of knowledge and lessons to improve programme implementation.

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20 Tierra Brava was supported by the Pinar del Rio Government with funding from the UNDP Sustainable Forest Management project (OP-15).



One of UNDP's main contributions was the strengthening of national capacities and systems for HIV/AIDS response. The national health network, composed of laboratories, primary care centres, clinics and pharmacies, was expanded and equipped to ensure timely access to antiretroviral (ARV) medication and condoms by the affected population. In total, three laboratories, four hospitals/medical institutes, 15 clinics and four warehouses were strengthened during this period. At the same time, the staff from the primary care centres and the social networks' promoters were trained and sensitized on the differentiated health needs and services to be provided to the different target groups, and issues related to social determinants. In this process, UNDP supported the import of equipment and ARV medication.<sup>21</sup> ARV medication, condoms and lubricants were purchased through the UNDP/UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA procurement partnerships respectively.

National M&E capacities were also enhanced through training and financial and technical support for M&E activities. Financial support was provided for the development and conduct of the national surveys on HIV/AIDS<sup>22</sup>, and the regular monitoring visits to the distribution centres. Civil society support groups (sub-beneficiaries), who submit quarterly reports, were trained on data collection and monitoring methods and have been involved in the analysis of survey results and trends.

The enhanced M&E capacities led to the improvement of national surveys and statistical studies on HIV/AIDS. Surveys now provide more detailed information on the target groups, their conditions, attitudes and practices. The 2015 Prevention Indicators Survey, for instance, besides including a set of questions to measure stigma and discrimination, also had a specific module for transgender people that helped

identify that the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS was within the transgender community (19.70 percent of the transgender population lives with HIV/AIDS vs. 5.58 percent of men who have sex with men and 2.8 percent of people that practise transactional sex<sup>23</sup>). ONEI together with CENESEX and the Trans network is now collecting more in-depth data on the transgender community, through the first National Survey on Transgender Community in Cuba, which was in its analysis phase during the evaluation. All these survey results, in general, have served as an input to focus the actions of the National Strategy towards greater behavioural change of target populations by prioritizing their social health determinants.

These improvements also contributed to Cuba becoming the first country in the region to transition from the Global Funds by 2020 due to the controlled HIV/AIDS incidence levels.<sup>24</sup> Of the 28,659 people living with HIV/AIDS in the country, 95 percent know their status, 83 percent receive continuous ARV treatment, and 70 percent are virally suppressed.<sup>25</sup> Considering the 90-90-90 target promoted by UNAIDS and adopted by the country, more efforts are required to reach the international goal in this respect.

As part of the National Strategy, with the support of UNDP, the country has also made notable efforts to address the structural and social determinants that facilitate the spread of HIV or the substantial stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV/AIDS. Although it is not easy to measure the results of these efforts with adequate rigour, consulted parties perceive some progress in reducing stigma and discrimination.

Concrete behavioural change was identified with the establishment of a more enabling legal and policy

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21 Between 2014 and 2017, the Global Fund/UNDP contributed with over seven million ARV, representing around 60 percent of the total ARV treatments imported for people living with HIV/AIDS in the country.

22 Traditionally, two main surveys have been used to monitor HIV/AIDS prevalence in the country: i) the Survey on Infection Prevention Indicators on HIV/AIDS, and ii) the Survey of People Living with HIV/AIDS. The Global Fund/UNDP has financially supported both surveys since 2002.

23 Source: MINSAP HIV/AIDS registry. Prevention Indicators Survey. ONEI 2013.

24 In terms of controlling the overall HIV/AIDS incidence, while the number of people living with HIV/AIDS has increased over the last four years, UNAIDS estimates that the number of new diagnosis in Cuba has declined from 2,200 in 2014 to 1,800 in 2017. Source: UNAIDS country factsheet 2017: <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/cuba>

25 Source: MINSAP HIV/AIDS registry (2017 data).

framework for people living with HIV/AIDS to reduce labour barriers and discrimination. UNDP helped the social support networks, both financially and technically, in their advocacy and communication campaigns for the recognition of non-discrimination due to sexual orientation, and the right of people living with HIV/AIDS to a paid salary during their medical consultations in the 2014 Labour Code revision<sup>26</sup>. These campaigns and communication materials were also geared towards the promotion of sexual diversity rights, and the reduction of stigma and discrimination. Recent data show that in Cuba, less than 1 percent of men who have sex with men and 2 percent of people who practice transactional sex reported avoiding taking an HIV test in the previous 12 months due to stigma and discrimination, well below the average in the Caribbean region<sup>27</sup>.

All the developments made in terms of increased health coverage, enhanced services, availability of disaggregated data, strengthened support groups and legal frameworks allude to an improved quality of life of the key target population. The interviewed beneficiaries highlighted a positive change in terms of better health conditions resulting from the regular ARV therapy and greater motivation and a sense of belonging and empowerment thanks to their participation in mutual support groups and social networks.

The 2014 Labour Code modifications and the ongoing constitutional reform debate for the recognition of diverse gender identities and same-sex marriage also indicate a greater social acceptance towards men who have sex with men and the transgender community. The potential approval of the constitutional reform represents an opportunity to expand the work on the promotion of respect for diversity and the elimination of HIV-related discrimination and stigma.

The Government is systematizing and documenting the Cuban experience in the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis to be shared with other countries in the region through South-South cooperation, with the financial support of UNICEF. Previous initial exchanges have already taken place between the Cuban Government and the Dominican Republic and Zimbabwe Governments with UNDP support. Similarly, UNDP exchanged its experience in managing Global Fund projects with UNDP Belize in June 2018.

**Finding 7.** Phasing out from the Global Fund by 2020, Cuba faces the challenge of sustaining its social achievements and results controlling HIV/AIDS. Donors are unlikely to see Cuba (a middle-income country with low HIV/AIDS incidence) as a funding priority and the country will face the challenge of accessing certain antiretroviral medications due to the US blockade.

Sustaining the social results in terms of prevention, quality of services, treatment coverage and empowerment of target populations will require resources. In the immediate future, Cuba will face the challenge of financially assuming the production and/or import of medications and ARV treatment, something possibly complex given the US blockade. Moreover, the population's self-care and preventive measures are still insufficient; the number of people with HIV/AIDS that access therapy needs to be increased to reach the 90-90-90 target; and community support networks still need to strengthen their understanding and use of the rights-based approach and mobilize additional resources to ensure the continuity of their work.

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26 Cuba Labour Code, 2014, article 2 and article 116-k: [https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/2013\\_lej116\\_cub.pdf](https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/2013_lej116_cub.pdf)

27 [http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/unaid-data-2018\\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/unaid-data-2018_en.pdf)

Following the announcement in 2017 that Cuba would not receive funding after 2020 because of the country's notable advancements, the CCM developed a transition strategy and put in place two projects with UNDP's advisory support: Sustainability of the HIV Response in Cuba project, known as the transition project, and the Strengthening of the Country Coordination Mechanism project. The transition project aims at strengthening the HIV and health system to ensure continuity of prevention policies, treatment for people with HIV, and the diagnostic and follow-up methods, as well as further empower the target populations to reduce stigma and discrimination. The CCM project complements the work carried out by the transition project with a focus on strengthening the CCM's M&E and organizational capacities.

In its transition strategy, the Government outlined the actions and estimated resources to gradually assume full responsibility for the provision of the necessary treatments and services. Despite this strategy, several interviewed beneficiaries and stakeholders expressed concern on the country's readiness to fully finance the National Strategic Plan, particularly its capacity to produce or import the necessary ARV medication due to the US blockade. To ensure the import of ARV medication, the Government signed an agreement with the WHO/PAHO on April 2018 to access the medication and equipment through PAHO's Strategic Fund.<sup>28</sup> Under this mechanism, the Government will pay PAHO the cost of the combined medication that Cuba cannot produce locally at a reduced rate over a specific period.

Interviewees also expressed concern on the risks related with the availability of resources to sustain the prevention surveys that produce more reliable and specific data; ensure the timely access and distribution of the primary preventive care package for target populations; and sustain the social networks and communication initiatives for greater

prevention, social awareness and acceptance to reduce stigma and discrimination due to gender identity, sexual orientation and serological status. Clearly, the transition process and the sustainability of results may face risks in mobilizing sufficient resources to ensure the continuity and quality of some areas of work.

## 2.3 Environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction

In environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction, UNDP has committed to contributing to the following outcomes:

### RELATED OUTCOMES

**Outcome 28:** Communities and key sectors develop and increase energy efficiency and renewable energy use.

**Outcome 31:** Productive and services sectors strengthen the integration of environmental considerations, including energy and adaptation to climate change, into their development plans.

**Outcome 32:** Governments and key sectors improve their capacity for disaster risk management at territorial level.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Cuba is highly vulnerable to adverse climate change impacts such as extreme floods, hurricanes and droughts. Between 2008 and 2016, climate hazards caused approximately \$20 billion in losses, affecting the economy and food security of the country. Exacerbating the situation, in September 2017, Hurricane Irma severely affected over 9 million people in 13 of Cuba's 15 provinces,

<sup>28</sup> The Strategic Fund of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is a regional technical cooperation mechanism for pooled procurement of essential medicines and strategic health supplies. Members pay an additional 3 percent, on top of the medication cost, for the service.

