



# INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION TIMOR-LESTE



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## IEO TEAM

### Directorate:

Indran Naidoo (Director) and Arild Hauge (Deputy Director)

### ICPE Section Chief:

Fumika Ouchi

### Lead evaluator:

Deqa Ibrahim Musa

### Research consultants:

Tianhan Gui and Elizabeth Wojnar

### Evaluation Advisory Panel member:

Chen Zhaoying

### Evaluation consultants:

David Todd (resilience and sustainable development) and Ernesto Bautista (governance and institutional strengthening)

### Publishing and outreach:

Sasha Jahic

### Administrative support:

Antana Locs

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## STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

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### Other stakeholders and partners:

Government of Timor-Leste, representatives of United Nations agencies, civil society, non-governmental organizations and bilateral and multilateral development partners



# Foreword

I am pleased to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) of UNDP in Timor-Leste. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted the evaluation in 2018. It is the second ICPE conducted in Timor-Leste and covers the country programme of cooperation between the Government of Timor-Leste and UNDP for the period 2015 to 2019.

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is one of the youngest countries in the world, having gained independence from Indonesia in 2002 after a protracted conflict. The country has achieved considerable progress in peacebuilding and State-building since independence. However, despite this notable progress in a relatively short time frame, the poverty rate remains high. Additionally, the country's topography makes it vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards including floods, coastal erosion, tsunamis, strong winds (cyclones), prolonged dry seasons (drought), earthquakes, landslides and forest fires.

The evaluation found that the UNDP country programme reflects national priorities vis-à-vis resilience, climate risk and environmental management as well as strengthening institutional capacities of key democratic governance institutions. Building on the previous country programmes, UNDP has progressively contributed to developing the capacity of democratic governance institutions, including the justice sector and electoral management bodies, to implement government reforms. UNDP also played an important role in developing capacities and an enabling framework to support decentralization and local governance.

The evaluation also found that most of the interventions under the resilience portfolio have delivered

substantial amounts of small-scale infrastructure, including clean water systems and irrigation, check dams, slope stabilization and reforestation. However, the upstream policy-oriented interventions under this subcomponent have been delayed by political uncertainty and government changes. At the same time, the sustainability of the community-level infrastructure is challenged due to limited subnational budgets and resources. UNDP also needed to do more to systematize youth vocational training, certification and creation of businesses.

There have been major changes in the external environment in which UNDP has operated since the last ICPE, following the departure of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste and the country's transition to middle-income status. The country programme is severely challenged by a disconnect between its ambitions and available resources.

The evaluation presents a set of recommendations for UNDP to consider during the elaboration of its next country programme. UNDP management has provided its response to the recommendations in the management response section of this report.

I would like to thank the Government of Timor-Leste and the other stakeholders for their insights into the evaluation. I hope this report will be of use to UNDP, the Government and development partners in prompting discussions on how UNDP may further enhance its contribution to sustainable human development in Timor-Leste.



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





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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>BCDRP</b>	“Building Climate and Disaster Resilience in Communities” project (funded by World Bank)
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based organization
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>CPD</b>	Country programme document
<b>DARDC</b>	“Strengthening community resilience to climate-induced disasters in the Dili to Ainaro road development corridor” project
<b>DIM</b>	Direct implementation modality
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>ICPE</b>	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
<b>IEO</b>	Independent Evaluation Office
<b>IT</b>	Information technology
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and evaluation
<b>MAPS</b>	Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>MTR</b>	Midterm review
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of understanding
<b>NCCP</b>	National Climate Change Policy
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NIM</b>	National implementation modality
<b>PNTL</b>	Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste (National Police of Timor-Leste)
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SSRI</b>	“Strengthening resilience of small-scale rural infrastructure and local government systems to climate variability and risk” project
<b>UNCDF</b>	United Nations Capital Development Fund
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UNMIT</b>	United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
<b>UNV</b>	United Nations Volunteers
<b>UPMA</b>	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister
<b>VPU</b>	Vulnerable People’s Unit of the PNTL



# Evaluation Brief: ICPE Timor-Leste

Since 2003, the Government of Timor-Leste and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have had a partnership, formalized in country programmes of cooperation, aimed at advancing the country's aspiration for sustainable human development. The current programme, covering the period 2015 to 2019, establishes a framework for supporting the Government's Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 and related five-year plan 2012-2017. Employing strategies including policy advocacy and advisory services, technical assistance, operational support, knowledge exchange and transfer, and piloting new initiatives and models, the programme has three components—resilience-building, sustainable development and governance and institutional strengthening—with an indicative budget of US\$75 million.

The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) in 2018 prior to the scheduled completion of the country programme in 2019. The primary purpose of the evaluation is to inform the development of the next UNDP country programme and to strengthen accountability to national stakeholders and the UNDP Executive Board. This is the second ICPE of the UNDP programme, with the previous evaluation having covered the period 2004 to 2011.

## Findings and conclusions

**The country programme reflects national priorities vis-à-vis resilience, climate risk and environmental management, and strengthening institutional capacities of key democratic governance institutions. The programme has provided institutional capacity-building support to public institutions and worked at community level, with mixed results.** UNDP has contributed to developing the capacities of democratic governance institutions to implement government reforms through the adoption, utilization and implementation of improved systems, management practices and institutionalized capacity

development and training. UNDP played an important role in developing capacities and an enabling framework to support decentralization and local governance. The country programme also delivered substantial amounts of small-scale infrastructure, including clean water systems and irrigation, check dams, slope stabilization and reforestation under the resilience portfolio. However, the upstream policy-oriented interventions under this portfolio have been delayed by political uncertainty and government changes. The sustainability of the community-level infrastructure is challenged by limited subnational budgets and resources.

**Because the country office faces a disconnect between its ambitions and available resources, it needs to focus its objectives in terms of support and coverage which can be delivered with the resources available.** There have been major changes in the external operating environment since the last ICPE. Following the departure of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste in 2012 and the country's transition to middle-income country status, many traditional development partners have left or are changing their strategies. The UNDP Regional Office has envisaged an increasingly "upstream" role for the country office, focused on high-level policy advice and a "think tank" role. Concurrently, UNDP regular resources and staffing have been reduced consistent with the country's middle-income status, with unintended consequences for the design and sustainability of project interventions. Shorter-term funding will mean shorter-term projects that tend to favour "low hanging fruit" interventions at the expense of projects requiring the longer implementation timeline that many development outcomes require.

**Outside the governance programme, the country programme is overly dependent on Global Environment Facility (GEF) funding and focuses mainly on poverty-environment linkages.** GEF-funded projects tend towards provision of services and social infrastructure with a sometimes tenuous

connection with global environmental benefits. The country office's broader intentions with regard to youth and self-employment, strengthening peace and supporting sustainable development are marginal to the programme. Given the scarcity of donors and their tendency to implement their own programmes, there is no obvious solution to this challenge.

**Given the programme's concentration around one set of interconnected issues, the current division into three outcome areas is unnecessary.** Projects with similar objectives appear under different outcome areas, with improved governance as an underlying factor for progress in all areas. UNDP support to decentralization, seen by national partners as a major comparative advantage, could provide an overarching approach to the delivery of sustainable development, incorporating all three current outcomes under one coherent programme.

**Capacity-building, the underlying justification for the continuing engagement of UNDP in Timor-Leste, needs to be approached more systematically.**

Following years of technical support, relevant democratic governance institutions have enhanced institutional capacities for governance reforms. However, the rest of the portfolio did not demonstrate a well-designed approach to capacity development. Although written into virtually every project, it is often at a generic level without specific objectives and results indicators, which would enable performance to be assessed. There is limited knowledge transfer and no requirement for those trained to develop concrete plans to use this knowledge to improve the operations of their institutions.

**Collaboration among United Nations bodies is not sufficient to maintain the status of the United Nations system as a major development partner in Timor-Leste.** The declining human and financial resources affecting all United Nations organizations in the country is seen by government partners as reducing the role of the United Nations. The lack of coordination among agencies exacerbates this situation, creating an impression of competition which is seen as a weakness by national stakeholders.

## Recommendations

**The next UNDP country programme should have one outcome area, focused on contributing to sustainable development through support to decentralized and area-based local governance.** This would concentrate limited resources around a programme with limited and attainable objectives that makes a clear contribution to national development. The outcome should incorporate critical elements of existing projects to ensure long-term sustainability. In governance and institutional strengthening, these include improving access to justice at the local level, strengthening integrity and accountability of local public administration and strengthening the institutional capacity of Oecusse Special Administrative Region.

**The programme should align its objectives to resources which can be realized.** The practice of inflating objectives and targets on the basis of "aspirational" funding

from unknown sources and completely unrealistic GEF co-funding estimates should be halted. Future country programmes should be realistic, with clearly identified contributions to nationally-owned development policies and programmes.

**Future country programmes should be built around a specific capacity-building strategy with clear objectives, realizable targets and concrete plans for increased national ownership and management.**

While government bodies recognize their capacity limitations, they feel that these could be overcome more quickly through a more consistent and effective approach to capacity-building from UNDP. Enhanced technical and operational capacities of the government and private sector are essential for the phased transfer from direct to national implementation. UNDP approaches to capacity-building need to become more

targeted and results-oriented so that progress can be measured and the transition to national implementation can begin as soon as possible.

**In the context of the integrator role defined in the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 and of United Nations system reform, UNDP should systematically consider and map the best opportunities for enhanced results through improved United Nations Country Team collaboration and work with the Resident Coordinator to bring these to fruition.** National stakeholders have observed a lack of complementarity and coordination among United Nations bodies. Given overlapping interests and expertise across United Nations agencies, joint programmes or other focused collaboration can strengthen the quality of technical support and maximize use of limited resources.

A decorative graphic consisting of a dotted white line that starts at the top left, goes down, then right, then down again, and finally right. It features five colored circles: an orange circle at the top left, a dark blue circle below it, a white circle at the bottom left, an orange circle on the horizontal line, a dark blue circle on the horizontal line, and a white circle at the bottom right.

# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

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Since 2003, the Government of Timor-Leste and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have had a partnership, formalized in country programmes of cooperation, aimed at advancing the country's aspirations for sustainable human development. The current programme, covering the period 2015 to 2019, continues support for Timor-Leste's transition in building a democratic system and an inclusive and sustainable growth model conducive to reductions in poverty, inequality and exclusion, particularly at the local level. Per design, it provides policy support and institutional capacity development under three thematic programme components: (a) resilience; (b) sustainable development; and (c) democratic governance. The indicative budget of the programme was US\$75 million.

In accordance with the UNDP Evaluation Policy<sup>1</sup> and the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) workplan (2018-2021)<sup>2</sup>, an Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) was conducted in Timor-Leste in 2018 prior to the scheduled completion of the country programme in 2019. This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this evaluation. It will be made available to the Executive Board at the same time as the next country programme document for Timor-Leste. This is the second ICPE of the UNDP programme in Timor-Leste, the previous one having covered the period 2004 to 2011.<sup>3</sup>

The report consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 summarizes the evaluation's purpose, objectives, scope and methodology, describes the salient features of the national development context of Timor-Leste, taking stock of the key human development challenges faced by the country, and introduces the UNDP country programme. Chapter 2 presents the evaluation findings. Chapter 3 provides the conclusions and recommendations as well as the management response on the evaluation recommendations, provided by UNDP Timor-Leste.

## 1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of the ICPE is to:

- Support the development of the next UNDP country programme;
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders;
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board.

The evaluation's main objective was to assess the UNDP contribution to development results in Timor-Leste through its country programme 2015-2019. Specifically, the ICPE assessed the effectiveness of the country programme in achieving expected results, including its contribution to furthering gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>4</sup> The ICPE also assessed the sustainability and replicability of the results to which the country programme contributes. In addition, the evaluation examined the factors affecting the performance of the country programme and considered country-specific factors that are assumed to have had an impact on the performance of the country programme.

Country-level independent evaluations conducted by the IEO have included in their scope the assessment of UNDP collaboration with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), both of which share governance and operational structures with UNDP.

The evaluation is intended to inform the remainder of the ongoing programme and the formulation of the next UNDP programme. Primary audiences for the evaluation are the UNDP Timor-Leste country office, Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific, UNDP Executive Board and Government of Timor-Leste.

<sup>1</sup> See: [http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/policy/2016/Evaluation\\_policy\\_EN\\_2016.pdf](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/policy/2016/Evaluation_policy_EN_2016.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://undocs.org/DP/2018/4>

<sup>3</sup> UNDP, *Assessment of Development Results: Timor-Leste, 2012*.

<sup>4</sup> This was done using the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/unsystemcoordination/un-swap/un-swap-framework-dec-2012.pdf?la=en&vs=3435>



## 1.2 National development context and challenges

This section provides an overview of the external context within which the country programme has operated since the last ICPE in 2012. Its purpose is to situate the assessment of UNDP performance, particularly its relevance.

**Political and governance context.** The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is one of the youngest countries in the world, having gained independence from Indonesia in 2002 after a protracted conflict. The country has achieved considerable progress in peacebuilding and State-building since independence. There is much cause to celebrate the country's record in deepening the democratic process. Free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections were conducted in 2007, 2012 and 2017. The 2017 elections resulted in a minority government and after some months of a political impasse, the Parliament was dissolved in January 2018. New parliamentary elections were held on 12 May 2018. While elections are at the heart of successful democratic transition, the Government of Timor-Leste is aware that more needs to be done to ensure both the effective functioning of the justice system and the active participation and engagement of political parties and disadvantaged groups, especially women and youth. Taking advantage of the demographic bulge and ensuring employment and meaningful participation of idle youth in the country's governance process are key to a stable future.

Considerable progress has been made in developing the institutional capacity of the State to deliver its core functions and address the country's fragility,<sup>5</sup> although significant challenges remain in: (a) addressing policy gaps; (b) developing governance, institutions and legal frameworks; and (c) supporting the Government to accelerate development of the capacities required for sustained development.

