

# 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.

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

FIGURE 1. Funding sources, 2014-2018

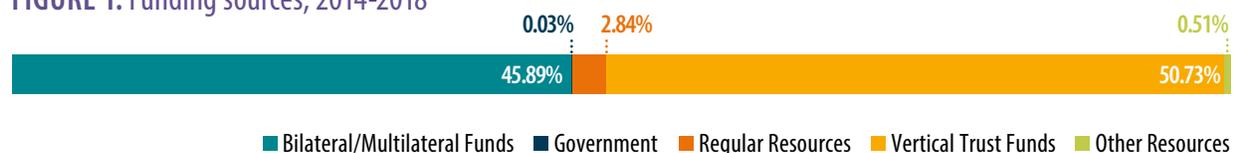


FIGURE 2. Programme expenditure by thematic area, 2014-2018 (\$ million)



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.