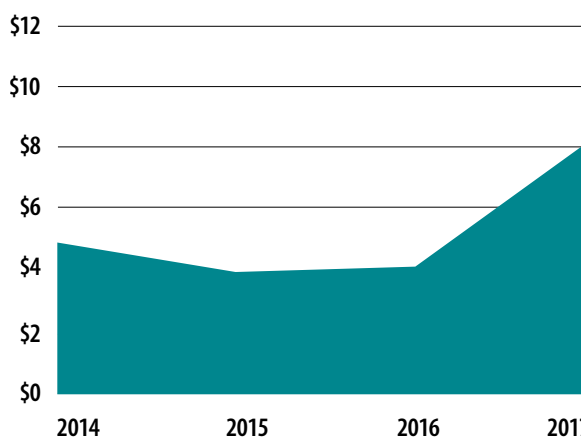


damaging 75,000 hectares of crops.<sup>29</sup> The devastation came one year after Hurricane Matthew and in the context of an intense drought that lasted for almost three years. These events led to a necessary shift in programme focus to ensure an adequate and timely response to the damage caused by the hurricanes and the persistent drought. The country is also threatened by seismic risks, particularly in the south-eastern and north-central regions due to tectonic plates (between Pinar and North Cuba). Over the last years, Cuba has faced increasing soil degradation, deterioration of forest coverage, pollution, loss of biological diversity, depletion of water resources and difficulties with the availability and quality of water.<sup>30</sup>

In alignment with Cuba's environmental policy in the 'Lineamientos', the National Environmental Strategy (EAN), disaster risk management and reduction strategies and the UNDAF, UNDP has been working towards enhancing Cuba's environmental regulatory framework. The CPD also envisages strengthening the integration of environmental considerations in development plans and increasing the use of renewable energy sources to diversify the country's energy matrix. To achieve this, initiatives that promote the protection and rational use of natural resources with an ecosystem approach and the use of bioenergy technologies at the community level were envisaged. At the same time, UNDP planned to strengthen national capacities on climate change, particularly in forests, coastal and agricultural areas, and raise environmental awareness of key actors. In terms of disaster risk reduction, UNDP interventions aimed at strengthening the capacities of government entities and key sectors in managing disaster risks through studies, instruments and planning methodologies.

Between 2014 and mid-2018, a total of 46 projects<sup>31</sup> with 49 project outputs were implemented under these thematic areas. With an estimated budget of \$36.56 million and expenditures of \$25.04 million, the execution rate reached 70 percent. Between 2016 and 2017, expenditures doubled from \$4 million to \$8 million due mostly to the implementation of the emergency and recovery projects. Despite having the highest number of projects, only 12 project outputs (24 percent) under this thematic area had gender equality as a significant objective (GEN2). Most of the outputs were expected to contribute to gender equality in no way or a limited way (7 GEN0 projects; 30 GEN1 projects).

**FIGURE 8. Environmental sustainability, climate change and DRR: total expenditure (\$ million)**



29 National Defence Council declaration of 28 September 2017.

30 CITMA, 2016.

31 Four projects under outcome 28 on energy, 21 projects under outcome 31 on sustainable natural resource management, and 21 projects under outcome 32 on disaster risk reduction.

The main resource partners for this portfolio include the GEF, with 39 percent of expenditures under this area, followed by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Adaptation Fund, the EU through its Disaster Preparedness ECHO programme, and Switzerland. The projects were implemented in close collaboration with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA), the Environmental Agency (AMA), the Ministry of

Energy and Mining (MINEM), the Ministry of Higher Education, the National Defence, the Institute for Hydraulic Resources (INRH), the Institute of Physical Planning (IPF) and the Meteorology Institute. Partnerships were also established with the Cuban Society for the Promotion of Renewable Energy Sources and Environmental Respect (CUBASOLAR), and the Centre for Information Management and Energy Development (CUBAENERGIA).

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### BOX 3. Key factors contributing to results in the environmental and DDR area

- High national ownership and leadership by key governing institutions such as CITMA and Civil Defence;
  - Successful mobilization of GEF funding enabling continuum development at the institutional and local level, and UNDP proactive fundraising support for rapid emergency response and recovery;
  - Integration of diverse actors and strategic partnerships for programme implementation;
  - Active engagement of local governments and communities in emergency response and DRR actions;
  - Strategic investment in developing mini industries for the production of construction materials;
  - Effective use of South-South cooperation to learn from other countries' experiences on environmental financing mechanisms and share Cuba's experience with early warning system.
- 

**Finding 8.** UNDP has effectively contributed to the development of national policies, norms, strategies and methodologies on biodiversity conservation and environmental sustainability, as well as the implementation of such policies in municipalities and key economic sectors (agriculture, tourism and fisheries).

In alignment with the Government's priorities, UNDP's environmental portfolio has focused on addressing the major environmental problems in the country, as identified in the National Environmental Strategy of 2011-2015 and 2016-2020 and in the National Development Plan 2030. Its strategy to contribute to Cuba's environmental sustainability has aimed at harmonizing the environmental dimension with economic development. Interventions promoted an integrated ecosystem management approach to increase their resilience to extreme climate events. Several ecosystems of national importance were targeted by UNDP interventions: marine-coastal ecosystems, mountainous regions and agro-productive systems, as well as key economic sectors such as agriculture, forestry, livestock, tourism

and fisheries. Interventions worked effectively towards strengthening national and local capacities to improve information, planning, regulatory and decision-making processes and mechanisms and promoted the insertion of environmentally sustainable and economically viable practices in key productive sectors.

UNDP continuously supported the Government in the improvement of its environmental regulatory framework, including national strategies, local planning tools and guidelines. UNDP contributed to the development of 101 technical norms on soil, water and forests for the MINAG; the integration of programmes that promote climate resilience in the Plan for the National Protected Areas System 2014-2020; the inclusion of climate change adaptation in the Local Municipal Development Strategy and Environmental Management Models in the Palacios, Güira de Melena and Jimaguayú municipalities; and the inclusion of sustainable land management considerations in the Law Decree No. 300 on the bestowment of unused lands and the Principles for the Elaboration of the National Territorial Development Scheme 2014-2030.

As part of these processes, UNDP also contributed to the institutional strengthening of the involved institutions through the enhancement of their existing technical capacities. Consulted counterparts valued the richness of the 'learning by doing' process that came with the implementation of several GEF-UNDP projects over the years. Throughout this time, awareness was raised within the institutions and at the local level on the benefits of using new technology for the sustainable land management, the control and management of specific invasive exotic species and the implementation of sustainable alternatives to fishing. These initiatives and the experiences emanating from their implementation have provided inputs to further improve the existing national policies and programmes. UNDP has been supporting the implementation of the Science, Technology, Innovation and Environment Policy, as approved in 2017 in the 'Lineamientos', and the State Plan to Tackle Climate Change, approved in 2017 and known as 'Tarea Vida'. This plan, which outlines five strategic actions and eleven tasks, sets Cuba's strategy to address climate change in the short term (2020), medium term (2030), long term (2050) and very long term (2100).

Effective contributions were also found in the development of strategic reports to monitor the country's progress towards its climate change and environmental sustainability commitments and goals. These include Cuba's Second Communication on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the Fifth and Sixth National Reports on the Convention on Biological Diversity; and the National Biodiversity Strategy 2016-2020.

UNDP is also supporting the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy. With a Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN), UNDP has provided incipient but relevant contributions on biodiversity and climate change financing, an important issue the country faces. This initiative is promoting the adaptation and use of new financing frameworks and mechanisms for biodiversity financing. Two new financing solutions were developed and will be tested in the coming two years: payment for environmental services due to carbon sequestration and payment to access protected areas (entry fees). These are representative of significant progressive changes in the social-economic model of the country. Linkages between the Ministry of Finance,

Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP), Cuban Central Bank (BCC), CITMA, MINAG and ONEI were strengthened as part of the financial plan and solutions development process, promoting synergies. To facilitate this process, UNDP has also coordinated knowledge exchange visits among Cuban, Colombian and Costa Rican government officials to learn from their experiences in implementing financial biodiversity solutions, which were highly valued by the interviewed national counterparts.

UNDP has worked on the issues of conservation, availability and efficient use of water resources, as well as managing the risks and impacts of climate change associated with them, such as floods, drought, depletion of aquifers or saline intrusion. Ongoing projects contribute to the implementation of prioritized programmes, such as the Life Task, the National Water Policy, the Land Water Law and the National Environmental Strategy. Twelve projects (of which two are joint programmes) show results in water and sanitation resource management.

The evaluation, however, found that UNDP's programme placed insufficient emphasis on addressing issues related to water pollution and its availability and quality. Both were identified as key problems in the EAN, on which the Government would welcome UNDP's collaboration. These aspects significantly impact the food security and well-being of the Cuban population, making them of particular importance for the future economic development of the country.

**Finding 9.** UNDP has played a significant role in developing and implementing Cuba's energy policy framework. UNDP helped the Government increase access to electricity through the installation of solar panels in remote communities and the construction of 'biogas digestors' for biogas production in pig farms and agricultural cooperatives. Insufficient attention was devoted to energy efficiency compared to renewable energy.

Cuba's energy sector plays a crucial role in the productive transformation of the country and the development of the Cuban society. Its importance is recognized in several policies outlined in the 'Lineamientos' and the National Economic and Social Development Plan 2030, highlighting the country's priority of increasing energy efficiency and the use

of renewable energy sources in all sectors. By 2030, Cuba aims at sourcing 24 percent of its energy matrix through renewable energy.

During this evaluation period, UNDP provided financial resources and technical advice to strengthen national entities' energy policy framework and capacities to access investments for projects on forest biomass and hydroelectrical energy. UNDP's institutional strengthening support enabled the formulation of MINEM's National Policy for Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency and its programme, approved under Law Decree No. 345/2017.