The process of decentralization remains in transition since the development of an options study on decentralization in 2003.<sup>6</sup> Successive governments have had varying stances on adopting and pursuing a clear path for implementing decentralization. In the justice sector, notwithstanding the long history of technical assistance provided by development partners to strengthen rule of law, challenges remain in establishing key institutions and addressing the sector's institutional framework and capacity. For instance, the Supreme Court has yet to be established as mandated by Section 123 of the Constitution and the technical capacity of the justice sector remains limited. Language is a major constraint as all legal documents, court procedures and practices are written in Portuguese, in which very few Timorese are versed. Access to justice remains a challenge. Although there has been progress, the formal justice system remains a distant reality for most of the population, especially those living in rural areas. With a relatively low adult literacy rate of 58 percent (2010 Census) and limited basic awareness of the justice system, there is a reliance on the traditional justice system.

There is a growing perception among citizens of Timor-Leste of increasing incidence of corruption, considering the country's revenue inflows from oil reserves and the massive investment in infrastructure in recent years which present opportunities for corruption. Results from the 2015 survey commissioned by the national Anti-Corruption Commission revealed that about 47 percent of respondents considered corruption to be more prevalent and increasing in the preceding two years. The country has been slow in adopting the legal framework for anti-corruption. The law on anti-corruption has been pending in Parliament since 2011, and the country has yet to adopt a national anti-corruption strategy. Despite the institutional framework and policies to promote transparency, the country's performance on different global indices continues to be poor. On Open Budget Index, Timor-Leste

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Finance, *Fragility Assessment in Timor-Leste: Summary Report*, February 2013. <http://www.g7plus.org/sites/default/files/resources/Timor-Leste-Fragility-Assessment-Report.pdf>. Accessed August 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of State Administration, *Local Governance Options Study*, 2003.

scored 41/100 (2015 score), placing it in the “Insufficient Openness” category. On Resource Governance Index, the country’s composite score slipped from 68/100 in 2013 to 49/100 in 2017.<sup>7</sup> In 2017, Timor-Leste ranked 91 of 180 countries with a score of 38 in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index.<sup>8</sup> Although this score shows marginal improvement from a score of 33 in 2012, it is considered poor by international standards.<sup>9</sup>

**Socioeconomic context.** The country has achieved good progress in terms of socioeconomic development. The poverty rate fell by 8.6 percent between 2007 and 2014.<sup>10</sup> The infant mortality rate fell from 88 to 44 per 1,000 live births between 2001 and 2009, making the country one of the fastest in the world for reducing infant mortality.<sup>11</sup> Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita increased from \$499 (current United States dollars) to \$1,405 between 2007 and 2016.<sup>12</sup> Despite this notable progress in a relatively short time frame, the poverty rate remains high at about 42 percent (2014). Infrastructure remains underdeveloped, access to and quality of public services are constrained, food security is a major challenge and there is high unemployment, especially among youth. Over 70 percent of the country’s 1.2 million<sup>13</sup> people are under the age of 30. Young people aged 15-34 represent 77 percent of the unemployed adult population in the country.<sup>14</sup> The Government is conscious of the need to convert the youth bulge into a demographic dividend.

The economy is reliant on oil/gas and public spending. GDP growth fell in recent years, from 11.4 percent in 2007 to 5.7 percent in 2016<sup>15</sup> due to declining oil reserves and falling prices. According to the International Monetary Fund, Timor-Leste is the most oil-dependent economy in the world and economic diversification is urgent.<sup>16</sup>

The 2018 Human Development Report places Timor-Leste in the medium human development category, ranking it 132 of 188 countries and territories.<sup>17</sup> About 67 percent of the population live in rural areas.<sup>18</sup> Agriculture is the most important sector outside of the oil economy, as it provides subsistence to roughly 80 percent of the population and generates an average of 80 percent of non-oil exports.<sup>19</sup> However, low agricultural productivity combined with a lack of access to markets and inputs contributes to high food insecurity, particularly in rural areas. Limited access to water and lack of skills and knowledge of agricultural methods are underlying causes of low agricultural production. Floods, landslides and drought also affect domestic food production. About 74 percent of the rural population suffer from moderate to severe food insecurity.<sup>20</sup> Superstition and local traditions affect dietary practices, particularly consumption of protein. Some 28 percent of the population live in households without electricity connections and 25 percent live in households that lack sanitation and safe drinking water.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>7</sup> UNDP project document, page 7.

<sup>8</sup> Transparency International. [https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2017](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017) Accessed 23 August 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Based on the 2017 index, the best performing region is Western Europe with an average score of 66. The worst performing regions are sub-Saharan Africa (average score 32) and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (average score 34).

<sup>10</sup> Government of Timor-Leste and World Bank Group, *Poverty in Timor-Leste 2014*. [https://www.mof.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/012\\_TL\\_REPORT\\_R01.pdf](https://www.mof.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/012_TL_REPORT_R01.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> UNDP, Country programme action plan, 2015-2019.

<sup>12</sup> The World Bank Data, GDP per capita (current US\$): Timor-Leste: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=TL>.

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Timor-Leste, Population projection for 2017. <http://www.statistics.gov.tl/>.

<sup>14</sup> UNDP Timor-Leste, Timor-Leste National Human Development Report, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> World Bank, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/east-timor/gdp-growth-annual>.

<sup>16</sup> International Monetary Fund, *Public Information Notice: IMF Executive Board Concludes 2010 Article IV Consultation with the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste*, 8 March 2011. <http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/28/04/53/pn1131>, and 2017 Article IV Consultation – Press Release and Staff Report, December 2017.

<sup>17</sup> With a Human Development Index of 0.625 (2017 data). The National Human Development Report places Timor-Leste’s Human Development Index at 0.585 (2016 data).

<sup>18</sup> United Nations data – Timor-Leste: <http://data.un.org/en/iso/tl.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery: <http://gov.east-timor.org/MAFF/>.

<sup>20</sup> UNDP Timor-Leste, Country programme action plan 2015-2019.

<sup>21</sup> Government of Timor-Leste and World Bank Group, *Poverty in Timor-Leste 2014*: [https://www.mof.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/012\\_TL\\_REPORT\\_R01.pdf](https://www.mof.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/012_TL_REPORT_R01.pdf).

**Environment.** The topography of Timor-Leste makes it vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards. The country is exposed to multiple natural hazards including floods, coastal erosion, tsunamis, strong winds (cyclones), prolonged dry seasons (drought), earthquakes, landslides and forest fires. The most frequent hazard types in recent years include floods, landslides and drought, which affect domestic food production, the main source of livelihood for most Timorese.<sup>22</sup> It is estimated that 70 per cent of the population reside in ecologically fragile and disaster-prone rural areas. Although not explicit, the country's current development agenda and priorities recognize the serious threat of climate change and disaster risks. The country's disaster risk management system continues to be relief- and response-oriented and a comprehensive system encompassing disaster preparedness, response and mitigation is lacking.<sup>23</sup>

**Gender equality.** On the Global Gender Gap Index, Timor-Leste is ranked 128 of 144 countries.<sup>24</sup> Gender inequality is mainly reflected in women's low economic participation and high rate of gender-based violence (GBV). According to the country's 2015 Population and Housing Census, there is no significant disparity between female and male literacy rates (64 and 71 percent respectively). There is also no significant disparity between male and female enrolment in secondary education (30 and 36 percent).<sup>25</sup> However, the formal labour-force participation rate of women is only half that of men (about 22 percent for women aged 15-64 years compared to 40 percent for males).<sup>26</sup> Domestic violence is the most reported incident to the Vulnerable Persons Unit of the National Police.<sup>27</sup> To combat GBV, the Government launched the 2017-2021 National Action Plan against Gender-based Violence in 2017.<sup>28</sup>

In terms of political empowerment, Timor-Leste is among the top countries in the Asia-Pacific region to have advanced women in decision-making structures. The country is ranked 60 on the political empowerment index of the 2017 Global Gender Gap Index. In 2016, the Government introduced amendments to the national electoral laws to promote women's political participation, specifying that women candidates must account for 33 per cent of political parties' lists. Women held 38 per cent of parliamentary seats in 2017<sup>29</sup> and about 19 percent of ministerial positions.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.3 National development plan

The aim of the Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 is to transform Timor-Leste to an upper middle-income country with a healthy, well-educated and safe population by 2030. It is centred on four pillars: social capital; infrastructure development; economic development; and effective institutions. The social capital pillar focuses on building a healthy and educated society to address the social needs of the country and promote human development. It covers quality education, health, social inclusion, the environment and culture and heritage. Infrastructure development focuses on functioning roads, bridges, water and sanitation, electricity, ports, airports and telecommunications, to ensure that the country has a productive core infrastructure for sustainable development. Under the economic pillar, the focus is on rural development, agriculture, fisheries, petroleum, tourism and private-sector investment. The institutional framework covers cross-cutting issues such as security, defence, justice, public sector management and good governance, upon which the three other pillars are constructed. In 2013, Timor-Leste hosted an

<sup>22</sup> UNDP Timor-Leste, Country programme document, 2014.

<sup>23</sup> UNDP Timor-Leste, Strengthening Disaster Risk Management in Timor-Leste, project document, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Timor-Leste was not ranked in the 2015 UNDP Gender Inequality Index.

<sup>25</sup> General Directorate of Statistics (Timor-Leste), United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Population Fund, Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census 2015, Thematic Report Volume 11, Education Monograph 2017, 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Government of Timor-Leste, National Employment Strategy 2017-2030, June 2017.

<sup>27</sup> UN-Women, Timor-Leste: <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/timor-leste>.

<sup>28</sup> Government of Timor-Leste, Launch of the 2017-2021 National Action Plan against Gender-Based Violence, <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=18310&n=1&lang=en>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> World Economic Forum, The Global Gender Gap Report 2017, p. 320. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf).

international conference on the post-2015 development agenda which fed into the report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The Strategic Development Plan has been aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2017, following a Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) programme mission, the Government launched its road map for achieving the SDGs.

## 1.4 UNDP programme under review

Based on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the same period, the UNDP country programme 2015-2019 establishes a strategic framework for supporting national priorities under the Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 and the related five-year plan 2012-2017, which calls for a diversified, socially inclusive economy and recognizes climate change and environment as a key focus area. The country programme was aligned with the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. A further realignment was conducted in 2017 to address programmatic and operational issues such as phasing out of post-peacekeeping legacy programmes. The indicative five-year programme budget was set at \$75 million, of which \$48 million (64 percent) had been mobilized as of November 2018 (table 1). The country programme has three substantive components: resilience-building; sustainable development; and governance and institutional strengthening.

### 1.4.1. Resilience-building programme

The current programme builds upon national risk, hazard and fragility assessments undertaken in the previous country programme cycle. As recommended by the 2012 ICPE, it has incorporated a focus on policy advice and strengthening the frameworks and institutional capacities of the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment to implement disaster, climate and fragility risk management measures and to develop preparedness systems at national and sub-national levels. UNDP has offered support to training, information management and policy advice, with the objective of reducing the vulnerability of people living in areas threatened by climate change and building their resilience to shocks. Central to the outcomes of this approach would be a coherent national policy framework that promotes linkages between disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and the development and enforcement of building regulations. This would need to be accompanied by district-level actions on watershed management, floods, landslides and climate-proof small-scale infrastructure.

Other UNDP support in this thematic area has promoted sustainability through the National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change and national biodiversity strategies and action plans. To promote more inclusive and equitable social and environmental policies and address the drivers of

**TABLE 1. Country programme budget, in millions of United States dollars**

Programme component	Planned budget (2015-2019)	Actual budget (2015-2018)*	Expenditures (2015-2018)**
Resilience	16.7	12.2	9.7
Sustainable development	32.2	9.3	6.9
Governance and institutional strengthening	26.1	22.2	16.2
Total	75.0	48.1	32.8

\* Excludes \$4.5 million which is not linked to any outcome.

\*\* Excludes \$2.5 million which is not linked to any outcome.

Source: UNDP Corporate Planning System, November 2018

fragility, UNDP has supported the Ministry of Social Solidarity to align social cohesion measures to target women, youth, disabled persons and other vulnerable groups. UNDP has worked in collaboration with the World Bank, other development partners and with non-governmental and community-based organizations (NGOs/CBOs) at the district and community levels to strengthen government capacities in disaster and climate risk management. The UNDP initiative to support the g7+ secretariat<sup>31</sup> to expand cooperation between fragile States is expected to help to consolidate experiences and lessons learned on building resilience and sustainability.

The programme consists of four projects contributing to three output results, which in turn contribute to the results of one outcome (figure 1 below).

### 1.4.2. Sustainable development programme

According to the country programme document,<sup>32</sup> under this component UNDP aims to build upon current initiatives to ensure that the linkages between poverty reduction and environment are strengthened, in line with the recommendation of the last ICPE. UNDP work at the upstream policy level supports the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Secretary of State for Electricity to target the poorest and most vulnerable groups, especially women and youth, through sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, waste management and renewable energy. UNDP is also contributing to inter-agency efforts for improved nutrition and food security. Technical support at subnational levels is aimed at building systems and institutions to improve practices in agriculture and natural resource management within the framework of the Government's Strategic Development Plan. UNDP support for access to financial services in remote areas for creating jobs and promoting livelihoods focuses on scaling up national action to address the poverty-environment

nexus. UNDP is working closely with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment, the State Secretariat for the Support and Promotion of the Private Sector and financial sector institutions such as the Central Bank of Timor-Leste and National Commercial Bank of Timor-Leste to create jobs through income-generation solutions and management of natural resources, ecosystem services and waste management. UNDP support for the preparation of the fourth national human development report, which focused on youth, sought to contribute to research and policy advocacy

The programme consists of seven projects contributing to four output results, which in turn contribute to one outcome result (figure 1 below).