Relevant downstream support was also provided for implementing this policy, contributing towards the country's target of sourcing 24 percent of its energy matrix from renewable energy by 2030. UNDP interventions focused on transferring and installing bioenergy technology for rural development and on electrifying remote rural areas outside the national grid. According to the Government, around 10,000 households located in the Guantanamo and Santiago de Cuba provinces are now sourced through photovoltaic energy sources. Besides the capacity development actions for staff from the local electric company, UNDP is also promoting the use of biogas technology in local productive initiatives through the Bioenergy project, a \$2.7 million GEF-funded project. Even though project implementation has been delayed due to a lengthy national approval process and difficulties in importing the equipment, other initiatives under the UNDP/GEF Small Grant Programme contributed with 432 biodigestors that were installed in agricultural cooperatives to improve the use of pig farm residues.

Synergies were successfully established between the energy projects and the local development initiatives. In its support to the municipalities' local development process, UNDP fostered the use of sustainable energy solutions, such as renewable energy, in food production chains (i.e. beans and milk). Energy efficiency has also been addressed in ongoing UNDP projects (such as BASAL and Agrocadenas) together with newly approved initiatives that include objectives and activities related to the subject, e.g. UNDP/GEF Low Transportation in Emissions Project,

Ozone Projects, Linking the Kigali Amendment with Energy Efficiency in the RAC sector, and the Joint UNDP-UNIDO-EU Energy Project. All these initiatives contribute to the national energy policy.

While UNDP has made notable contributions to the country's goal of increasing energy access and use of renewable sources, it has given insufficient attention to energy efficiency, a pillar of the Cuban Energy Policy. Moving forward, with the update of Cuba's social and economic development model, UNDP has the opportunity of providing more holistic contributions to the energy sector. It can do so by integrating support to the energy efficiency pillar in new or ongoing initiatives by linking the relevance of investing in this area to augment results in other development areas already under UNDP's attention. Since the approval of the policy, UNDP has been working with several donors on energy efficiency, which is reflected in the new projects that will be implemented from 2019 onwards.

**Finding 10.** UNDP has helped to strengthen the capacities of local governments, communities and key economic and service sectors for disaster risk management. Interventions supported the establishment of early warning systems and allowed municipalities to respond more quickly to emergencies, reaching the communities affected by the two hurricanes and drought. Seismic risks, however, specifically for Havana, have not been given sufficient attention, based on authorities' priorities and focus given to hazards of floods and coastal flood by storm surge.

Cuba's Civil Defence System was established in 1962 with the objective of protecting the Cuban population, economy and environment from the destructive effects of natural disasters and other catastrophes. In 2005, the National Defence integrated disaster risk planning and prevention into the country's Economic and Social Plan and established the parameters and protocols to be used throughout the four stages of DRR: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. This directive was updated in 2010 to establish the Management Centres for Disaster Risk Reduction with the goal of facilitating DRR by reducing the population's vulnerabilities and risks.

UNDP's strategy under this area focused on strengthening national entities' capacities, particularly at the local level, training technicians and specialists, supporting the expansion of the early warning system, developing tools and methodological guidelines on DRR, and promoting the use of eco-friendly and economically viable technologies and practices. Two main projects were implemented to support the Government in strengthening their national early warning system: the Hydrometeorological and warning system and the Hydrometeorological early warning system (EWS) of Zaza and Agabama (known as the FORSAT project and implemented in Sancti Spíritus and Villa Clara).

At the national level, UNDP worked closely with the Institute of Meteorology and the Hydraulic Resources Institute and improved the EWS in Cuba. Through the FORSAT, EWS were implemented or strengthened in the Sancti Spiritus and Villa Clara provinces. These EWS, which were tested during the Alberto subtropical storm and Irma hurricane, helped national institutions adopt the necessary measures to reduce human and capital loss, as reported by the interviewed government staff. Moreover, technical staff from both institutions were trained on hydrological measurement, modelling and flood forecasting, and installation and maintenance of hydrological stations.

Similarly, UNDP strengthened the capacities of technical staff in the Physical Planning Institute aiming the development of the urban resilience studies. As part of this process, over 316 national technicians and specialists were trained. Also, new information systems were introduced and normative and methodological documents were updated. Among the tools produced with UNDP's support were the methodologies of the Management Centres for Disaster Risk Reduction, Danger the Hazard, Vulnerability and Risk Studies and the Early Warning System Toolbox, which capitalize and systematize Cuba's experiences and methodologies in DRR. Cuba is now sharing this toolbox and helping to adapt its experience with the Risk Reduction Centres in other countries of the Caribbean such as Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Virgin Islands, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

In addition, through a Russian-funded project, UNDP helped develop capacities for the local production of construction materials and water storage tanks in the east region of the country. In Guantanamo province, a region heavily affected by the 2016 Hurricane Matthew, 23 mini-industries were established to produce construction materials. Besides the trainings and workshops for workers and technicians, UNDP also facilitated the import process of the required technology. Despite the delays faced in the project approval and its implementation, due to Hurricane Irma, this intervention has provided sustainable and replicable contributions to the improvement of local productive sectors for the recovery and resilience of the affected population. The mini-industries provide not only a long-term solution in terms of recovery but also boost the local economy through the creation of jobs. According to national counterparts, UNDP's vision and experience with respect to gender also helped them ensure that women actively participated in the trainings and benefited from the job opportunities in the mini-industries.

In all these projects, national counterparts acknowledged UNDP's valuable contribution to knowledge management, capacity development, technology transfer and building synergies. The DRR projects implemented with UNDP's support helped the Government build greater collaboration among institutions involved in the early warning system.

The evaluation identified that the Seismic Danger, Vulnerability and Risks Studies lacked the assessment for Havana. The seismic risk for Havana is extremely high considering that the active Pinal tectonic fault extends very close to the capital. The last main seismic activity occurred in 1880, meaning that energy has been building for the past 130 years. The municipality of Centro Havana is also the most densely populated municipality in Cuba (more than 43,000 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>) and the structural vulnerability of its buildings has not been studied, resulting in serious threats. The Urban Resilience project was conceived to address this issue in three cities: Havana (two municipalities: Centro Habana and Guanabacoa), Bayamo and Santiago de Cuba. The final project report stated that a seismic risk study for

Havana could not be carried out. The final report also indicated that in Havana other risks were prioritized, such as floods, coastal flood by storm surge, and solid waste. No additional evidence on the seismic study was collected during interviews with project counterparts and UNDP staff.

## 2.4 Cross-cutting issues

Key overall factors<sup>32</sup> mostly connected to programme results and potential for sustainability include:

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### BOX 4. Key overall factors contributing to results

- Strategic and long-standing partnerships;
  - Political will and strong national ownership for results;
  - UNDP's territorial presence and programmatic focus on strengthening national capacities;
  - High staff and counterpart capacities (institutional capacity);
  - Practical use of knowledge management and South-South cooperation;
  - Good gender mainstreaming and knowledge management.
- 

**Finding 11.** UNDP is perceived as a strategic, reliable, inclusive and competent partner. The continuity of its programme in specific thematic areas and geographic locations and the close partnership with the Government at the national and local levels have helped position UNDP as a 'go-to agency'.<sup>33</sup> By supporting South-South cooperation mechanisms, UNDP has facilitated timely access to knowledge and experiences and has generated and promoted better articulation between national and local actors.

As a trusted long-term partner to the Government, UNDP strategically positioned itself as a preferred agency in Cuba. Partners highlight UNDP's technical capacities, the geographical coverage of its programme and respectful relationship with the Government

as its main comparative strengths. It has not only complemented and made significant contributions to the national priorities but also occasionally succeeded in pushing sensitive issues. The organization has promoted multidimensional approaches and intersectoral integration, convening several actors with different viewpoints and expertise, especially through South-South cooperation.

UNDP has effectively instigated the proliferation of partnerships, connecting relevant intersectoral national and local actors to address diverse thematic priorities, in a more holistic manner, and with enhanced sustainability potential. Strategic use of partnerships has been key to the effective implementation of its programme. The continuous collaboration and presence in the territory have generated confidence among partners, allowing UNDP to expand and deepen its contributions.

National and local partners recognize UNDP's value added in the facilitation of an intersectoral and multilevel approach, fostering greater articulation and integration between national and local entities through institutionalized mechanisms. Most successful examples have been the councils of municipal intersectoral management of the agricultural value chains, Agrocadenas project; the institutional mobilization for the municipal strategies of adaptation to climate change of the BASAL project and; the PADIT, composed of a broad number of national and local development actors to address various prioritized local development issues and which has significantly contributed to the country's decentralization and local development strategy.

The integration of academic entities and research centres has allowed a more evidence-based implementation of the PADIT in Pinar del Rio. Similarly, the inclusion and close partnership with civil society actors that support the HIV/AIDS target groups, and the target groups/beneficiaries themselves, has led to a well-adapted and relevant HIV intervention.

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32 Information comes from coded interviews and desk review of relevant documents.

33 Donors, partners and beneficiaries repeatedly cited this term.



The use of inter-agency expertise in UNDP's programme has been limited despite the joint identification and programming work carried out by the agencies in the UNDAF. With a few exceptions, synergies or complementarity were not sufficiently sought. While the Government and some donors have shown a preference for working with separate interventions by each agency, there are still cases in which technical agreements could have been explored more actively. This was the case especially for food security initiatives, where other UN agencies have ongoing interventions with the same national counterpart as UNDP and a history implementing the same project in the region.<sup>34</sup> Some examples of interagency collaboration are:

- a. the alliance with ECLAC in support of the modernization of the banking system and generation of statistics;
- b. participation in interagency response to the drought and leadership in the Joint Programme for the Drought in Santiago de Cuba, jointly with the WFP and UNICEF;
- c. participation in the UN Action Plans for Hurricanes Sandy, Matthew and Irma Responses: coordinated strategy achieved with UNICEF for interventions in the water sector and fostered spaces of complementarity with UN-Habitat;
- d. three joint programmes implemented with UNDP participation (one with UNDP as the lead agency); agreements and partnership with UNFPA for the implementation of activities in two key projects (food security and local development); and
- e. technical dialogue with PAHO in response to HIV/AIDS, at the formulation stage and linked to the sustainability of the response.

UNDP is considered an efficient implementer of projects downstream. It is viewed as an influential and effective upstream contributor, strategically positioning itself to assist during emergencies and foreseen challenges such as the currency unification, constitutional reform and changes to the economic model. Additionally, UNDP has added value to development in Cuba through effective adaptive management.

For example, it has successfully adapted its initiatives and responded to emergencies caused by natural disasters such as Hurricanes Irma and Matthew and the prolonged drought. The Government considered UNDP a key ally for resource mobilization and for expediting the implementation of new recovery interventions for the people affected by natural disasters. UNDP also adapted its ongoing projects in the field, integrating early recovery actions after the hurricanes. There has been an effective management of knowledge based on the identification and transfer of good practices relevant to the nationally defined priorities, as well as the systematization of experiences and the generation of informative material that has facilitated the achievement of results.

UNDP has also responded promptly to emerging demands and requests from national counterparts with a high level of technical expertise, mobilizing resources and identifying experiences relevant to the Cuban reality to carry out the South-South knowledge exchange. This has allowed national decision-making entities and territorial implementing entities to access relevant knowledge that they have adapted into legal and regulatory frameworks for territorial planning and management, financing of local development and the banking system. UNDP has also fostered the creation and adaptation of tools, methodologies and mechanisms in the area of planning and local management, increased productivity in the agricultural chains, practices of climate change adaptation in the agricultural sector, microcredit to non-state sector and institutional gender strategy. These transfers have generated innovations adapted to the country needs, highly valued and recognized by national institutions.

**Finding 12.** South-South cooperation is often highlighted as one of UNDP's key value proposition, effectively used to generate new ideas and improve existing methodologies and tools. There is however space for a more proactive and systematic approach to systematize and document learning for replication and scaling up of results.

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34 Lessons learned and reflections from the FAO's experience implementing Agrocadenas in Central America: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5775s.pdf>

With its global network and high local technical expertise, UNDP has facilitated the practical use of South-South cooperation with attention to continued mutual collaboration and knowledge management, systematizing some experiences, and promoting the use of new knowledge for the replication and scaling up of initiatives in Cuba and other countries.

Highlights of continued cooperation with positive results for Cuba's development emerging from South-South Cooperation exchanges include:

- i. Exchanges between the Central Bank of Cuba and ONEI to access the knowledge networks of the South in specialized banking-financial topics such as operational risks, balance of payments, strategic planning, microcredit and microfinance. ONEI, the central bank and commercial banks now have more modernized knowledge and better analysis capacity, as well as new financial projection and instruments for financial services to the population, cooperatives and private clients.
- ii. Exchanges with the regional knowledge networks on productive and value chains to strengthen key food production chains of beans, maize, meat and milk and help reduce the need to import beans for national consumption. National and local actors now have enhanced specialized knowledge on post-harvest management practices, marketing and storage methods, and production technologies.
- iii. Improvement in renewable energies and energy efficiency and the growth of this sector with the practical exchange of experiences in the development of wind farms, generating installations from the biomass and production of biogas technologies.

Besides facilitating South-South cooperation to address Cuba's development needs, UNDP has also supported the transfer and promotion of Cuba's experience to other countries. Highlights include:

- i. Transfer of the Cuban Risk Reduction Management Centres model to five Caribbean countries: Jamaica, Dominican Republic, British Virgin Islands, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, including support for the development of a sustainability plan for the pilot centres in each

country. Cooperation systematized, published and recognized as a reference case in the UNDP Annual Report of the Administrator.

- ii. Support in systematizing Cuba's HIV/AIDS experience to transfer and exchange knowledge with the Dominican Republic, Belize and Zimbabwe. Cuba is providing technical assistance in the development of these countries' financial reporting system for sub-recipients of the Global Fund multi-country programme for the Asia-Pacific region, and is helping them implement a combined prevention programme;
- iii. Technical advice and early recovery support provided to the Ebola epidemic in Guinea-Conakry, which helped UNDP's country office in Guinea, implement several initiatives focused on community education and social mobilization in most-affected areas.

Many more exchanges took place, such as participation in congresses and study tours, but the results observed had an emphasis on short-term benefits, showing the need for more clearly articulated theories of change during the design phase of these initiatives. Despite the valuable contributions, the potential of South-South cooperation has not been systematically considered in all projects. Not all exchange experiences have been properly systematized and documented for further learning, replication and scaling up in Cuba and other countries.

**Finding 13.** Gender equality is well mainstreamed in the UNDP programme, as well as in the office business environment, which led to the renewal of the Gold Gender Equality Seal. The focus is mostly gender-responsive but not yet transformative enough. The human rights-based approach working on social determinants to address the structural causes of inequality in the LGBT community, to leave no one behind, has been assertive and can be expanded to other parts of the programme.

The country office has earned its second Gold Gender Equality Seal, effectively mainstreaming gender across its programme. The conducive gender business



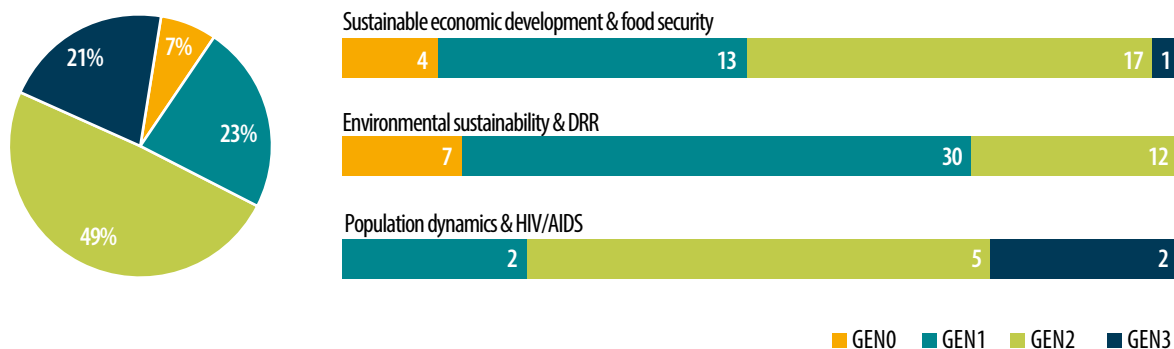
environment of the country office has contributed to the successful gender mainstreaming in the programme. Since 2011, the country office has had one full-time gender focal point in place. The gender focal point and the M&E officer are part of the office's gender focal group. This focal group, led by the Resident Representative and comprising programme officers, aims at strengthening the management of gender equality and the implementation of UNDP's Cuba gender strategy. The group promotes and leads the implementation and monitoring of UNDP policies and strategies related to equality in the workplace. In terms of gender parity, 63.5 percent of the total staff, including the two country office heads, are women.

Another contributing factor to success has been the country office's gender equality strategy.<sup>35</sup> The strategy includes action plans that map out strategic priorities for two-year periods, with specific activities to promote gender for each project and thematic area. As part of this strategy, the country office used protocols and gender analysis that helped mainstream gender throughout the programme.

In addition, gender-sensitive instruments and measurements were developed in projects related to disaster risk reduction at the local level, at the agricultural sector and in local development initiatives to support the prevention of violence against women.<sup>36</sup>

The increasing expenditures towards gender equality outcomes reflect the importance the country office pays to gender mainstreaming. Seventy percent of programme expenditures corresponded to project outputs that were to significantly contribute to gender equality outcomes (GEN2 and GEN3), as indicated in the UNDP gender marker. The other 30 percent were linked to project outputs that were either not expected to contribute to gender equality (GEN0) or were expected to contribute in a limited way (GEN1). Figure 9 shows the trends in expenditure by gender marker and number of project outputs per gender marker.

**FIGURE 9. Programme expenditure by gender marker/Project outputs by gender marker and thematic area**



35 'DIGéneroSÍ

36 PADIT

Results achieved by the programme are gender-targeted and -responsive. Efforts to mainstream gender were more evident in the disaster risk reduction interventions than in those on environment and energy. Based on the GRES scale, results achieved under outcome 32 were mostly gender-responsive, while those for outcome 28 and 31 are still gender-blind. In the case of the energy projects (outcome 28), UNDP carried out awareness-raising activities on the link between energy and women for the technical staff of the Ministry of Energy and Mines. Despite these efforts, interventions still do not target gender equality and women's empowerment as one of the main objectives. On the other hand, projects under outcome 32 had specific actions to empower women in social and economic activities, including disaster risk reduction. These projects promoted women's leadership in their communities by encouraging their active role in the distribution of resources and articles for post-hurricane and drought recovery. UNDP also collected disaggregated data for women and men in terms of capacity development activities, distribution of inputs for the affected households, and creation of new jobs.

Results achieved under the sustainable economic development area can be categorized as gender-responsive, except for those under outcome 26 which were mostly gender-blind. UNDP promoted a gender approach through awareness-raising activities, capacity-building and knowledge transfer for national institutions and women beneficiaries, obtaining positive results towards gender equality and women's economic empowerment. At the institutional level, UNDP strategically partnered with the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) and its Women Research Centre (CEM) to sensitize national authorities and decision makers on the importance of incorporating a gender approach in their institutional strategies, local planning and territorial development tools. Technical guidance was provided for the development of a Gender Strategy for the agriculture sector 2015-2020 and the Gender Equality Certification Initiative for Food Security Quality Management (IGECSA)<sup>37</sup>, led by MINAG. Other ministries have expressed interest in developing their own gender strategy, based on MINAG's experience.