### 1.4.3. Governance and institutional strengthening programme

The UNDP Timor-Leste strategy on governance as reflected in its areas of support has generally maintained its focus between the previous (2009-2014) and current (2015-2019) country programmes. The key focus of both has been to strengthen the institutional capacities of key governance institutions. The current programme builds on the previous one with a focus on strengthening the capacity of key institutions, namely: justice institutions (courts, Legal Training and Judicial Centre, Office of the Prosecutor General, Public Defender's Office, National Police (Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste (PNTL)); electoral management bodies (National Commission on Elections; Technical Secretariat of Electoral Administration); and the Anti-Corruption Commission. The only new project that would be considered to have a different substantive focus is the support to the institutional development of the Oecusse regional administration. The latter is an area development focus project with a combined institutional development and livelihood development orientation. The previous programme included support to strengthening of Parliament,

<sup>31</sup> Timor-Leste has led the g7+, a global forum of countries that are or have been affected by conflict and are now in the transition to the next stage of development. The g7+ provides a platform for the countries to share experiences and learn from one another, and to advocate for reforms to the way the international community engages in conflict-affected States.

<sup>32</sup> UNDP, Timor-Leste country programme document (DP/DCP/TLS/2), 2014.



the Provedoria (Ombudsman) for Human Rights and Justice and the civil service, but this was discontinued under the current programme. The programme aims to contribute to outcome 3 of the UNDAF and has four outputs, the latter reflecting immediate results to be achieved under different governance projects on the justice sector (including police), anti-corruption, decentralization and local governance, and elections.

The governance programme is comprised of eight projects, of which six can be considered as “legacy” projects (figure 1). Except for local governance and decentralization, UNDP support to the justice sector, police and electoral assistance builds on support developed earlier in pursuit of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) and were included in the Joint Transition Plan of 2011.<sup>33</sup> A key distinction between the current and previous governance programmes is the shift in focus and implementation strategy adopted by the implementing institutions. In the case of the justice system, the approach was intended to shift from the provision of institution-specific to sector-wide support anchored around improving national capacities, the introduction of a district pilot approach and using an evidence-based approach.<sup>34</sup> The implementation approach for support to the PNTL was intended to shift from capacity substitution to developing national capacity, introduction of civilian capacity and service orientation to end users, and the introduction of a more decentralized approach. For electoral support, the approach shifted to an electoral-cycle approach with greater emphasis on reinforcing linkages with other governance areas such as Parliament, local development, strengthening gender equality and supporting the creation of an environment for inclusive political process through civic and voter education. Finally, the project on anti-corruption aimed to advance efforts towards developing an anti-corruption strategy and create broader public awareness of public accountability.

## 1.5 Data collection and analysis

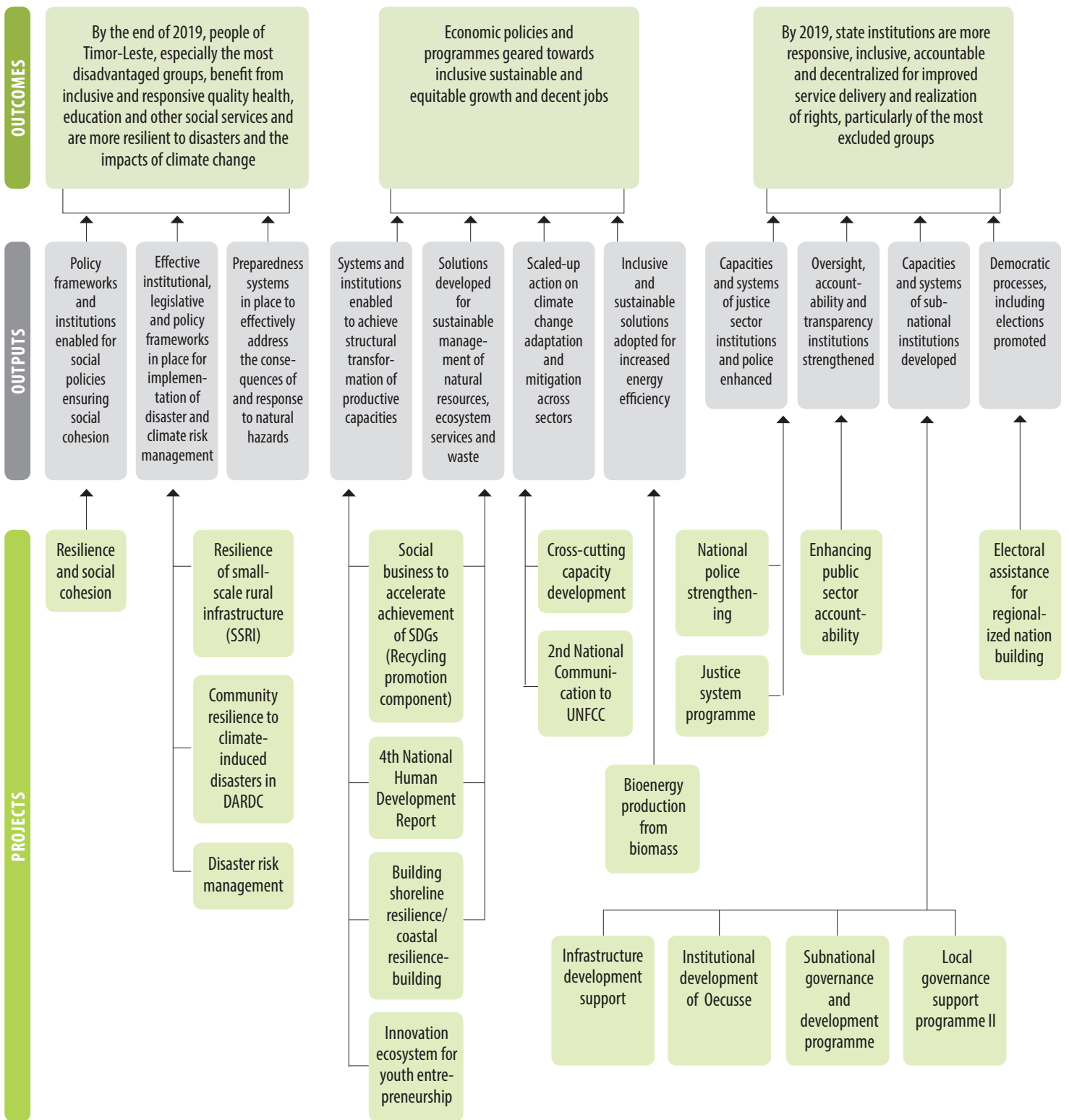
The evaluation aimed to address three main questions: (a) what did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?; (b) to what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?; and (c) what factors contributed to or hindered the performance of UNDP and eventually, the sustainability of results? The evaluation constructed an abridged theory of change to evaluate the country programme (figure 2). According to the theory of change, the country programme is based on the logic that a mix of high-level policy advice and implementation support in relevant national priority areas (resilience-building, sustainable development and governance and institutional strengthening) will result in the achievement of planned outputs and contribute to planned outcomes. This entails a process of institutional capacity strengthening. The theory of change does not link UNDP interventions directly to longer-term outcome results and establishes the country programme’s accountability ceiling at the level of intermediate outcomes. It is recognized that intermediate and long-term outcome results are the result of the collective efforts of multiple development actors and the country programme is solely accountable for the achievement of immediate outputs. Given that the country programme was at an early stage of implementation, compounded by limited attention to monitoring and evaluation of outcome results, many of the results attributed to the country programme are classified as output results.

The evaluation gathered information and data from multiple methods and sources including a desk review of available programme documents, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with programme managers, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The desk review covered background documents on the national context, strategic country programme documents, workplans and progress reports, monitoring self-assessments

<sup>33</sup> Joint Transition Plan: Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste, September 2011.

<sup>34</sup> UNDP, Consolidating the Rule of Law and Peace through a Strong Justice System in Timor-Leste, Project Document, pp 8-10, 2013.

**FIGURE 1. Results framework of the country programme**



such as the UNDP results-oriented annual reports, and evaluations conducted by the country office and partners. The main data collection mission to Timor-Leste was in August 2018. The aim of the mission was to understand stakeholders' views of the country programme's performance. Primary stakeholders consulted included government implementing partners, programme beneficiaries and UNDP staff. Other stakeholders included United Nations agencies, donors, civil society and private sector groups. In total, the evaluation consulted about 100 persons (annex 2). The evaluation team undertook field visits to three project locations to observe implementation status and consult beneficiaries. Information and data from these multiple sources were analysed and cross-verified to assess the performance and contribution of the country programme. The evaluation covered all 19 active and closed projects of the country programme.

The evaluation terms of reference are provided in annex 1. The list of documents consulted are listed in annex 3. The country programme outcome indicators are in annex 4. The evaluation was guided

by the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for the conduct of evaluations, adhering to the norms on impartiality, ethics and transparency.<sup>35</sup>

## 1.6 Limitations and challenges

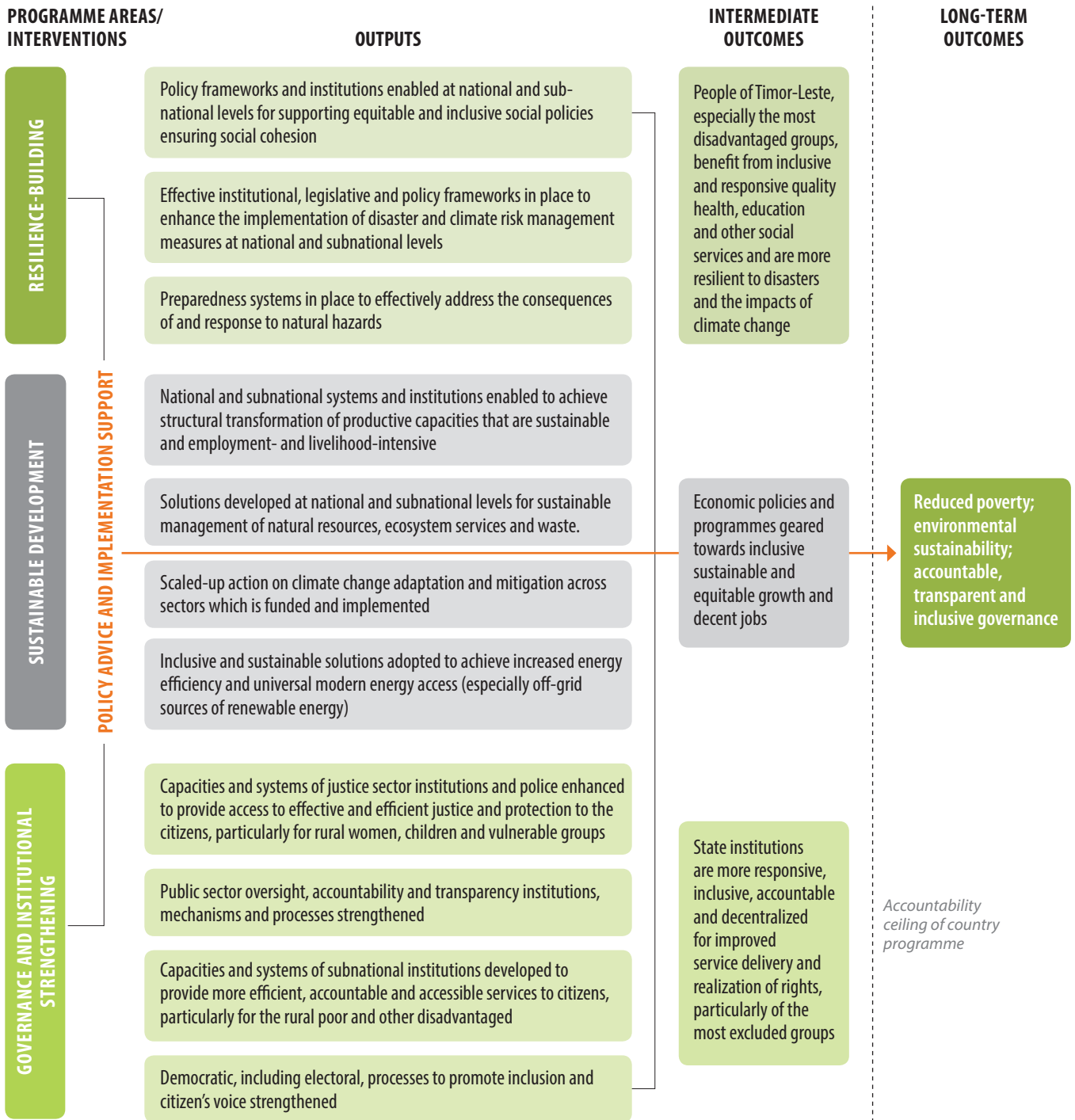
The previous evaluations of the country programme were all at project level and evidence on progress towards outcomes was not available. In addition, the evaluation's coverage of subnational-level project activities and participants is limited due to resource constraints and the spread of project locations. It also was not possible to consult all national-level project focal persons responsible for implementation and day-to-day project management since the ICPE was conducted soon after the parliamentary elections in May 2018 and, according to the country office, the high turnover in government (three governments in three years) and then ongoing government transition affected the availability of some project managers and senior government officials for interview by the evaluation team. The evaluation does not generalize its observations of project activities to all projects.

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<sup>35</sup> United Nations Evaluation Group, 'Norms and Standards for Evaluation', 2016.



**FIGURE 2. Abridged theory of change of the country programme**







# CHAPTER 2

## FINDINGS

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**This chapter presents the evaluation findings** in line with the three broad evaluation questions. The first section covers the **effectiveness of the country programme** under the three programmatic pillars of the country programme 2015-2019, namely resilience-building, sustainable development, and governance and institutional strengthening. This discussion also includes the programme's contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The second section considers the **sustainability of the results** to which UNDP contributes. The third section covers the **factors affecting the performance of the country programme**.

## 2.1 Findings on effectiveness

### 2.1.1 Resilience programme

**Finding 1.** While the intended output results focused on community-level infrastructure and land stabilization have been delivered satisfactorily, the upstream results of interventions are unlikely to be delivered within the three- or four-year duration of UNDP projects.