Downstream, UNDP supported the establishment of judicial services for the prevention of, attention to and fight against violence against women in the Cienfuegos province improving access to advisory services for women. The capacities and leadership of FMC staff, in municipal provinces where projects were being implemented, were also strengthened to support local governments. UNDP carried out capacity-building in the agricultural sector for 200-plus women across seven provinces, enabling women to access positions in the agricultural sector that are traditionally occupied by men and increasing their participation in agricultural cooperatives. Similarly, women have taken a more active role in the identification of gender strengths and gaps to be addressed by their municipalities' local development plans. Gender dimensions were also mainstreamed in local management tools, such as surveys, indicators, systems, and in consultation methodologies.

As part of its HIV/AIDS interventions, UNDP provided guidance for the development of the HIV/AIDS Gender Strategy, led by MINSAP. Capacity-building was conducted for MINSAP's staff in the capital and provinces to enhance their awareness for improved services to women living with HIV/AIDS. UNDP also replicated the IGECSA gender certification process in the health sector, through the Gender Equality is Health Initiative (IGES) with the PROSALUD and CNP. HIV/AIDS interventions supported the creation of women support networks for their empowerment and motivation. A gender approach was also mainstreamed in the work carried out with the transgender community by targeting social determinants that cause stigma and discrimination. Communication and awareness-raising on women's rights and gender equality were also high priorities. Various communication products and tools were developed to raise awareness of sexist stereotypes as well as patriarchal sociocultural patterns.

The satisfactory gender mainstreaming, conducive business environment and political interest in gender, point to an enabling environment towards more transformative approaches and results. Some evidence of efforts towards gender transformational changes are:

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37 Developed as part of the UNDP PALMA project - Programme to Support the Modernization of the Agricultural Sector in Cuba.

- a. the design and implementation of programmatic tools to support the national policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment (gender strategies in the agriculture system and the national STI/HIV/AIDS programme);
- b. the realization of 10 local initiatives with affirmative measures aimed at empowering rural women and contributing to gender equality;
- c. the implementation of gender equality management systems (13 entities certified with level 1 of IGECSA).

Even though some noble work was developed around social determinants and structural barriers, more will have to be done to ensure that transformative changes take place. A comprehensive theory of change will be needed to secure actions addressing the structural causes of gender inequality, including the LGBT community with the focus of leaving no one behind. There is also space to improve gender mainstreaming in some areas, such as energy.

Key overall factors<sup>38</sup> mostly connected to hindering or constraining programme results are enumerated in Box 5.

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#### **BOX 5. Key overall factors hindering or constraining results**

- Lack of a clear theory of change with proper systems thinking;
  - Geopolitical conflict and blockade narrowing funding opportunities and access to providers;
  - Insufficient Internet connection;
  - Lengthy administrative approval processes in the Government and UNDP delaying implementation;
  - Low/delayed financial execution and limited providers affecting value for money.
- 

**Finding 14.** A clearer theory of change with proper systems thinking that reflects the evolving integration of the SDGs and strengthening of cross-sectoral and inter-agency synergies is missing to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of results.

Programmatically, ad hoc examples of integration of the multidimensional approach were found in all areas. Conversely, clear mapping of the assumptions, risks and best routes for integration of different goals and timings to maximize sustainable results were not evident. Adequate systems thinking should strategically consider the right time and sequencing to invest and integrate different dimensions. Another deficiency that limits adequate systems thinking for strategic integration is the use of inadequate indicators at a level in which it is not possible to monitor UNDP’s specific contributions and progress coherently, thereby limiting results-based management. CPD indicators at the outcome level, as required by corporate guidelines, had undefined baselines and were inadequate to assess UNDP’s work. Similarly, the defined outputs in the CPD under each outcome were too broad and generic, limiting the efficient focus of interventions and effective M&E. Aware of the need for better indicators, the country office defined output level indicators that were monitored annually.

In some outcomes, there were also inconsistencies between the implemented projects and the expected outcome as initially defined in the CPD (i.e. outcome 26 on key productive sectors), or outcomes that in reality seemed very similar to other outcomes (i.e. outcome 28 with 31, and outcome 26 with 29). This alludes to the need of reducing the number of outcomes in the CPD to reflect a more integrated programme.

**Finding 15.** Despite the challenging context and a restricted execution rate, healthy financial management and systems have earned UNDP a stable value-for-money and cost-effectiveness rating<sup>39</sup> among national partners and donors in Cuba.

38 Information comes from coded interviews and desk review of relevant documents.

39 Partnership survey results triangulated with positive interviews and financial analysis.

Efficient use of programme resources was found in alignment with national policies and strategies and UNDP rules and regulations. National governing and technical institutions have partnered successfully with UNDP helping to mobilize funds and contributing their own financial resources and human resources to the interventions. National counterparts recognize that the resources mobilized by UNDP help to catalyse resources provided by national and local institutions.

The country office has a proactive resource mobilization strategy. Despite being a middle-income country, which generally means reduced donor resources, Cuba is also a Small Island Development State and thus is eligible for more financing windows. To take full advantage of funding opportunities, UNDP has a proactive strategy in support of national partners applying for new funding opportunities, as currently is the case of the proposals for the Green Climate Fund, a challenging funding window with strict requirements. UNDP is not only involved in alerting partners of funding opportunities but is also fully involved in the proposal writing phase to effectively support application requirements. With an average financial execution of 68 percent, the delivery rate has been restricted due to the blockade. To compensate, the Government and UNDP have cautiously revised, planned and budgeted the projects' execution every year considering modest targets. Some challenges have also been identified when it comes to the import operations. Multiple measures have been taken to try to improve the processes but there is space to negotiate more systemic solutions.

Cuba's limited access to US dollars and foreign markets due to the US blockade has also affected programme implementation. The blockade affects execution by severely restricting providers sourcing, keeping a high level of delayed payments, and a constant demand for contingency solutions, which must be considered in each project time-frame. The import processes led by national companies tend to be lengthy due to their limited access to products and providers,

often delaying project implementation. Maratones (training marathons) and other measures were put in place by UNDP and national counterparts to transfer the know-how and expedite the import processes. Despite the efforts, a sustainable solution has not been found. Besides the US blockade, the import process is also challenged by multiple approval steps involving several institutions' permissions. UNDP has not been able to influence this aspect beyond supporting lengthy case-by-case requests.

A key factor contributing to the efficient management of financial resources has been the close relationship the country office developed with the headquarters treasury in New York, necessary to solve banking and payment issues caused by the blockade. This continuous communication should also benefit the treasury by enabling them to design timely measures considering the upcoming currency unification that would minimize financial loss when eventually converting the accumulated CUPs in Cuban banks.

The economic implications of unifying Cuba's double/parallel currencies and multiple exchange rates will be extremely relevant, including for the operational and programme activities of UNDP. These changes can also be opportunities for UNDP to contribute to a smooth transition, as a trusted partner, clearly well positioned with key counterparts and to work with headquarters well in advance on all measures needed to be prepared for its implications in the UN operations and personnel.

UNDP has an accurate and timely cost-recovery<sup>40</sup> discipline but at the project level there is still some partner reluctance and lack of clarity regarding the concept and payment of the different forms of cost recovery of DPC, GMS and ISS.<sup>41</sup> Although the Government has expressed support in the UN General Assembly for the mandatory responsibility of country offices in recovering costs as agreed by the member states – and despite engagement with MINCEX and projects – partners still lack clarity on the cost-recovery concept.

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40 GMS (general management support), ISS (implementation support services), DPC (direct project costs)

41 The DPC are organizational costs incurred in the implementation of a development activity or service provided by UNDP. The GMS fee encompasses costs incurred in providing general management and oversight functions of the organization as a whole. The ISS are charged using the universal and local price list in each country office.

In addition, the Government to Local Office Contribution (GLOC) has not been paid since 2006. Until then, Cuba paid the GLOC in Cuban pesos (CUPs), the local Cuban currency which UNDP cannot widely use for exchanges of goods and services. Therefore, corporately UNDP is at loss of 26 million CUPs that it cannot use – registered by UNDP Treasury with the UN Official Rate Exchange of 1 (dollar) per 1 (CUP). UNDP has insisted<sup>42</sup> with the Cuban Government to reinstate the payment of the GLOC and to make the payment in the more widely used currency, the Cuban convertible peso (CUC) instead. A solution has yet to be agreed on.

**Finding 16.** With the challenges of operating under the blockade and with restricted Internet access, a significant amount of UNDP staff time is devoted to additional and time-consuming compliance-related tasks. The strict corporate requirements and focus on compliance has worked to the detriment of a more strategic, innovative and programmatic use of staff talent and in contradiction to UNDP's strategic plan commitment to make the organization more open, adaptable and agile for innovation and effectiveness.

Corporate support to Cuba has not been solutions-driven and adaptive to the national context but compliance-based and risk-averse to adapt to corporate requirements. As assessed by the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) in UNDP Cuba's last audit exercise<sup>43</sup>, the country office shows satisfactory compliance levels in all corporate requirements, regardless of the severe commercial blockade and the unique conditions in which the country office operates. The country office has had access to some special conditions but only when facing natural disasters. The Bureau for Management Support is now piloting new ideas that could have benefited UNDP Cuba long ago. It is not clear how much the country office has been able to contribute or even be aware to timely adapt to these changes given the limited time that staff has had to dedicate to be involved and explore/propose

new ideas. More operational flexibility, in recognition of the Cuban contextual particularities, would allow the country office to devote more time to create more strategic and substantive value. All CO units interviewed mentioned the impact of the blockade in terms of difficulties to cope with all corporate requirements and took the procedures for compliance as an unchangeable framework. Only the Procurement Unit presented an example in which they explained to headquarters instances of the Cuban particularities and were granted a more adequate alternative. The aim of having a nimbler, more innovative and enterprising agency as stated in the new Strategic Plan 2018-2021<sup>44</sup> was not a pivotal point in the conversations between the Operations and Programme Units.

Although a good and frequent level of coordination between the Programme and Operations Units is observed, this focuses on coordinating actions related to the daily execution of the projects and not on more strategic issues such as new technological developments, innovative methodologies in operational areas, support in cost recovery negotiations, etc. The procurement area comes closest to offering proactive interventions, given its constant focus on monitoring problems and preparing alternative solutions to the blockade.

The staff is also severely challenged by limited access to the Internet hindering interaction with UNDP's systems, knowledge networks, other innovative tools and online training. The slow connectivity has often forced staff to stay long hours in the office to upload data, take online courses offline or keep parallel structures (spreadsheets for example) to circumvent challenges. More recently, RBLAC has provided additional financial resources that nearly doubled the bandwidth of the country office's Internet and the international private-governmental telecommunication consortium (ETECSA) has progressed in wiring a fibre-optic network to improve Internet connection quality. Additional bandwidth has been made available and fibre optic is in the process of activation. However, there are

42 A letter has been sent to the mission and MINCEX.

43 OAI Report 1883 released 1 December 2017. [https://cards.undp.org/file\\_view\\_audit.cfm?audit\\_id=1883](https://cards.undp.org/file_view_audit.cfm?audit_id=1883)

44 The UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021, p.2: "(b) Be more nimble, innovative and enterprising – a thought leader that succeeds in taking and managing risks".

still impediments to the country office's functioning according to corporate needs. Additional solutions to increase bandwidth should be pursued.

When headquarters aims to eventually migrate certain operational services to clustering solutions in Global Shared Services Centres, it is important that the human resources function of the country office continue developing competencies that in the future will allow them to reorient their contribution to the Government through interventions at a more strategic level. Currently, limited time can be spent developing new professional skills beyond the contents offered by the Talent Development Unit. This investment would also allow the country office to go one step further in maintaining a high-quality offer of knowledge and services to the Government. In a context where Internet access from home is expensive and often unavailable, the remaining options for the team are to connect from the office or to travel and replicate locally what was learned, requiring both planning as well as time and funds.



# CHAPTER 3

## CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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This chapter presents the evaluation team's main conclusions on UNDP's performance and contributions to development results in Cuba, its recommendations based on the key findings presented, and the management response from the UNDP country office in Cuba.

### 3.1 Conclusions

- **Conclusion 1.** UNDP has made important progress towards the planned country programme outcomes and relevant contributions to the development of Cuba, flexibly adapting to the country context and timely responding to national needs, including disaster emergencies. UNDP's long-standing presence, territorial coverage and partnership with national and local governments have strategically positioned it as a trusted and respected development partner in Cuba.

UNDP has efficiently implemented innovative projects and added value to the development and implementation of national policies and strategies in key and at times sensitive and new areas through technical advice of the highly skilled local staff and partners and UNDP's global network.

- **Conclusion 2.** Clearer theories of change with the proper systems thinking, reflecting a contextualized sequencing of SDGs integration, and strengthening of cross-sectoral and inter-agency synergies, would have further strengthened UNDP's contributions.

Although promising, only ad hoc examples of integration of the multidimensional approach and SDGs integration were found in the programme. The successful territorial approach and platform promoted by UNDP could have been more effectively capitalized on to help the Government use and monitor integrative approaches to localize and achieve the SDGs, complementing national efforts in strengthening capacities and systems.

- **Conclusion 3.** UNDP has been efficient in delivering results. Despite the improved delivery and management efficiency ratio, however, low

**execution rates persist. Compliance demands and the imperatives of the Cuban context have precluded the staff from paying greater attention to strategic programme support.**

The blockade, the double/parallel currency, the limited Internet access constrains more cost-effective technology and inputs, slowing execution and delivery of results. Continuous corporate support and flexibility to better accommodate the needs of the Cuba country office to the realities of the country is key for staff's availability to focus on more strategic issues that could add more value to programmatic results.

- **Conclusion 4.** Despite the limited approach to systematically documenting experiences, UNDP has promoted South-South and triangular cooperation, introducing to and providing from Cuba new capacities and technologies that have been successfully adapted to different contexts for sustainable results and national ownership.

The potential of South-South cooperation has not been systematically considered in all projects and not all exchange experiences have been properly systematized and documented for further use of learning in the replication and scaling up of initiatives in Cuba and other countries.

- **Conclusion 5.** UNDP Cuba also made relevant contribution to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Cuba. Most results to which UNDP contributed were gender-targeted or -responsive but not yet transformative enough.

Strategic partnerships were fostered to support gender advocacy at all levels and UNDP played a pivotal role in promoting, designing and implementing institutional gender strategies, and integrating gender in local development plans and instruments. More work is still needed to address the structural causes of inequality and enhance the use of the rights approach through social determinants.

- **Conclusion 6.** Despite being planned in the country programme document, there was limited integration of population dynamics in the programme, especially of intergenerational approaches, considering Cuba’s growing concern with the ageing population.

Recognizing that population dynamics is not an area within UNDP’s mandate, UNDP’s work in this respect has been modest, with some ad hoc initiatives and partnerships that lacked a coherent strategy. However, adequate consideration of this vulnerable elderly population, in close collaboration with relevant partners with expertise in the area, represents a good opportunity to enhance the social and economic contributions of UNDP’s programme for Cuba’s development.

- **Conclusion 7.** Financed by the Global Fund, UNDP’s support for Cuba’s fight against HIV/AIDS, which was built upon partnerships between the Government, civil society actors, and the United Nations, was key to eliminating mother-to-child transmission and controlling HIV incidence in the country.

Advancements have led Cuba to become the first country in the region to transition from the Global Fund. Considering the blockade and given that not many donors will see the country (a middle-income country with low incidence) as a funding priority, UNDP now has the challenge of helping Cuba implement a smooth transition, focused on ensuring the financial sustainability of the achieved social results.

- **Conclusion 8.** UNDP’s assistance to banking modernization contributed to greater access to finance for development in Cuba’s key productive sectors. In alignment, UNDP’s support to territorial development management and agricultural value chains production built local governance capacities and improved the productivity of key products, which to a modest extent helped some municipalities with import substitution.

The integrated territorial platform approach has been relevant to develop capacities and facilitate multilevel intersectoral coordination among local actors, with good potential to further integrate the SDGs and a multidimensional approach, including help to prepare the country for the ongoing update of its social and economic model, as well as the upcoming currency unification.

- **Conclusion 9.** UNDP’s contributions have strengthened national capacities for the integration of environmental considerations in local and sectoral development, and disaster risk management and reduction at the territorial level. Insufficient attention was devoted to water contamination and availability issues and energy efficiency – both important for climate change adaptation – and to seismic risks in the Havana.

UNDP was key in supporting the country to implement environmental policies with municipalities and key economic sectors. It helped harmonize environmental and risk reduction considerations with economic development and integrate the management of ecosystems for their increased resilience to climate change impacts in support of the national environmental strategy. Considerations of energy efficiency and water contamination issues could, given its importance, have been more integrated to the programme. Contributions in strengthening multi-hazard early warning systems helped Cuba be better prepared to manage the impact of hurricanes and seismic disasters. Havana, however, is still particularly vulnerable to earthquakes as it sits on tectonic plates building energy for the past 130 years. A resilience study is lacking for the city, as the south-eastern zone is the one prioritized by the country, thus increasing the vulnerability of the city of Havana and its population, including multiple sectors.

## 3.2 Recommendations and Management Response

### Recommendation 1.



UNDP should develop a clear theory of change for the new CPD that reflects a contextualized sequencing of strategic SDG integration and strengthening of cross-sectoral synergies, making better use of UN agencies expertise. The structure of the country office should also reflect this integration to better ensure synergies. The programme approach should ensure focus on leaving no one behind and the human development multidimensional approach to complement the country's efforts to achieve the SDGs. This needs to be more evidently highlighted in the programme as UNDP's key value added to strengthening the institutions and society for the challenges and opportunities ahead related to the decentralization process, currencies and exchange rates unification, constitutional reform and the update of the social and economic model. In developing the theory of change, more appropriate assumptions, risks and indicators at adequate levels should be mapped to accurately test and measure not only progress but also UNDP's contributions and lessons learned for adequate results-based management.

### Management Response:

Accepted.



The new CPD 2020-2024 is currently under formulation and the country office is in the process of developing a theory of change aligned to the national priorities expressed in the 2030 National Plan for Economic and Social Development, the State Plan to address climate change 'Tarea Vida', all in connection with the 2030 Global Agenda and SDGs. At the CO level, special emphasis will be placed on working mechanisms to promote synergies and articulations around the 2030 SDG goals and the development outcomes to be identified in the new country programme.

Also, UNDP will promote cross-sectoral programmatic synergies and provide technical advice and implementation support to complement the country's efforts to achieve the SDGs, based on its global presence and fostering partnerships with the Government at the national and local level, key national counterparts, the United Nations agencies and donors.

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1. In the upcoming CPD 2020-2024, develop a theory of change focused on SDG integration, cross-sectoral synergies and that addresses intergenerational issues.	June-September 2019	UNDP Programme Unit		In progress
1.2 Develop the new CPD 2020-2024 with a focus on the human development multidimensional approach.	June-September 2019	UNDP Management and Programme Unit		In progress

## Recommendation 2.



**Building from PADIT's experience, UNDP should expand the use of platform approaches as a catalytic investment to leverage national efforts and resources to strengthen governments' capacities and systems to integrate and implement the SDGs in a holistic way, especially at the territorial level.** Positioned as the 'go-to agency', UNDP has a leading and integrator role in strengthening synergies among UN agencies, and in fostering greater intersectoral partnerships and multidimensional integrative approaches that contribute to national challenges and opportunities, such as the SDGs, currency unification, changes to the economic model and building resilience to climate change. It is recommended to localize/territorialize the SDGs and properly monitor, not just harmonize measurements but also the learning from different local contexts in order to adapt and improve effectiveness of different integrative approaches used to achieve the SDGs, especially at the local level, considering that the global tendency is to report at the national level, which can mask local inequalities.