The main projects under this programme have delivered, with participation from communities and local administrative bodies, substantial amounts of small-scale infrastructure. This has included in particular clean water and irrigation systems and a broad range of environmental management projects. The latter have included such measures as check dams, slope stabilization and reforestation. On the other hand, acts and policies have been held up by political uncertainty and government changes. The creation of a Disaster Risk Management Act is in progress. There is a lag in approval due to a government freeze, creating political uncertainty. In the meantime, further revision of this policy has been recommended to harmonize with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Similarly, the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), developed with UNDP support to provide the institutional mechanism, legal arrangements and provisions to mainstream climate change into development by integrating it into sectoral priorities, has not been tabled by the Government for approval by the Council of Ministers. Gender, demographic strata, socioeconomic elements, a human rights-based approach and institutional

arrangements form the core of the NCCP Conceptual Framework. The ability of municipalities and *sucos* (administrative posts, formerly subdistricts) to increase resilience by adopting enhanced approaches to environmental management and to promote livelihood improvement at community level has been restrained by the same factors. More fundamentally, these levels of government are severely constrained by limited budgets and inadequate human resources. Underlying the relatively limited progress of upstream results is the fact that these need a longer time frame than do relatively straightforward infrastructure deliverables and are unlikely to be delivered within the common three- or four-year duration of UNDP projects financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The following sections analyse the progress and results achieved by subcomponent.

#### **Disaster and climate risk management**

Rural populations of Timor-Leste are exposed to hazards including flash floods, landslides, soil erosion, coastal flooding and drought. In addition, small-scale rural infrastructure, which is essential to the development of rural communities, is failing due to anthropogenic factors such as poor, non-climate-resilient design, poor application of infrastructure construction standards and the limited investment in operations and maintenance. The "strengthening resilience of small-scale rural infrastructure and local government systems to climate variability and risk" (SSRI) project, implemented between 2013 and 2017, aimed to address climate-induced problems, particularly in areas that are drought-prone and vulnerable to extreme rainfall events, which make it increasingly difficult for local administrations to

supply and maintain critical small-scale infrastructure for rural communities, leading to measurable reductions in household income, increased food insecurity and health issues. The project also seeks to address climate-induced threats caused by the slowly decreasing protective and water storage functions of ecosystems due to over-exploitation of forest and coastal areas resulting in rapid deforestation. The SSRI project supported the Ministry of State Administration and Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment to implement climate-resilient rural infrastructure projects in a socially and environmentally acceptable manner, and to develop institutional and human capacities at national and subnational levels (local communities and municipalities). The project worked in the three municipalities of Baucau, Ermera and Liquica to integrate climate resilience into the planning and implementation of district development investment plans projects.

According to the country office, 20 small-scale climate-resilient infrastructures—mainly water facilities, irrigation system, bridges, river protection/gabion and roads—were constructed and rehabilitated, reaching 80 percent of the total target. Around 84,976 people (51 percent female) in the three municipalities are now accessing clean water, health centres, schools and other basic services. Complementary bioengineering/vegetation work has also contributed to building resilience of the community and infrastructure against climate-induced natural disasters. More than 50,000 community members were engaged in all the project implementation cycles, which cultivated their sense of ownership of the infrastructure.<sup>36</sup>

As reported by the project's midterm review (MTR), the project had been adequate in terms of implementation of small-scale infrastructure projects. However, the technical basis for the project's vulnerability assessment work was weak and capacity development for government technical staff was ad hoc and did not fall under a coherent framework to

ensure sustainable transfer of skills. In terms of co-financing and parallel financing, the MTR noted that the project was not reporting on the in-kind contributions and parallel financing totalling more than \$50 million predicted in the original project document. The support provided was a small fraction of the amount intended.

The Ministry of State Administration is the major government partner for disaster and climate risk management activities. Although the SSRI project fit well with existing government programmes, current stakeholders in the Ministry were not well-informed concerning its design process. They indicated that national counterparts initially were not fully aware of the project's intentions and that it took some time for them to realize the importance of climate-resilient design in local-level infrastructure. However, after implementation had proceeded for some time, Government was sufficiently satisfied to request collaboration with UNDP in designing an extension. With technical support from the UNDP Regional Office in Bangkok, a concept paper has been submitted to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for support. This process ran well and there was good information-sharing between UNDP, the Ministry of State Administration, Department of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and the Directorate of Disaster Risk Management in the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

A positive aspect of SSRI implementation was the location of its project management unit in the Ministry of State Administration. This was seen as helping with staff capacity-building, as staff were able to learn by doing, for example by incorporating climate-resilient design aspects into bills of quantity for infrastructure. There was also training for local contractors, who were not familiar with climate change as a factor in bidding for infrastructure contracts. The Government supported the project by paying ministry staff from its budget, rather than from project funds.

A second project, "strengthening community resilience to climate-induced disasters in the Dili to

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<sup>36</sup> UNDP Timor-Leste, Results-oriented Annual Report, 2017.



Ainaro road development corridor" (DARDC),<sup>37</sup> aims to protect critical economic infrastructure from climate-induced natural hazards (flooding, landslides, wind damage). Limited road infrastructure is identified as a constraint to economic development, particularly in rural areas. The Government is investing in transport infrastructure as a basis for securing the country's long-term development goals. The DARDC project, implemented between 2014 and 2018, was developed to overcome barriers to building smart, climate-resilient infrastructure through the delivery of three integrated and complementary components: (a) support the integration of climate change adaptation into national development strategies and sector plans by strengthening knowledge and awareness of climate-induced disasters; (b) strengthen subnational-level disaster risk management, taking climate change into account; and (c) protect road infrastructure in the Dili-Ainaro corridor from climate-induced disasters by delivering watershed-based resilience measures.<sup>38</sup> DARDC is implemented in parallel to the World Bank-funded "Building Climate and Disaster Resilience in Communities" (BCDRP) project. Both projects aim to increase the resilience of communities to climate-induced disasters within the Dili-Ainaro and Linked Road Corridors through capacity development of communities and by delivering community-based disaster risk management measures. The DARDC project also has the broader objective of strengthening the capacity of national and local disaster risk management systems and stakeholders, and of increasing resilience through the integrated district development planning process and land-use and watershed approaches.

The country office earlier reported progress mainly in watershed management and climate-resilient infrastructure development. Its 2017 annual report stated that around 20,000 people were by then covered by community-level water-

shed management measures as a result of reforestation completed on some 1,160 hectares of protected land in four villages, using 30,555 prepared seedlings. More than 200 check dams and slope stabilization had been constructed to address water and soil erosion in the area. These activities had indirectly benefited more than 5,000 households (50 percent women) by protecting their land and properties.<sup>39</sup> Subsequent country office reporting<sup>40</sup> has indicated additional progress on the three intended project outcomes as



## RELATED OUTCOMES

**Outcome 1:** A national consultant has been recruited for disaster risk management policy review to integrate the Sendai Framework, the manual for community-based disaster risk management has been revised and community-level training is ongoing.

**Outcome 2:** The second phase of top-up grant implementation (seven projects) is near completion in the project site. The selection process for the community grants scheme has been completed and contract agreements with selected NGOs or community groups are expected to be signed by the District Administrator by the end of July. Early warning system equipment is being installed in eight locations.

<sup>37</sup> Summary derived from the midterm review of the UNDP-GEF-Least Developed Countries Fund-Government of Timor-Leste project, "Strengthening Community Resilience to Climate-induced disasters in the Dili to Ainaro Road Development Corridor, Timor-Leste", August 2017.

<sup>38</sup> An additional benefit is expected to be reduced road maintenance requirements and costs, which will help with an area of challenge to central and local government.

<sup>39</sup> The country office has since provided the following updated figures: 470+ check dams and 100,000+ seedlings in the last year.

<sup>40</sup> Project Quarterly Progress Report, 2nd Quarter 2018.

**Outcome 3:** The standard operating procedure for watershed management has been finalized and approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The proposal for preparing 100,000 nurseries in Aileu and Ainaro has been completed. A national bamboo strategy is being drafted by an international consultant to the Bamboo Institute, supported by UNDP, and procurement of bamboo machinery is under way.

The project's MTR noted a lack of a shared vision among the numerous stakeholders, leading to incoherent interventions lacking an overall direction. A top-down approach led to limited local ownership, threatening sustainability of results. The initial plan to have two complementary projects side by side did not work. Despite the obvious complementarity between the World Bank BCDRP initiative and the DARDC project seeking to increase the resilience of communities to climate-induced disasters within the Dili-Ainaro corridor, there has been very little complementarity between the two initiatives since the start of the implementation phase.

As noted by the MTR, the original project document indicated that 88 percent of the total funds required to achieve the project objectives would come from co-financing. This included \$20 million from the parallel World Bank project, which is ineligible for inclusion in this category under GEF rules, and more than \$13 million from the two government ministries involved. These contributions appear not to have been tracked and actual amounts received, including in-kind contributions, are much smaller than predicted in the project document.

Key ministry stakeholders identified the SSRI and DARDC projects as playing an important role in promoting linkages between decentralization, service provision and climate resilience. The DARDC

project has built on some of lessons of the completed SSRI project and may be continued through a further phase, possibly using World Bank funding.

The DARDC approach of building community capacities to plan and implement small-scale infrastructure projects through small grants is seen as sound. The parallel World Bank project is less well integrated with the Ministry, since its funding to communities is operated by the NGO Plan International. Under the UNDP project, funds are channelled through national and local development programmes and are transferred directly from central government to municipality accounts and from there to the *sucos*, which are supporting community-level projects.

The partnership with UNDP is reported to have been limited by the weak funding base of the UNDP country office. The collaboration on the proposal to the GCF is an example of how this financial limitation can be overcome by trying to access institutions with a stronger funding base. From the perspective of this Ministry, UNDP has shown a stronger interest in decentralization than have bigger funders such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia). This gives UNDP an advantage as a partner, since it is more in tune with government intentions.

A field trip by the evaluation team to one community found that a clean water project had provided water to standpipes in a previously unserved community. The project also provided nursery-reared plants for reforestation around rehabilitated roads. However, the bamboo seedlings were supplied several months late and all died. Training in water system maintenance was to have been provided to a community team, but this was not undertaken by the sanitation department, so the community claimed limited capacity to maintain the system. Some check dams constructed two years previously were said to be already damaged and non-functional. Community representatives also expressed the need for a local by-law on how to use the water system and to provide sanctions against damaging it. This evidence from direct contact with local stakeholders illustrates the range of challenges which can be encountered in projects relying on delivery from local government

institutions, in association with community organizations. However, it is not possible to estimate the prevalence of such challenges across the areas served by the project on the basis of this limited evidence.

Issues with maintenance and sustainability were also raised by the municipality visited, which proposed that UNDP support needs to continue to ensure that community projects can be sustained. Further, the project had supported projects in only 6 of the 32 *sucos* in the municipality and now other *sucos* are asking when UNDP will finance their needs. Challenges were also reported with slow fund flows through the government system.<sup>41</sup> An additional limitation was perceived to be the relatively short duration of the project's collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, since the reforestation plants will take four to five years to mature while the funding is for only three years.

UNDP country office stakeholders feel that the "top-up" approach of grants for community-implemented projects under DARDC has proved to be broadly successful. However, they are concerned as to whether the Government will take over and implement activities on a larger scale. This challenge arises partly because they see the original GEF project design as substantially overambitious, in view of the highly exaggerated co-financing predicted in the project document (\$37.3 million).

### **Resilience and social cohesion**

Timor-Leste managed to restore peace and stability after the 2006 internal crisis; however, a fragility assessment conducted in 2012 as part of the implementation of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States revealed the remaining challenges and potential threats that could destabilize the national development process. The key risk factors identified by the assessment included high unemployment, particularly among youth; legal and policy uncertainty around land issues; urban/rural disparities; persistent poverty; high reliance on oil; and weak justice institutions. Social cohesion was regarded as

a factor limiting resilience. The country programme developed the "resilience and social cohesion" project aiming to consolidate and further strengthen capacities within the Government to maintain and deepen resilience and social cohesion across the nation. It builds on a previous project, implemented between 2011 and 2013, which supported the institutional capacity development of the newly created Department of Peace-building and Social Cohesion.

About one third of the anticipated budget of \$2 million was not funded, while over \$500,000 million was received from the Government of Japan. The project was to have been completed in 2017, but the latest available progress report was from 2015. This lists project activities as "security meetings, forum theatres for conflict prevention, training on dialogue facilitations for community leaders, the youth and women representatives in eight municipalities". The report focuses mainly on inputs and to some extent on outputs, on the basis of which it is not possible to assess progress towards the objective, although substantial constraints are reported, which suggests limitations.

## **2.1.2 Sustainable development programme**

### **Support to jobs and livelihoods creation**

**Finding 2.** UNDP supported the Government with advocacy, evidence and advice in improving the enabling environment for economic diversification and in enhancing the entrepreneurship capacities of youth, fostering the development of social business and improving financial inclusion. Overall, much more needs to be done nationally in terms of systematization of vocational training for youth, certification, support for business creation and financial support.

The Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 prioritizes the development of rural communities with a special focus on job creation by encouraging private sector development that enhances the contribution of the small and medium enterprises sector in the economy. The Government and UNDP have

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<sup>41</sup> The country office has indicated that these fund-flow issues are linked to the specific circumstances of government instability during the project implementation period and that they may not be long-term.



been collaborating to mobilize the private sector to contribute to development by setting up social businesses and through partnership agreements to provide business development services.

Support for social business was introduced in the previous country programme through the “mobilize social business to accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” project. The project, implemented between 2012 and 2015, aimed to promote high-impact social enterprises that would contribute to the reduction of poverty in rural Timor-Leste and generate rural employment and income. There were two intended outputs: (a) the impact and performance of social business in accelerating achievement of the MDGs is enhanced; and (b) social businesses’ access to financing opportunities is improved. According to the project’s final report, 240 of a planned 300 persons were employed by three social businesses supported by the project. At the level of institutional strengthening, it is reported that the partnership between UNDP and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment adopted a combination of various development approaches ranging from policy advisory services for the creation of an enabling/conducive policy environment, to a business incubator approach to encourage new and innovative ideas, to establishing access to financial resources.<sup>42</sup> The project also explored ways to enhance social enterprise activities of the private sector with Timor Global, a major private firm in Timor-Leste. The project explored how to utilize this private firm to help local farmers by purchasing local agricultural products as a potential and stable buyer.

A successor project with the same name commenced in mid-2016 and with substantially less funding, supported at a low level by the Government of New Zealand. In 2017, a loosely related business-oriented project, “youth innovation and entrepreneurship” (“Knua”) commenced, again with a relatively low budget, this time from UNDP funds. This project has been funded by UNDP regional funds

at the level of \$350,000. Attempts to raise additional funds had not been successful by the time of this evaluation. Uptake of these activities was hindered by political instability and change, which made a government resource commitment impossible. Given these circumstances, UNDP and donors were unable to commit major additional support, but focused on continuing current activities at a low level and positioning themselves for future interventions. By mid-2018, a one-stop-shop youth entrepreneurship and innovation hub named Knua Juventude Fila-Liman was developed and established. The centre provided training and other empowerment activities to around 1,500 youth, of whom 19 are now entrepreneurs, eight are now employed and others have gained knowledge and skills related to innovation, business development, research, leadership and related topics. The first integrated e-market platform connecting supply to demand for jobs as well as product and services was also established.<sup>43</sup> The project has not generated the expected funding support, owing largely to instability of government support, and is now seeking international backers.

The Knua project has been supported through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Telemor, a private telecommunications company operating nationally. It has provided free Internet access for the youth centre for the last two years, as well as technical support and supervision. Although its MoU covers three areas—Internet provision, creation of a job portal and e-marketing—only the first has been requested and implemented by UNDP, although Telemor retains its interest in supporting the other two elements.

The Knua project has emerged as a flagship activity for UNDP using a platform approach and linking research, upstream policy development and a downstream service delivery pilot. While the aim of the pilot is to have the Government adopt the initiative, it currently faces major challenges in terms of scaling up its effects to help generate sustainable

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<sup>42</sup> UNDP Timor-Leste, Final Report, Mobilize Social Business to Accelerate Achievement of Timor-Leste’s MDGs project, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> UNDP Timor-Leste staff.

youth businesses at any scale. This would require a substantial scale-up of the current project or preparation and committed funding for a larger follow-up activity. The country office has engaged the seventh and eighth Constitutional Governments in addition to the main bilateral donors in pursuit of this objective, but proposals have been held up by the current political impasse and absence of decisions regarding the potential future State budget.

The Ministry of Youth appreciates the progress made by UNDP on the promotion of youth entrepreneurship but is also aware of underlying structural impediments to youth entrepreneurship. In particular, it notes the unrealistic expectation of most small businesses that they will be able to obtain government contracts once they are trained and licensed. The few private sector companies do not generate such opportunities and do not seem likely to expand on a large scale in the foreseeable future. The creation of a National Development Bank is also seen as an essential step in creating impetus for small-scale private sector operations.

### **Support to acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals**

**Finding 3.** Although the UNDP support has made a major contribution to enabling the SDGs to become nationally defined and scoped, the Government is looking to UNDP for continued support, particularly provision of tools, sharing of experiences from elsewhere and information technology (IT) support, particularly in terms of innovation.

During the current country programme period, UNDP provided a variety of support on a non-project basis to help the Government conceptualize and set in motion its approach to achieving the SDGs.

Timor-Leste has shown great commitment to the development and implementation of the SDGs both internationally and nationally. In support of this process, UNDP engaged a MAPS mission. According to the dedicated website, MAPS engagements are envisioned as a one-year investment in missions, initiatives and support packages. As agreed by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and tailored to

country demand, these country- or subnational-level engagements might include scoping and preparatory analytic work; partnership and capacity-building workshops; consultancy support; focused dialogues with government and stakeholders; assistance with programme development and resource mobilization; facilitation and inception of forums, country platforms and SDG innovation labs; and the co-development of solutions, key accelerators and road maps with Governments and other stakeholders.

In the case of Timor-Leste, the MAPS support helped the country to develop an SDG Road Map (April 2017) that links the goals and priorities of the national Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 with the SDGs and describes the steps, methodologies and institutional coordination necessary for the implementation of measures necessary to achieve the SDGs. The SDG targets have been mapped against the national 20-year Strategic Development Plan, and selected SDGs were used directly in budgeting for 2017. The road map was approved by the Council of Ministers in May 2017, becoming an official policy document. UNDP advocacy and technical assistance to the Prime Minister's office played an important role in setting the agenda in terms of determining priorities for government expenditures moving forward.

The government partner for engagement on the SDGs is the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister, known as UPMA, which was created in 2015. The UPMA reports that its support from UNDP began in 2016 with the provision of a technical adviser under the MAPS engagement, to help with SDG alignment and contextualization. The process was participatory and involved line ministries, civil society and other development partners. These consultations enabled development of the SDG Road Map, which identifies SDG goals, targets and indicators to be aligned with the Strategic Development Plan. In the second phase of this work, sectoral plans will be devised and which will incorporate the SDGs based on the road map. The third phase will entail refining of the indicators and identifying data sources.

According to UPMA team, the SDG Road Map is widely used and budget discussions focus on the

contribution to SDGs. UNDP support was instrumental in localizing the SDGs and advising on which SDGs to be prioritized. UNDP also coordinated and ensured involvement of other United Nations agencies in the process. For example, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provided technical assistance on gender and child rights and the World Health Organization worked directly with the Ministry of Health, providing analysis on health and nutrition.

The UPMA co-chairs the working group on public financial management. The goal is to have a development partners' subcommittee. UPMA work is leading to a one-plan, one-budget approach to activities targeting achievement of the SDGs, but with regard to the United Nations system in the country, it claimed to receive little information on who is doing what and suggested a need for improved United Nations coordination. For example, UPMA is working with municipalities on programme budgeting. UNDP is also working with them but UPMA reported having limited information on what they are doing in this field. Since the future role of UPMA itself in relation to other government planning bodies has not been clarified, it may be that other bodies have been more closely engaged with UNDP work. However, it is evident that while UNDP may have a range of comparative strengths (technical expertise, analysis, etc.), these are not sufficiently known by all government bodies to which they would be relevant. The capacity of the United Nations system, including UNDP, needs to be more visible in the Prime Minister's Office and UPMA. The UPMA also suggested that more regular engagement of UNDP at the political level could facilitate and expedite much of the policy work done by United Nations agencies.

During the period covered by the ICPE, UNDP played a major supporting role for a development finance assessment for the country, which aimed to strengthen the financial basis for delivering against the SDGs and the Strategic Development Plan. The concept of UNDP coordinating the SDG support of the UNCT has already been mooted, with UNDP intending to provide an SDG platform, potentially covering such areas as data collection and analysis.

However, to date there has been no strong impetus from other United Nations agencies in support of this concept and it appears they would prefer to continue to work on an individual basis, targeting SDGs for which they have a specific comparative advantage.

An underlying challenge with regard to UNDP continuing support to the SDGs in Timor-Leste concerns the country office's fragile human resource and funding base. The MAPS support came from outside of the country office's resources and was at a high policy and strategy level. However, country office funding is limited and largely derived from the green sector, which makes it difficult to use as a driver for the country office's support for the SDGs as a whole. There appears to be no major SDG support project in the offing, which could enable the introduction of high-level specialist staffing. The core staffing consists largely of non-senior national officers, volunteers and interns who are not sufficiently senior to play a major role in further development of approaches to implement government SDG-related programmes. Furthermore, the sustainable development component of the country programme has been severely compromised by drastic budget shortfalls. Against its indicative budget of about \$32 million, it now has an actual budget of \$9 million and at the time of the evaluation mission only \$6 million had been spent. This suggests that unless there is a substantial financial revival, the country office will not be strongly positioned to play a major role in furthering implementation of activities and programmes targeting the SDGs.

### **Renewable energy**

**Finding 4.** UNDP support to improved access to clean bioenergy did not fully achieve planned targets. Aside from project implementation delays and constraints, interest in renewable energy has been seriously compromised by increased conventional power generation capacity and subsidized electricity provision to consumers. However, the modest results attained will contribute to the overall goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions over the medium to long term.

The GEF-funded project, "promoting sustainable bioenergy production from biomass," implemented

between 2014 and 2018, was developed to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through removal of barriers to sustainable production and utilization of biomass resources in Timor-Leste and application of biomass energy technologies to support local economic, environmental and social development.

The objective of the project was to enhance the capacity of relevant public and private stakeholders, developing policy and legal bioenergy frameworks for the promotion of energy-efficient, low-carbon end-use appliances and scaling-up of 20,000 improved cookstoves in the country, expected to generate benefits with regard to household health and to help reduce deforestation. It was to assist the Government of Timor-Leste in mainstreaming sustainable biomass energy in policy formulation and thereby help in mitigating the national emission of greenhouse gases resulting from deforestation and the use of non-renewable biomass resources. The project was expected to help increase Timor-Leste's access to clean bioenergy and create employment through inclusive businesses.

The evaluation team received self-assessed progress reports up until mid-2016, which focused on inputs and to some extent outputs. The milestone for the total number of people with improved access to energy is 60,000; however, only 4,000 households or around 28,000 people (average seven people per household) have accessed improved cookstoves produced with UNDP support.<sup>44</sup> The bio-briquette production faced long delays due to the limited local capacities in operating the bio-briquette machine recently purchased by the local NGO with UNDP support. Although this represents only 47 percent of the total target, it will contribute to mitigating the country's greenhouse gas emissions while addressing local environmental issues such as indoor air pollution.

A GEF Project Implementation Review rated the project's performance as moderately satisfactory and noted a high level of risk to its long-term objective.

These risks related to a number of challenges in Timor-Leste for promotion of biomass energy solutions. Lack of technical capacity in the country, lack of a regulatory regime supporting environmental management and lack of market-based approaches for technology solutions remain key challenges associated with implementation of the project. Slow uptake of the proposed solutions by stakeholders, in particular changing the mindset of the implementing partners from a complete grant-based approach to market-based solutions, is a major obstacle which the project tried to address in the reporting period. Lack of associated data is also very evident in the country.

The project to promote sustainable energy, specifically biogas, received a GEF System for Transparent Allocation of Resources ("STAR") allocation of \$1.7 million, plus \$600,000 from UNDP. The co-financing proposed in the project document was \$6 million. UNDP staff who have been implementing the project referred to the huge array of targets and indicators for the project, which are far beyond what could be delivered with the available funds. The project also suffered from changes in policy associated with a new Government. When the project was designed, the country had little energy surplus, interest in renewables was high and huge targets were set. Since then, two new conventional power plants have been built, capable of producing a major surplus of energy supply over demand. The main electricity networks have greatly expanded and supply power at subsidized prices to consumers. In the light of these events, biogas production became of marginal interest and the biogas centre was abandoned.

With GEF funding, UNDP supported Timor-Leste to prepare its second communication under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The report on its intended nationally determined contributions to the twenty-second Conference of the Parties to the Convention was completed. The report notes that although Timor-Leste is a negligible contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, it has already explored such areas as renewable energy programmes to provide

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<sup>44</sup> UNDP Timor-Leste, Results-oriented Annual Report, 2017.



alternative energy sources such as solar home lighting systems to primarily rural populations. It also references the work supported by UNDP and GEF on efficient cookstoves, the use of biomass resources and in the forest/land degradation sectors.

### **Management of natural resources**

**Finding 5.** Progress on mangrove protection and rehabilitation has been marginal due to several contextual constraints. The limited experience and capacities of community-based implementing bodies, limited budgets and experience of local authorities and the weak legal framework for mangrove protection hindered project implementation.

Approximately 40 percent of Timor-Leste's population live in coastal areas. Over the past two decades, mangroves, which serve as a natural defence against the sea, have been severely degraded, leaving the country's shoreline and coastal communities vulnerable to coastal inundation, erosion, saltwater intrusion and impacts of sea-borne natural hazards (e.g., waves, storm surges and in extreme cases, small-scale tsunamis). The objective of the GEF-funded project, "building shoreline resilience of Timor-Leste to protect local communities and their livelihoods" (2016-2018) is to strengthen resilience of coastal communities by the introduction of nature-based approaches to coastal protection.

In the first half of 2018, the integrated coastal adaptation strategic plan of Timor-Leste was launched with support from the project. Mangrove restoration and coastal ecosystem protection and conservation work continued in degraded mangroves areas and 600 hectares of exposed mangrove sites were fenced through community participation. Gender sensitization workshops in more than 20 *sucos* and gender mainstreaming training for project staff and partner experts were also undertaken. Training on livelihoods improvement and mangrove restoration was provided to local communities to contribute to sustainable benefits to local communities and conservation of mangroves and other critical coastal ecosystems.

The project's latest progress report notes significant challenges, particularly with regard to mangrove

protection and rehabilitation, which are the major focus of the project. Planned activities such as mangrove restoration and protection and strengthening of coastal community livelihoods require intensive presence of strong local CBOs or NGOs. In the absence of such partners, the project is working with local authorities and communities through providing intensive capacity-building interventions. The demand to receive an incentive for each and every engagement by both by local experts and communities is a big challenge to move forward in the implementation of activities. Moreover, limited coordination and collaboration between some local authorities and government institutions remain a major challenge hindering project performance.

The country office has informed the ICPE team that the responsible Minister at the time of project preparation was engaged in the preparation process. Despite this involvement, the Government has not been able to meet its contribution, which was put at an unrealistically high level. The lead partner for the project, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, has a relatively small budget and could not meet the co-financing amount stated in the project document (\$31 million). Different departments and ministries have contributed to the project over time, all of which should be counted as co-financing. Field officers work with no charge to the project and the Ministry has provided mangrove plants, trained communities and decided on mangrove areas for protection. The Ministry also offered the project office space but it was too small, so the team works from the UNDP office. UNDP staff working on GEF projects have the impression that the project documents count any other potential or actual projects or government activities as co-financing and that this level of inputs, whether in cash or kind, is never available during implementation. This can give rise to substantial disconnect between the results intended to be delivered through the total "aspirational budget" approved by the GEF Council and those which can actually be delivered with the financing achieved, which is usually mainly the GEF budget plus a small contribution from UNDP and varying levels of in-kind contributions from national stakeholders.