## Management Response:

Accepted.



UNDP is actively supporting governments' capacities and systems to integrate and implement the SDGs in a holistic way and promoting the territorialization of SDGs through:

1. The provision of key UNDP methodologies and tools to monitor the implementation and achievement of the SDGs.
2. The expansion of PADIT to 10 out of the 15 provinces which provides a programmatic platform for more integrated UN development interventions and facilitates the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda at the local level. UNDP will continue conducting strategic actions to complement the country's efforts in the monitoring and achievement of the SDGs at the national and local level.
3. In the framework of PADIT and the SDGs, there is an ongoing initiative financed with TRAC 2, for the management platform of the 'live SDG Lab' in support to the National Group in charge of the follow-up of the 2030 national development plan and SDGs. It includes pilot tests of 'Territorial/municipal SDG Laboratory', the strengthening of local development measurement with SDG prism and the introduction of Information and Communication Technology.

Recommendation 2. (cont'd)

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1. Provide a set of UNDP tools aimed at SDG monitoring and development measurement (SIGOB, combos and accelerators, IPM, etc.) to support the National Development Group's capacities to monitor and report on the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 National Development Plan.	July 2018-September 2019	UNDP Programme Unit	This is being done through training and technical exchanges.	In progress
2.2 Continue the strategic support to the National Development Group, incorporating the territorial dimension and facilitating the articulation in a platform approach of several development projects at the local level.	March-December 2019	UNDP Programme Unit	An initiative financed by TRAC 2 has been already approved to support the National Development Group and the SDGs' territorial dimension.	In progress
2.3 Support the National Office of Statistics and Information's capacities to apply measuring methodologies according to international standards: Example: IPM.	July 2018-September 2019	UNDP Programme Unit	First calculation of the Multidimensional Poverty Index made with UNDP's support in association with OPHI's.	In progress

Recommendation 2. (cont'd)

<p>2.4 Support the formulation of a new Human Development Report in Cuba focused on the local level, which: 1) measures local development with new methodologies and integrated indicators, 2) proposes an index of human development with an environmental dimension, and that 3) for the first time, measures development at the municipal level.</p>	<p>January 2018-December 2019</p>	<p>UNDP Programme Unit</p>	<p>First draft under revision.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>2.5. Support the expansion of PADIT to 10 provinces, as a programmatic platform for more integrated UN development interventions and facilitator of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level.</p>	<p>January 2019-December 2021</p>	<p>UNDP Programme Unit</p>	<p>The second phase of PADIT is under implementation in 10 provinces.</p>	<p>In progress</p>



**Recommendation 3.**



Considering the restricted execution rates, the upcoming unification of currencies, and challenges with Internet connectivity, UNDP, with the support of the Regional Bureau, should continue to work with the Government to agree, as partners, on mitigation measures and strengthening plans to expedite execution, and minimize impacts on programme results and staff. Continued close communication with the Government will be needed to ensure timely corporate commitment from UNDP to solutions that mitigate potential negative impacts on programme results and staff salaries that may result from the currencies and exchange rate unification. UNDP should also renegotiate with the Government the payment of the Global Contributions to Local Office Costs (GLOC) in a currency that the country office can use. Part of these resources can be directed towards addressing the persisting problem of inadequate Internet connection. Simultaneously, in line with one of the corporate goals of UNDP – to make the organization more open, adaptable and agile – the country office should continue to work with RBLAC to better adapt operational procedures to the Cuban context while still honouring the principles of transparency, competitiveness, and accountability with the intention to free staff time for learning, and for them to be able to provide more strategic support to programme results.



**Management Response:**

**Accepted.**



Regarding the context challenges, and its impacts on cooperation, the country office has worked on the identification of mitigation measures, analysing case by case, preparing studies and performing scenario analysis. For more than three years, the country office has formally requested support to headquarters for risk management through the annual integrated work plans; has held many meetings and teleconferences with RBLAC and OHR, and with other country offices that faced a similar situation and updated RBLAC on the announced monetary and exchange rate unification process and its potential impacts. The issue has been identified in all integrated work plans.

To support the streamlining of project formulation and implementation, the country office has increased monitoring and supported key entities and processes: Operational follow-up meetings with projects of greater impact on the annual delivery are frequently held, strategic meetings with senior UNDP and MINCEX managers are also conducted as well as trainings to importing companies involved. Comprehensive and detailed monitoring of procurement processes is also carried out. As a result of the actions taken, there has been progress in the annual delivery rate, from \$15 million in 2014, 2015 and 2016 to \$25.9 million in 2017, \$20 million in 2018 and \$21 million in 2019.

Regarding the operational procedures, the country office is in constant dialogue with headquarters on the ongoing updating of the Cuban model. Multiple corporate supports have been received to support the efficiency of the office and to align the processes with the corporate requirements. In all cases, corporate requirements are duly met.

UNDP will continue working on the implementation of practical solutions to expedite programme execution and minimize impacts on programme results and staff of the challenges associated with changes in context.

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Perform scenario analysis on possible impacts of monetary and exchange rate unification in the office's Operations and Programmes and make proposals to mitigate them.	January 2018-December 2019	Operations Unit	Scenarios have been elaborated and mitigation actions identified and discussed with the OMT Interagency Group and UNCT.	In progress



Recommendation 3. (cont'd)

<p>3.2 Keep operational follow-up meetings with projects with greater impact on the annual delivery (Marathons) as well as strategic meetings with UNDP and MINCEX senior managers. Continue comprehensive monitoring of key procurement processes that impact annual delivery.</p>	<p>January 2019-December 2019</p>	<p>Programme and Operations Unit</p>	<p>A set of meetings and delivery following up mechanisms are already in place that supports programme delivery and annual target achievement.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>3.3 Maintain constant dialogue with headquarters on the updating of the Cuban model and its impacts on office efficiency and linkages with corporate requirements.</p>	<p>January 2019-December 2019</p>	<p>UNDP Management</p>	<p>A fluid exchange with RBLAC on the updating of the Cuban model is maintained and corporate supports have been received to support the efficiency of the office.</p>	<p>In progress</p>

**Recommendation 4.**



As a key value proposition of the programme, UNDP should more systematically integrate South-South cooperation, expanding the use of existing Cuban expertise and knowledge and more proactively identifying opportunities to support Cuba's development and for Cuba to contribute to the development of other countries. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks of all UNDP projects and initiatives should be adapted to expand from the usual focus only on compliance to learning and with attention to documenting and extracting lessons and best practices for further replication of South-South cooperation. In more proactively identifying opportunities for Cuba to cooperate with other countries, UNDP should strengthen its role by ensuring mutual benefits to both countries and enabling Cuba to take advantage of learning from other countries on other matters when possible.

**Management Response:**

**Accepted.**



The country office has promoted, whenever possible, projects incorporate South-South and triangular cooperation actions. This works in two directions: bring experiences to Cuba and share the Cuban experience with other countries.

Specific steps are as follows: Issues of national interest or new to the Cuban context are identified, especially those that require knowledge of the experiences of other countries, including those which have already promoted solutions to similar problems.

**Management Response:**

**Accepted.**



It is agreed with the national institution to organize exchange missions on specific topics. Then, through the UNDP network, good practices are identified, studied and those that may be of greater interest to the Cuban context or to share outwardly are selected. From there, the agenda is designed, including management meetings, with academic centres and field visits to verify practical application.

Taking into consideration the relevance of South-South cooperation in the current global development agenda and the upcoming formulation of the new CPD 2020-2024, UNDP will work at two levels: 1) At the strategic level and building on Cuba's extensive experience in South-South cooperation, UNDP will support Cuban authorities to further foster the country's role in the promotion of such cooperation, and 2) At the programmatic level, UNDP will actively continue identifying opportunities for Cuba to cooperate with other countries, ensuring mutual benefits and enabling the country to take advantage of learning from other contexts. In March 2019, UNDP supported the presentation and systematization of Cuba's and UNDP's projects on South-South cooperation with the Caribbean during BAPA+ 40 (High level conference on South-South Cooperation organized in Buenos Aires). UNDP has received the acknowledgement from MINCEX on the impact of this support.

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Provide strategic information to Cuban authorities on South-South/ Development Cooperation Agencies in the region and identify opportunities of UNDP's support to foster Cuba's role in the promotion of South-South cooperation.	April-December 2019	UNDP Management	Set of information of key South South/ Development Agencies in the region is being prepared.	In progress
4.2 Include South-South cooperation as a key element in the new CPD 2020-2024 and continue identifying opportunities for Cuba to cooperate with other countries, ensuring mutual benefits.	January 2020-December 2024	UNDP Management		In progress

### Recommendation 5.



**Building on Cuban social equity results and the good capacities of UNDP staff for gender mainstreaming, UNDP should pursue more gender-transformative rights approaches in all areas of work to accelerate changes in social determinants and structural issues.** While important progress has been made with gender-responsive and some initiatives with transformative potential, more can be done to enhance UNDP's contributions to secure transformative results. In doing so, it will be important to also consider the SDGs' principle of leaving no one behind and redirect attention to the needs and challenges of other vulnerable groups, such as the LGBT and the elderly.

### Management Response:

Accepted.



Although it is true that many of the results are mainly focused on women, this responds to the prior identification of gender inequalities and the programmatic consensus of prioritizing the closing of gender gaps in priority areas of the country's development and in LGBTI populations.