The UNDP staff managing and overseeing the project are aware that it faces substantial challenges, particularly with regard to mangrove restoration. The NGOs engaged have little capacity to deliver functioning community groups and it has proven difficult to prevent people from continuing to cut mangroves for firewood and income. More importantly, there are many “higher level” forces active in mangrove destruction. These include the expansion of roads and ports, oil exploration and large-scale shrimp farms. All of these activities are licensed and appear to have no restrictions in terms of their interaction with mangroves. Furthermore, unregulated settlement is focused on coastal areas, making them more vulnerable to ecological damage and disasters.

The evaluation team conducted a field visit to *Suco Sabule*, within Matinaro Administration, to gain a basic understanding of field-level issues concerning the project, particularly those associated with mangrove restoration and protection. A number of small women’s groups were encountered, supervised by a national NGO. The initial focus had been on developing livelihood activities, mainly connected with sale of foodstuffs and handicrafts along the main road. The groups appeared to be very new and the livelihoods produced to date marginal. The next stage was said to be familiarization of the communities with mangrove protection and their role in it. In this respect, local stakeholders reported that important people in Dili send teams with trucks to cut down mangrove trees to take to the city for sale as firewood. Furthermore, the project fences could not be set back as far from the mangroves as intended because military personnel claimed to own the land required. At municipality level, the importance of raising livelihoods of coastal communities was stressed, as well as the need to socialize communities on the importance of mangroves. The intention to continue working with those *sucos* supported by UNDP was signalled, hopefully with support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries at municipality level. The major challenge was expressed as scaling-up, which was seen to require national-level budget discussions

with the participating ministries. Some reservations were also raised concerning the Department of Forestry, which is reported to be still chopping down mangroves and forests, rather than taking a strong line on protection.

### 2.1.3 Governance and institutional strengthening programme

#### Support to the justice system

**Finding 6.** UNDP has progressively contributed to developing the capacity of the justice sector including the police, in the effective administration of justice. This has been made possible through the adoption, utilization and implementation of improved systems, management practices and institutionalized capacity development and training for the judiciary and the police.

The UNDP-supported Justice System Programme is one of the legacy projects of the country programme, having been launched in 2003. The objective of the programme is to develop the institutional and human capacities of the Timorese justice sector. The last ICPE (2012) found that the programme had contributed significantly to improving the capacity of the justice sector capacity. The programme is currently in its fourth phase covering the period 2014 to 2018.

**Organizational development.** Despite some previous technical and recurring issues, justice sector institutions have adopted and increasingly utilized an integrated case management system which has contributed to improved efficiency and effective management in the administration of justice. The Ministry of Justice has successfully taken ownership and responsibility for its operation and management. These improvements have been complemented by the adoption and implementation of an inspectoral system introduced within the Office of the Prosecutor General, leading to an improved internal disciplinary system that has helped to create vitality and efficiency in the functioning of the office. As a result, productivity in the Prosecution Service has increased as reflected in the reduction of the case backlog. Between 2015 and 2016, years for which data are available, the

case backlog was reduced by 27 percent from 4,037 to 2,934.<sup>45</sup>

Justice institutions have also demonstrated increased capability to adapt improved management practices to enhance internal efficiency and aid decision-making. As early as 2015, the Office of the Prosecutor General has adopted rules and principles to determine the minimum level of productivity per national prosecution. Judicial and financial audits were conducted at the district office to assess the performance of prosecutors and clerks. In 2016, the UNDP-supported Justice System Programme examined the district courts' practices for scheduling mobile court sessions to assess cost efficiency.

Similar efforts have been undertaken by the PNTL to strengthen its management and administrative capacity. UNDP helped introduce a number of tools and systems improvement to PNTL at both the national and district levels. These included an institutional diagnostic assessment of the PNTL planning capability, which helped to inform the development of the new PNTL Strategic Plan, 2019-2030 and its link with the budget. UNDP also helped to develop and introduce a fleet management system. This has optimized and improved maintenance and management of the PNTL fleet of vehicles, as well as fuel management and procurement. As a result of improved scheduling, the number of PNTL vehicles maintained in-house has increased with 29 percent of all fleet vehicles now maintained according to governance guidelines, resulting in an overall reduction of maintenance costs.<sup>46</sup> Complementing this is an effort to develop a standard vehicle allocation ratio to determine the maximum number of vehicles that PNTL needs to enable it to operate efficiently and effectively. Finally, UNDP has introduced a management dashboard as a tool for evidence-based decision-making. At the time of the evaluation, the PNTL was conducting awareness-raising and training at the district level prior to its planned introduction at the district level. A pilot

functional review of the PNTL district office in Baucau was likewise completed in 2016 and helped to inform capacity development. These various initiatives have contributed to improved operational and management effectiveness of the PNTL. Since the police are people's very first point of contact with the justice system, an efficient and effective police system is key to the effective administration and rule of law.

Notable in the UNDP support to the organizational development of PNTL is the role of the project, which is largely staffed by nationals, and its role in developing in-house capacity. This provides an indication that national capacity is increasingly being developed to support the implementation of governance reforms in the country.

**Legal training.** In 2014, there were 177 accredited magistrates and legal professionals in the country, of whom 28 percent were women. As of the end of 2017, there were a total of 217 legal professionals including judges, prosecutor, public defenders, private lawyers and notaries accredited by the Legal Training and Judicial Centre. Of these, 34 are judges (13 women; 21 men), 33 are prosecutors (7 women; 26 men), 31 are public defenders (5 women; 26 men); 98 are private lawyers (27 women; 71 men) and 21 are notaries (5 women; 16 men). Women comprise slightly more than one fifth (21 percent) of total legal professionals.<sup>47</sup> More staff are expected to join the cadre of legal professionals at the conclusion of the legal training courses for 2018-2019. Since its establishment in 2004, the centre has played a central and important role in producing and developing the capacity of the country's legal profession. Although the Portuguese language problem remains a continuing systemic concern, it is evident that progress is being made with Timorese legal professionals increasingly able to take over and fill the various posts required for the effective administration of justice in the country. Under its new leadership, the centre is adapting to the demands of having limited

<sup>45</sup> UNDP Timor-Leste, Justice System Programme, Annual Progress Report, 2016.

<sup>46</sup> UNDP, PNTL Project, Annual Report, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> UNDP, Justice Sector Programme Annual Report, 2017.

legal professionals by adjusting how its continuing legal education courses are organized and held. Instead of holding one-off training which disrupts court proceedings, the centre plans to hold training in batches to minimize such disruption. The centre is also planning to undertake a more rigorous assessment of student intake to ensure quality graduates, complemented by a mentorship programme that will partner international legal professionals with nationals.

**Finding 7.** Through the programme's support to the mobile courts and provision of free legal aid (access to justice clinic), UNDP has contributed to strengthening citizens' awareness of the formal justice system and legal aid services, and improved access to justice for people and communities. This process has contributed to deepening the rule of law and addressing GBV, given the significant proportion of gender-related cases brought before the mobile clinic and the Public Defender's Office. However, while these programmes have had some very positive feedback from communities, the Government needs to assume responsibility for institutionalizing these initiatives and provide adequate budget support to enable their continuity and regularize them as part of the ongoing justice programme.

Established in 2010, mobile courts involve a partnership between three justice institutions, namely, district courts, the Office of the Prosecutor General and the Public Defender's Office. The mobile courts hold hearings in nine municipalities where there are no fixed courts.<sup>48</sup> Since 2015, when UNDP support to the mobile court programme started, the programme has registered good performance in reinforcing access to justice and raising awareness of the formal justice system. From 2015 to 2017, the mobile courts resolved an average of 41 cases per month, representing 82 percent of cases in 2015, 69 percent in 2016 and 59 percent in 2017, the variable performance being the result of fluctuation in the number of cases assigned to the mobile courts and financial constraints, especially in 2016 when the

mobile courts were able to operate only for eight months or less. In 2017, a total of 454 cases (447 criminal and seven civil cases) involving approximately 971 disputants, of which 312 were women, were resolved through mobile court hearings in nine municipalities. These resolved cases comprised a significant contribution when viewed vis-à-vis the 2661 cases decided by the four district courts in 2017.<sup>49</sup> Because mobile court hearings attract considerable attention among the local population in the municipalities, people invariably inquire and get to learn more about the operation of the formal justice system, although in an unstructured manner. This is important considering the results of the 2013 law and justice survey which indicated that 92 percent of respondents had a favourable comfort level with the customary system. The survey confirmed that 58 percent of respondents had not heard of a public prosecutor, compared to 60 percent in 2008, and 53 percent of respondents had not heard of a lawyer, compared to 54 percent in 2008.<sup>50</sup>

The Access to Justice Clinic started only in 2017 as a pilot in two municipalities of Baucau and Sua judicial districts. The initiative, led by the Public Defender's Office in partnership with three civil society organizations (CSOs), aims to provide and strengthen free legal services to vulnerable groups in land mediation and other disputes. Over a relatively short period of time, the initiative has received strong support and favourable feedback from communities and civil society in facilitating the resolution of pending cases and conflicts. As of end-December 2017, the clinic had registered 115 cases of which 83 involved land disputes, 27 other civil cases and five criminal cases. The clinic facilitated 91 mediation cases which led to the resolution of 16 land dispute cases and seven other types of cases involving 46 beneficiaries (16 women and 30 men). It is to be noted that the rate of resolution is not impressive in itself. However, the process of engagement of the Public Defender's Office and partner CSOs

<sup>48</sup> There are only four districts (out of 13) where court facilities exist. These are in Dili, Baucau, Suai and Oecusse.

<sup>49</sup> UNDP, Justice System Programme 2017 Annual Progress Report, table 1.

<sup>50</sup> Asia Foundation, Timor-Leste Law and Justice Survey 2013, November 2013.



with district/subdistrict administrations, *suco* (village) chiefs, community policing officers and communities, via awareness-raising campaigns and alternative dispute resolution training (mediation) for *suco* chiefs and community leaders—who have the authority based on traditional custom to adjudicate disputes—has a positive and long-term impact on strengthening people’s understanding of the justice system and building a culture of law that underpins the democratic process. By improving understanding of the formal justice system, this helps to address and shift preferences away from the customary justice system whose practices often discriminate against women, especially with regard to land ownership.

The Government’s passing of the statute integrating the provision of free legal information and consultation services in the mandate of the Public Defender’s Office,<sup>51</sup> and the process under way to enable the provision of State budget support, provide a strong foundation for sustainability. The same cannot be said however of the mobile court component of the programme, which has relied on the UNDP Justice System Programme for its operational expenses and functioning for the past eight years. Since the mobile courts are a core function of the government justice system, UNDP should consider developing an exit strategy and negotiate with the Government to take over the responsibility for the continued funding of this component. Given the programme’s demonstrated value to the government justice system, the limited programme resources of UNDP can be better used for addressing higher-priority concerns.

### **Electoral support**

**Finding 8.** Building on early initiatives implemented since 1999 by UNMIT, UNDP support has helped to build the capacity of the country’s electoral management bodies, enabling them to effectively lead and manage national and local elections. The effective conduct and management of the electoral process has contributed to the consolidation and deepening of democracy in the country. The high

voter turnout and generally uncontested results of the elections in 2017 and 2018, and the high proportion of women represented in Parliament (above 35 percent), have given strong credibility and legitimacy to the country’s democratic process. This has created a more stable political environment as evidenced by the peaceful transfer of power between governments.

Since the withdrawal of UNMIT in 2012, UNDP has played a lead role in responding to the Government’s request for electoral support. Building on previous support from the United Nations Electoral Support Team, in the current country programme UNDP has focused on the provision of technical assistance through an electoral cycle approach (“between the ballot boxes”) with a key component focusing on civic and voter education and strengthening political engagement of women and youth at the local and national levels. Given the earlier support extended by the United Nations in developing the capacity of the country’s electoral management bodies, namely the National Commission for Elections and the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Management, there is strong evidence that except for certain areas, e.g., electoral legal training and IT skills, where technical assistance may still be needed on a targeted and occasional basis, the Commission and Technical Secretariat are able to effectively plan, manage and conduct national and local elections. This was clearly reflected in the elections between 2012 and 2018, for which UNDP played largely a supportive and back-office role. The 2017 parliamentary election was notable especially for: (a) the high voter turnout of about 77 percent (close to 50 percent women); and (b) the very small number of invalid votes (less than 2 percent). These results lend strong credibility and legitimacy to the electoral process, which in turn creates the foundation for the predictable and peaceful transfer of political power that the country has experienced over the past 10 years.

Notable in the UNDP support to election is the proactive engagement with women, youth, people

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<sup>51</sup> UNDP Justice Sector Programme Annual Report, 2017.

with disabilities and partnerships with CSOs including the media. As youth make up 62 percent of the population, UNDP supported a voter education event to encourage young people to participate in the electoral and political process for the national parliamentary election. This socialization process is important in developing young people's understanding of the voting process and exposing them to the democratic process and practices that underpin good governance.

Working in partnership with a national disability organization, Ra'es Hadomi Timor Oan, UNDP conducted monitoring of access of persons with disabilities during the political campaign period and the election. It was found that polling places were not fully accessible to persons with disabilities. Recommendations were given to review voter registration regulations, undertake an accessibility assessment of polling centres prior to each election, and for the National Commission for Elections and Technical Secretariat for Electoral Management to develop specific civic and electoral information materials adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the UNDP support for strengthening the capacity of the media. A free media performs an important role in facilitating the free flow of information and exchange of ideas and performs an oversight role in reporting government performance. Through the project, UNDP supported the development of radio journalists' capacities for political reporting by improving their understanding of electoral and political processes. In partnership with Timor-Leste Press Council, UNDP support helped to facilitate and create a forum for discussion and political debates in the lead-up to the 2017 parliamentary election.

It is emphasized that beyond the direct capacity-building of electoral management bodies, increasing awareness, knowledge and creating a forum for people's engagement in the political process and developing the capacities of civil society are equally if not more important in creating the foundation of democratic process in a country. Elections are first and foremost political processes. Credible elections are less the result of the technical

processes that underpin the organization and management of elections than of citizens' understanding of their rights and responsibilities and the creation of an enabling environment to effectively exercise those rights.

After years of technical support, it is clear that the country's electoral management bodies have developed the capacity to plan, manage and conduct credible elections. Accordingly, it is important to ask about the role and nature of UNDP support in the future if/when such support is requested. To inform this exercise, this evaluation suggests that a capacity assessment be undertaken with the specific objective to map and provide a more informed understanding of the capacity of the electoral management bodies, as basis for developing a strategy that defines the form and nature of support which UNDP can provide. As UNDP support has progressively narrowed to more specialized areas, it may be necessary for UNDP to explore how to deploy such support through other modalities than are currently used.

### **Support to local governance and development**

**Finding 9.** UNDP played an important role in developing capacities and an enabling framework to support decentralization and local governance. UNDP can build on its earlier work as well as ongoing initiatives at the subnational level to demonstrate alternative options for implementing decentralized governance.

Although successive Governments have had varying stances on implementing decentralization in Timor-Leste, decentralization is expected to remain a priority of the Government's policy agenda for the foreseeable future. While a clear policy on decentralization has yet to be fully articulated by the current Government, there are indications that the groundwork is being prepared for the future implementation of decentralization. These are reflected in ongoing discussions within the Government for the conduct of municipal elections; the gradual deconcentration of functions from ministries to municipalities; and ongoing efforts to develop the capacities of municipalities to implement local development projects.

Since 2003, through the “local government support project” and later on through the “subnational governance and development project”, UNDP had been instrumental in developing the institutional, legal and regulatory framework to support decentralization and effective local governance. Building on the early pilot on bottom-up planning and budgeting at the district and subdistrict levels, UNDP has helped to develop capacities, systems, tools and processes for local planning, programming, implementation and management (public expenditure management) of local development projects. These tools and methodologies have since been adapted by the Government in the implementation of National *Suco* Development Programme. In 2015, UNDP helped to develop the national diagnostic assessment tool, a self-assessment tool to assess the institutional and organizational capacity of national institutions to deliver services and to assess whether these institutions are “fit for purpose”. Training courses in local governance were also developed for district administration and in-line ministry staff at the municipal level. Similar capacity development support was extended in 2017 by UNDP/UNCDF to develop the capacity of the Major Project Secretariat of the Infrastructure Fund in the areas of project planning and evaluation, a project feasibility study, project appraisal, project management and database development for the portfolio of the Infrastructure Fund.

Since 2015, UNDP has been supporting the Special Administrative Region of Oecusse to develop its institutional capacity for procurement, and some sectoral departments to plan and implement local development initiatives in the health, agriculture and community tourism sectors. A parallel initiative is under way in partnership with the Ministry of State Administration for a pilot implementation of local planning and prioritization of development initiatives in two municipalities utilizing the UNDP ART methodology,<sup>52</sup> a participatory approach to local governance and local development.

UNDP support to the institutional development of Oecusse Special Administrative Region holds potential as a model for implementing local development and the decentralization of services to inform the eventual roll-out of the government decentralization programme and as a vehicle for translating the SDGs. This follows from the adjustments to the project approach, made in 2016, away from a “policy focus” view to prioritizing technical assistance to local development to better align the project’s inputs to its development objectives and outcomes. The adjustment consisted of boosting the absorptive and technical capabilities of the regional secretaries, linking advice and policies with day-to-day implementation and the recruitment of a project manager on the ground.<sup>53</sup> Following this adjustment, working directly with the national and local administration authorities, local entrepreneurs and communities, the project identified bottlenecks/constraints (technological, capacity- and market-related) and based on the analyses, provided capacity development, training, proactive facilitation and support that has enabled small enterprises to start up and/or upgrade production and improve productivity, generating community livelihoods and improving service delivery on the ground. Many of these local enterprises involve women. As such, the interventions provide good practice for promoting local economic empowerment of women, who comprise half of the population. Although it is still a work in progress and thus premature to draw concrete results, the area-based approach provides an attractive modality for targeting development interventions within a defined geographic area, exploiting their complementarities to maximize impact. This approach is appropriate for development situations where local authorities have limited institutional capacities to lead and manage multiple stand-alone development projects. In the specific context where resources are limited, an area-based approach to programming may well provide an appropriate way for converging initiatives to create synergy for greater

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<sup>52</sup> ART is the UNDP “Territorial Partnerships for Implementing the SDGs at Local Level” initiative.

<sup>53</sup> UNDP, Subnational Governance and Development Project Annual Report, 2016. (See section 4 for more details.)

development impact on the ground. UNDP is well placed to explore how it can bring together the relevant components of its programmes on poverty, environment and governance in an integrative manner utilizing an area-based approach. Such an approach may require a different collaborative arrangement for programming, managing partnerships and implementation.

### **Support to public accountability**

**Finding 10.** This initiative is still at the start-up stage pending the appointment of the new Commissioner for the Anti-Corruption Commission by the new Government. Given the well-recognized challenges of fighting corruption, it is important that UNDP take a nuanced and pragmatic approach informed by a political economy analysis of context.

This effort builds on the early initiative of developing the capacity of the Anti-Corruption Commission. A key initiative of the project is the development of a national anti-corruption strategy. Other elements of UNDP support include the development of manuals to improve integrity and inspectoral systems in the public sector, the implementation of an Integrity Pact for Procurement; and increasing citizens' awareness through an outreach programme. International development experience demonstrates that developing strong public awareness and ownership is a key element of anti-corruption efforts. This is especially the case in countries where the capacity of the Government is weak. Since fighting corruption is a complex process, successful anti-corruption efforts often require the interrelated elements of: (a) prevention; (b) enforcement; (c) public participation and coalition-building; (d) strengthening national integrity institutions; and (e) working with the international community. UNDP should take a nuanced approach by incrementally identifying and supporting targeted implementation in areas where it can realistically achieve tangible progress. A political economy analysis can be a useful tool to map out feasible areas for support and help inform the development of a strategy for change as the project progresses.

**Finding 11.** UNDP has been able to leverage support from its various governance projects to strengthen

engagement and partnership with CSOs and address issues of gender inequality and youth participation in the governance process. This result is encouraging and could lead to greater civil society engagement, if reinforced through concerted support by development partners.

Some of the current governance projects have been able to leverage and develop strong partnerships and support to CSOs. These include the election project and the Access to Justice Clinic component of the Justice System Programme. These initiatives are strongly encouraged. Supporting civil society helps in developing its capabilities to engage actively with the Government and articulate citizens' needs more effectively. Promoting a vibrant civil society in the country is indispensable to deepening the democratic process, ensuring oversight and promoting accountability of the Government. However, rather than being largely project-driven, greater effort needs to be made by UNDP management to coordinate and facilitate synergy across these initiatives, within UNDP and with other development partners, to maximize benefits across a broader pool of CSOs. The country office's efforts in promoting the participation of CSOs in the Development Partners Forum on Governance is a step in the right direction. This should be strongly and systematically pursued across programme areas to promote coordination, synergy and learning.

**Finding 12.** A review of the governance programme monitoring framework indicates that the indicators used by the various governance projects are related to institutional performance. This is an accepted practice. However, in the context of Timor-Leste where most of the current support to governance is through legacy projects with a relatively long history of technical assistance, and because Timor-Leste is in the process of transition from conflict/post-conflict to development, the current indicators do not provide adequate measures for assessing the extent to which the various institutions have become more stable.

The New Deal's fragility assessment, conducted by the Ministry of Finance, examined the country's status along five stages of the fragility spectrum,



namely: crisis stage; reform stage; transition stage; transformation stage; and resilience stage.<sup>54</sup> In the context of UNDP support to strengthening governance institutions, it is important to determine to what extent UNDP support over the past several years has contributed to transforming these key governance institutions to become more capable, stable and adaptable. There are indications based on feedback and discussions during the evaluation mission that such changes are happening. However, as the indicators are primarily performance indicators, it is not possible to track and capture these changes systematically. Moving forward, successor projects, if developed, should include indicators that assess a measure of institutional transformation and adaptability. Indicators of stability would reflect and capture the capability of an institution to integrate and institutionalize initiatives internally and address risk. These indicators reflect leadership and management competency in the institutions. Measures of institutional adaptability capture and reflect an institution's ability to anticipate, plan and meet future needs. This is developed through an institution's ability to introduce improvements and innovation to address future anticipated challenges.<sup>55</sup>

### 2.1.4 Gender equality and women's empowerment

**Finding 13.** The country programme results are considered as gender-targeted since most UNDP-supported interventions focused on ensuring women's participation as beneficiaries of interventions.

Through its corporate gender equality strategy 2018-2021, UNDP is fully committed to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

By design, the country programme treats gender as a cross-cutting issue that is mainstreamed in all interventions.

The country office uses the gender marker, a corporate tool designed to help the organization track the degree of gender institutionalization in its programming. The tool assigns scores to projects during design, implementation and completion. Scores range from GEN0 to GEN3 based on the level of gender-responsiveness. The system relies on self-assessment by programme managers and scores can be subject to inaccuracies or inconsistencies. However, it provides a snapshot of the number of gender-focused projects and expenditures.<sup>56</sup> According to the gender marker analysis, slightly less than 38 percent of programme expenditures since 2015 have been recorded against GEN1, indicating that projects are contributing in a limited way to gender equality. The largest proportion of programme expenditure has been concentrated in the GEN2 category (about 62 percent), which corresponds to projects having gender equality as a significant objective. A small expenditure (0.6 percent) is recorded against GEN3, corresponding to projects having gender equality as the principal objective.

To examine the quality of programme results from a gender perspective, the ICPE applied the gender results effectiveness scale, a framework developed as part of the thematic evaluation of the UNDP contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women (2015), which classifies gender results into five categories: gender-negative; gender-blind; gender-targeted; gender-responsive; and gender-transformative.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Finance, Fragility Assessment in Timor-Leste, Summary Report, 2013. <http://www.g7plus.org/sites/default/files/resources/Timor-Leste-Fragility-Assessment-Report.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> UNDP, "Measuring Capacity", July 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Scores use this scale: GEN3 = outputs that have gender equality as the main objective; GEN2 = outputs that have gender equality as a significant objective; GEN1 = outputs that have limited contribution to gender equality; GEN0 = outputs that are not expected to contribute to gender equality.

<sup>57</sup> Gender-negative = result led to a negative outcome that reinforced/aggravated gender inequalities/norms; gender-blind = result had no attention to gender; gender-targeted = result focused on equity (50:50) of women and men in targeting; gender-responsive = result addressed differential needs of men and women and equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status, rights, etc.; gender-transformative = result contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discrimination.

A modest level of progress has been achieved in mainstreaming gender into disaster risk management approaches and infrastructure and environmental interventions. According to the 2017 results-oriented annual report of the country office, 20 climate-resilient infrastructures (mainly water facilities, irrigation systems, bridges, river protection/gabion and roads) were constructed or rehabilitated. These are benefiting around 84,976 people, of whom 51 percent were female, in three municipalities. These beneficiaries are now reported to be accessing clean water, health centres, schools and other basic services.

At the policy level, a gender action plan has been developed and a policy brief has been prepared to mainstream gender in disaster risk management interventions. An institutional framework has also been developed through a top-up grant mechanism for planning and implementation of community-based disaster risk reduction infrastructure to build community resiliency through a partnership approach between government and communities. Women are reported to be substantial beneficiaries of these projects.

Under the coastal resilience project, women in vulnerable communities were intended to be primary beneficiaries, although to date they are reported to constitute slightly less than half of those engaged. Households received training for improved livelihood activities and 76 women were supported for improved horticulture production. Under the UNDP support to the Special Economic Zones – Oecusse project, 50 percent of the 315 people who benefited from the Business Incubation Fund and Agribusiness Programme Fund were women. The programme aimed to improve their access to financial support for their businesses and to provide skills for business development. In many cases, the actual livelihood gains are marginal and their sustainability needs to be promoted through specific measures.

The evaluation classified the results achieved under the resilience and sustainable development pro-

grammes as largely gender-targeted, i.e., ensuring the participation of women as project beneficiaries.

Similarly, the evaluation rated interventions and results under the governance programme as gender-targeted. Given the high incidence of GBV, the justice sector including the police play a lead role in mitigating domestic violence. As the front-line agency in the justice sector, the PNTL handles domestic violence through the Vulnerable People's Unit (VPU) which is largely staffed by women police officers.<sup>58</sup> UNDP supports the VPU outreach programme in disseminating information about its work at the district level (Baucau municipality). Forty PNTL community policing officers were trained on dissemination of VPU services and coordination between PNTL VPU officers and GBV service providers. In addition, VPU facilities such as bedrooms and investigation rooms for victims of domestic violence were constructed. Beyond providing support to victims of domestic violence and training district police, UNDP has coordinated with Marie Stopes, an international NGO, to help raise policewomen's awareness of their own reproductive health issues, which can impact their careers by affecting promotions, which may require relocation, as well as family relations and obligations. Given the very limited data on GBV, UNDP has applied the Incident Management System used by PNTL to build a database of GBV statistics in Baucau municipality. If applied across municipalities, this initiative can lead to an important database which can help provide a clear idea about the extent of GBV and help inform government policy in addressing GBV.

Gender inequality remains an issue in legal education in the justice sector. Data on female enrolment for the sixth course for magistrates and public defenders indicate a low (9 percent) proportion of women among the legal professionals currently accredited by the Legal Training and Judicial Centre. Women comprise slightly more than one fifth (21 percent) of legal professionals in the country. This is a systemic issue reflective of the differential

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<sup>58</sup> As per discussion with PNTL, it is estimated that there are approximately 635 police women out of 4,173 police staff.

literacy rates between women and men. A similar issue is also reflected in court cases related to land issues, where cultural norms regarding women's right to ownership remain predominant.

The electoral support projects over time have proactively engaged with women. As part of the civic and voter education programme, UNDP support, through the electoral management bodies, worked in partnership with other leading NGOs (CAUCUS, PATRIA, MOFEEE and Feto Distritu Dili Association) to promote women's participation in elections. Targeted women included *suco* chiefs, women chiefs of subvillages, women representatives from different organization and young and first-time voters. The project also collected gender-disaggregated data during the recent presidential and parliamentary elections which had female turnout of 47 and 46 per cent respectively.