Actual programme projects that stand out for gender mainstreaming (GEN2 and GEN3) when focusing on women are made from the empowerment of their capacities to participate in conditions of equality with women. Both, with the women and men themselves and with institutional actors guiding policies, the main structural causes of the gender inequalities that still exist in the country are addressed.

Main transformational gender results have been achieved in HIV/AIDS, disaster risk management and food security outcomes. Among the structural causes that have been most addressed are: the elimination of occupational segregation and the sexual division of labour; the non-acceptance of gender violence; the confrontation with sexist stereotypes; the generation of changes in institutional management to eliminate barriers that limit the participation of women in management positions.

UNDP will continue working on enhancing its contributions towards gender-transformative results.

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Continue working with technical counterparts on the identification of social determinants and structural issues related to gender inequalities.	January-December 2019	UNDP Programme Unit		In progress
5.2 In the new CPD 2020-2024, formulate initiatives to address structural issues related to gender inequalities.	January 2020-December 2024	UNDP Programme Unit		Not initiated

## Recommendation 6.



Considering Cuba's growing elderly population, UNDP should mainstream an intergenerational approach throughout the programme. This should be done in collaboration with other national partners and agencies with expertise in the area. In close consultation and collaboration with national partners, UNFPA and other UN agencies, UNDP should develop a theory of change to identify a strategy and means to systematically integrate measures addressing intergenerational issues that affect the ageing population of Cuba as well as youth.

### Management Response:

Accepted.



Regarding the intergenerational approach, actions have been carried out within the framework of the projects PADIT, Agrocadenas and those in the area of risk reduction and response to HIV, as follows:

**PADIT:** Work has been carried out on the mainstreaming of the population approach in planning tools and strategies at the territorial level, both at the municipal and provincial levels. In addition, with the support of the Population Study Centre (CEDEM) population and development issues have been included in territorial communication strategies in Holguín and first steps have been taken in Pinar del Río, Artemisa and Cienfuegos provinces.

In Agrocadenas, in partnership with UNFPA, a study has been conducted of population dynamics associated with key productive chains.

**Risk Reduction:** In the design of the emergency response, attention is given to households with people over 65 years of age and minors. All of this is indicated in the following project reports: Response to the post-Matthew emergency (CERF Projects, OCHA Cash Grant, TRAC \$500 million, WWF and Sherritt), PC ODS project and the Dipecho Drought Phase I project. This population is identified as a prioritized group together with other vulnerable groups.

**Response to HIV:** Within the framework of Global Fund grants, training, information and communication actions are promoted for the prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS in people 50 years of age and older; and advocacy is made to achieve the recognition and respect of family members, caregivers, organizations, institutions and civil society that are part of the People Living with HIV/AIDS support line.

UNDP will continue working on enhancing its contributions to address intergenerational issues.

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
6.1 Develop a theory of change in the upcoming CPD 2020-2024 that addresses intergenerational issues.	July 2018-September 2019	UNDP Programme Unit		In progress

Recommendation 6. (cont'd)

6.2 In the new CPD 2020-2024, formulate initiatives to address intergenerational issues.	January 2020-December 2024	UNDP Programme Unit		Not initiated
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**Recommendation 7.**



**Considering the transition from the Global Fund by 2020 and challenges linked to the blockade, UNDP should keep working with national partners on identifying other viable solutions to ensure access to medications and to fund the work with social networks and the conduct of regular prevention and target population surveys.** UNDP should support national partners to ensure transparency and commitment to sustain results and efforts in motion. This may include helping social support networks in their efforts to access alternative financing opportunities and mechanisms to secure the continuity of the results.

**Management Response:**

**Accepted.**



UNDP is already taking steps linked to the recommendation, as follows: Quarterly, as part of the monitoring activities of the current Global Fund grant in implementation, UNDP and the National HIV Programme monitor the progress in the purchasing of ARV medicines funded by the Government.

Also, with UNDP's support, there is an ongoing assessment of the possible contractual mechanisms and alternative funding to ensure the work of the civil society organizations is ongoing with the participation of key actors from these organizations and the Ministry of Health. UNDP will continue assisting national partners in support of the sustainability of results.

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
7.1 In cooperation with the Government, keep a close monitoring of the procurement of ARV medicines with national funding, identifying and proposing in a timely manner other mechanisms to access ARV, if necessary.	January 2019-December 2020	UNDP Programme Unit		In progress



Recommendation 7. (cont'd)

7.2 Facilitate technical assistance to assess the possible contractual mechanisms and alternative funding to ensure the work of the civil society organizations, promoting the diffusion and application of the key findings.	February 2019 to December 2020	UNDP Programme Unit		In progress
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**Recommendation 8.**



**UNDP should support the formulation of policies related to the management model of territorial and intersectoral value chains from productive regions as a consolidation of innovations and changes initiated with the programme.** This should allow the expansion of initiatives that promote local development to more provinces, using the approach and methodology provided by the Articulated Platform for Integrated Territorial Development. It is recommended to deepen support to local economic development, taking advantage of the favourable context of the country for the decentralization process and the potential significant positive impact on the development of territories and on improving the living conditions of its inhabitants. UNDP has extensive experience and expertise in building and applying instruments and tools for local economic development that can be very relevant and timely for the country; it is recommended that the office identify and make it available to the Government.

**Management Response:**

**Accepted.**



The current programme is already promoting a management model of territorial and intersectoral value chains from productive regions. The work with the chains approach in the agri-food sector has undergone a process of scaling up in territories and chains as of 2014. UNDP began to insert the issue of productive linkages and creation of value chains at the end of the PALMA project, initiating this work as a pilot in Sancti Spiritus for the milk and bean chain and in Santiago de Cuba for the mango chain. As a result, it was decided to scale up this experience with the Agrocadenas project, started in 2014, extending the application of the approach to 13 municipalities and to four chains (milk, beans, corn and meat). In 2018, MINAG decided to continue scaling this approach towards three fruit chains (mango, guava and papaya), involving five other municipalities in the country. Also, an important result in this escalation has been the creation of the Office of National Coordination of Projects of the Agrifood Chains of MINAG, a sample of the appropriation and institutionalization that MINAG has given to this approach.

Recommendation 8. (cont'd)

**Management Response:**

**Accepted.**



At the same time, under the Articulated Platform for Integrated Territorial Development (PADIT), new methodologies to support local governments' capacities for local development management have been made available and it is now extended to 10 out of the 15 provinces in the country. UNDP will continue supporting the management model of territorial and intersectoral value chains from productive regions as well as promoting the implementation of innovative tools for local economic development.

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
8.1 Continue mobilizing resources to support the management model of territorial and intersectoral value chains from productive regions.	January 2018-December 2024	UNDP Programme Unit		In progress
8.2 Continue supporting the expansion of PADIT and the implementation of its innovative tools for local economic development.	January 2018-December 2024	UNDP Programme Unit		In progress

**Recommendation 9.**



**Voiced as national priorities by Government, UNDP should also reinforce the attention to issues of water resources and energy efficiency and mainstream a strategic risk management approach for disaster risk reduction throughout the entire programme.** Considering that water is the country's most threatened natural resource linked to climate change and that the Cuban Energy Policy rests on two fundamental pillars – the development of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency – UNDP should help the Government build upon the results of the current programme around renewable energy sources and invest in national policies and strategies to scale up initiatives with sustainable natural resources management methodologies, further integrating water resources and energy efficiency concerns. Considering the climate change and seismic risks of the country, Havana presents a special vulnerability and UNDP should further highlight that and help the Government complete a study for appropriate urban resilience measures.



**Management Response:**  
**Partially Accepted.**



For more than 25 years, UNDP has worked on the conservation, availability and efficient use of water resources, as well as managing the risks and impacts of climate change associated with them, such as floods, drought, depletion of aquifers or saline intrusion. The projects consider water a natural resource of extraordinary importance given its cross-cutting nature that ensures the economic, social and environmental development of the nation; and contribute to the implementation of the prioritized plans, programmes, in particular the Life Task, the National Water Policy, the Land Water Law and the National Environmental Strategy.

Regarding energy efficiency, some UNDP interventions have addressed it with tangible results (BASAL, Agrocadenas, Ozone) and there are important initiatives in the current pipeline (Kigali and the EU). In addition, and after a two-year negotiation, two important projects have been presented to the European Union (one already approved to address energy resilience at the local level and another in the process of signature to support energy efficiency and renewable energy sources towards promoting local development). Both amount to \$13.4 million.

Regarding the seismic risk in Havana, the recommendation is noted and will be considered for future interventions. So far, the UNDP projects have prioritized the subject of seismic risk in the south-eastern zone of Cuba, according to the priorities established by national authorities. The interventions carried out in Havana have responded to the priority hazards identified by the authorities: floods, landslides, and solid waste.

UNDP will continue identifying strategic opportunities to address the issues of water resources and energy efficiency and mainstream a strategic risk management approach for disaster risk reduction throughout the entire programme.

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
9.1 Continue mobilizing resources and formulating initiatives that address water resources management and energy efficiency.	January 2019-December 2024	UNDP Programme Unit	In the current pipeline, more than three initiatives (under negotiation) address these topics.	In progress
9.2 Continue mobilizing resources and formulating initiatives that support the mainstreaming of a strategic risk management approach and support urban resilience measures in Havana and other major cities.	January 2019-December 2024	UNDP Programme Unit	In the current pipeline, two initiatives (under negotiation) address these topics.	In progress

\* The implementation status is tracked in the UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre

# Annexes



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/9398>

- Annex 1.** Terms of Reference
- Annex 2.** Country at a Glance
- Annex 3.** Country Office at a Glance
- Annex 4.** List of Projects for In-depth Review
- Annex 5.** People Consulted
- Annex 6.** Documents Consulted
- Annex 7.** Summary of CPD indicators and Status as Reported by Country Office



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