With respect to the internal UNDP business environment for gender mainstreaming, the evaluation noted that this is still developing. In June 2018, the country office applied for the corporate UNDP Gender Seal, a certification and learning platform for advancing organizational change. In the process, the country office plans to implement initiatives to promote gender mainstreaming, including the articulation of a country office-specific gender strategy and assignment of a gender focal team to strengthen gender equality in programming and the office environment. In addition to a multidisciplinary gender focal team led by senior management, offices are encouraged to have dedicated gender expertise to provide technical backstopping and build partnerships for gender equality. The absence of a gender expert, owing to lack of funding, is seen by UNDP staff and government partners as limiting a consistent advocacy and action perspective on gender by UNDP. Efforts to engage UN-Women as a partner in such efforts have not yet been successful.

The availability of dedicated gender specialists within projects was also limited. At the time of the evaluation, there were two gender focal

points assigned to two projects (Justice Sector Programme/PNTL and coastal resilience-building). Despite working on similar issues such as gender action plans, awareness-raising, training materials, monitoring tools, etc., the office did not set up mechanisms to facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange for uptake in other projects. The same tendency was observed with regard to the project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff. In addition, to a cross-cutting data analyst with some responsibility for M&E, the office had five M&E staff, four of whom were project staff.

The country office has yet to achieve gender parity in its human resources composition. Looking at all staffing categories, the office has 98 staff, of whom 71 are males compared to 27 females. The disparity is observed in the service contract holders, of whom 48 are males compared to 11 females.

## 2.2 Findings on sustainability

**Finding 14.** The sustainability prospects of the UNDP contributions are mixed. Except for the mobile court component, the governance programme interventions have fostered capacity development and national ownership and have more potential to be sustainable. On the other hand, inadequate financial and human resources, weak national and community-level capacities and the lack of critical mass are some of the factors limiting the continuity and sustainability prospects of the resilience and sustainable development portfolios.

As discussed above, it is clear that following years of technical support, relevant democratic governance institutions have progressively enhanced institutional capacities to support the implementation of governance reforms. Sustainability prospects are further augmented by the provision of State budget support and integrating UNDP-supported programme components such as free legal information and consultation services in the mandate of the Public Defender's Office.<sup>59</sup> The exception is the mobile court component of the Justice Sector

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<sup>59</sup> Article 22, Decree Law No 10/2017.



Programme which has relied on the UNDP programme for its operational expenses and functioning for the past eight years. As noted earlier, since the mobile courts are a core function of the government justice system, UNDP should consider the development of an exit strategy and negotiate with the Government to assume responsibility for the continued funding of this component, allowing UNDP to direct its limited resources to addressing other priority concerns.

In the resilience programme, ownership and sustainability of the community-level infrastructure and environmental management measures face major challenges. While communities have participated in project implementation and welcome the infrastructure provided, a variety of stakeholders expressed the view that community expectations are for continuing support and an increased range of benefits. Local government bodies are looking for enhanced budgets to help maintain newly-provided systems, as well as to scale up from the pilot level achieved to cover all of their communities. Also, there are already reports of infrastructure failing for want of maintenance and of poor survival rates of vegetation intended to stabilize roadside slopes. The projects have not been able to secure the continuing commitments necessary from different levels of government or from communities to ensure sustainability and scaling-up from the original project sites.

Similarly, the scaling-up and sustainability prospects of interventions under the sustainable development programme faced difficulties. Inadequate budgets and human resources, particularly at municipal and *suco* levels, mean that government at these levels has little possibility of building on project achievements to generate sustainable impacts. This has created demand from participating communities for both additional and continuing UNDP support, while settlements outside of projects want to receive similar treatment.

A broader consideration, however, is the viability of a sustained UNDP contribution to development in Timor-Leste, specifically in the areas of resilience-building and sustainable development.

Environmental management activities entrusted to community groups have already encountered major limitations due to low educational levels and capacities of local populations, weak community organizations and NGOs contracted to support them, as well as the low capacity and resources of local government bodies at municipal and *suco* levels. All of these bodies have struggled to deliver, even with the relatively high level of support provided by the UNDP projects. The capacity to sustain and even scale up benefits from project activities is therefore limited and fragile and there are few tangible and funded plans in place to enable such continuity and broadening of results.

Although capacity development and knowledge transfer are mentioned in UNDP project documents, this tends to be in generic statements which do not provide any possibility of assessing achievement against targets. Hands-on collaboration with government staff is needed, so that they gain sufficient experience to take over responsibilities once projects close. Also, UNDP experts should offer more scrutiny of reports submitted by government, so that the quality can be improved. According to stakeholders, UNDP has qualified project staff but they give little feedback to counterparts. There must be transfer of knowledge. Project documents need to be much more explicit about what exactly will be delivered under capacity-building. Further, there is no strategy to follow up training. When government officers are trained abroad, they have to produce a detailed workplan to use their new knowledge to strengthen their departments, but there is no follow-up by UNDP.

The absence of a critical mass of interventions is another concern. Sustainability of results is driven substantially by the quality and consistency of UNDP support. Currently, national stakeholders see this support as uneven in quality and declining in quantity. The major resource available to UNDP to promote sustainability of results is the expertise and contribution of its senior technical advisers. However, the country office management acknowledges that it faces difficulties in recruiting suitable candidates, given the perceived difficulties of a posting in Timor-Leste.

Critical mass for sustainable approaches, particularly to environmental management contributions and resilience, would be achieved only if the various projects operating in this field systematically shared experiences and collaborated with each other. However, GEF projects are individually managed and there is no mechanism or personnel to enable them to develop UNDP approaches towards sustainability. Results are therefore fragmented and discontinuous and do not have a cumulative effect on poverty-environment linkages in the country.

## 2.3 Findings on programme design and management

**Finding 15.** The country programme has partially implemented the recommendations of its last independent evaluation and change management plan. As a result, the programme reflects a project approach despite the integrated and multidimensional issues it seeks to address.

The 2012 ICPE recommended that UNDP facilitate the Government's inclusive growth agenda to bridge rural-urban disparities, promote gender equity and generate employment, especially for youth, in the non-oil sector. It reported that UNDP had supported the establishment of a number of grass-roots organizations, built their capacities in financial intermediation in rural areas and influenced prioritization of human development in the Government's Strategic Development Plan through the production and dissemination of national human development reports. However, much more needed to be done. Specifically, an integrated approach was recommended to address risks associated with climate change through effective natural resource management measures linked with rural income- and employment-generation initiatives. Further, it was noted that the contribution to disaster management remained limited to the early recovery phase, with no systematic linkages to longer-term solutions or to address challenges linked to man-made and natural disasters.

In response, the country office reports jump-starting several initiatives. These include the work on the SDGs, social business, financial inclusion and youth, and the national human development report. Furthermore, UNDP launched pilot projects such as the GEF-funded SSRI and DARDC projects in support of community livelihoods, climate change adaptation and water supply initiatives.

National partners consulted by the ICPE team observed that UNDP has not been able to adopt a programme design approach to its portfolio. Projects are isolated from one another and there is no mechanism to ensure coordination and complementarity between them. The SSRI and DARDC projects experienced many challenges in terms of project management. They illustrate an observed tendency among GEF-funded projects to have detailed proposals, that despite being well designed, end up being poorly implemented. Concerning the SSRI project, many good infrastructure projects were completed, such as rural water supply and bridges. However, in Almeria and other places, communities complained that the water supply stopped in a very short time. Furthermore, people who had used the spring water before the project found that its new infrastructure cut off their supply and redirected it to the new scheme, causing conflicts within the community.

With regard to mangrove restoration under the coastal resilience-building project, stakeholders expressed a number of reservations, in particular concerning the wooden fences being used for protected areas. These were said to have been used in a previous project by the University of the South Pacific, but they all collapsed in about six months and were replaced with cement and wire fences. The project should have piloted different approaches to fencing materials and then scaled up the best ones. GEF projects are seen to have a tendency to just follow the project document, without adapting to what is actually needed.

In the case of the support for the second national communication under the UNFCCC, some training was delivered for the greenhouse gas inventory, but project coordination was poor and field-level data

collection was too rushed. Much data was entered in Dili on the basis of guesswork, which places the Government in the position of being responsible for inaccurate information for national planning purposes. Neither the Government nor UNDP imposed data quality requirements on the field teams. To access GEF and GCF funds in future, the country needs better-quality data than the communication exercise produced.

In addition, GEF projects, which form the majority of the resilience and sustainable development portfolios, have unrealistic co-financing expectations which cannot conceivably be delivered. Since these are linked to results targets, they cannot be met with the much lower level of resources actually available. The scale and scope of results are far more limited than envisaged at design. Government partner organizations mostly have restricted budgets and human resources and have minimal scope for “co-financing” other than through staff inputs and office facilities.

As pertains to the governance programme, it reflects, as recommended by the previous ICPE, a shift away from “a semi-humanitarian model of peace-and state-building”; includes a stronger presence at the district level through its support to the institutional development of Oecusse; and combines some elements of demonstration and a component of policy support through the projects on elections, access to justice component, support to the national police and the institutional strengthening of Oecusse. However, it is less clear how the country programme addressed other recommendations, notably the articulation of a clear strategy and focus of the governance support and the role that UNDP plays. As noted above, a number of the current governance projects are legacy projects. There is no clear succession plan or exit strategy to inform future action about what to do or transition UNDP support to.

**Resource mobilization.** The change management plan also recommended that the country office pursue new project ideas and explore funding sources beyond vertical funds. However, funding for the UNDP country programme has been

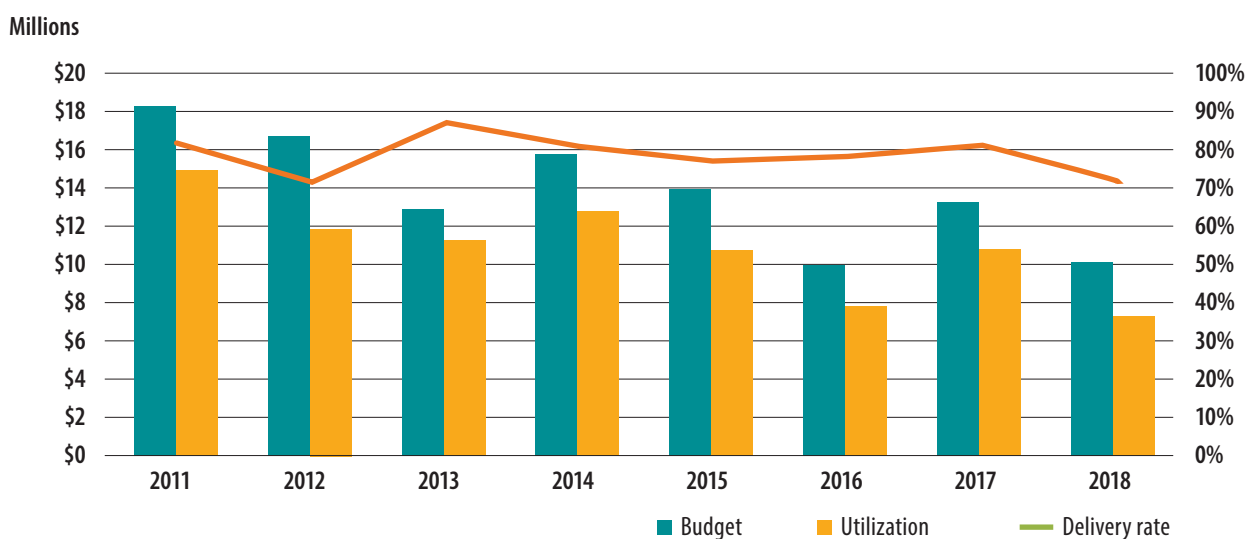
fluctuating (figure 2). Many of the traditional development partners such as the Governments of Ireland, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Canada are gone or maintaining very limited support, and the bilateral and multilateral donors such as Australia, the United States and increasingly, the European Union, are implementing their own programmes through their networks of vetted contractors and consultants.

The indicative five-year budget of the country programme was set at \$75 million in the country programme document. This is \$15 million more than the previous programme (2008-2014). As of November 2018, the country office had mobilized about \$48 million or 64 percent of its funding target. About half of this amount is vertical funding, mostly from GEF for the resilience and sustainable development portfolios.

Consistent with Timor-Leste’s middle-income country status, the allocation of UNDP regular resources to the country office stands at \$350,000 per annum. Consequently, the ratio of UNDP core funding (regular resources) to non-core (other resources) funding in the programme budget decreased from 14 percent to 2 percent between 2011 and 2018. With such a small amount of UNDP regular resources, which is usually earmarked for administrative expenditures, the country office is challenged in realizing the expected multiplier potential UNDP anticipates for middle-income countries, i.e., that they would be able to mobilize donor resources against the small UNDP inputs of seed funding. The result has been an acute funding shortfall in the sustainable development portfolio, which at design totalled slightly more than \$32 million but to date has managed to attract only \$9.3 million, or 28 percent of the target (see table 1 in section 1.4).

Despite delayed signature of the country programme and successive government changes in 2017 and 2018, annual budget utilization rates averaged 78 percent over the period 2015-2017, slightly below the recommended benchmark of 80 percent. For 2018, the delivery rate was 72 percent as of mid-November (figure 3).

**FIGURE 3. Evolution of the country programme budget and utilization, 2011-2018 (In millions of United States dollars)**



Note: The 2018 utilization rate reflects partial data, January-September only.  
Source: UNDP Corporate Planning System, 15 November 2018

**National implementation modality.** Some national stakeholders would like to see capacity development leading towards the introduction of the national implementation modality (NIM) whereby the Government assumes responsibility for programme management and delivery. Earlier, UNDP had suggested 2019 as the end of direct implementation modality (DIM), but it extended this to 2020 without consulting some of the stakeholders. This was not well received, since country ownership is seen as an important objective. The level of support provided by UNDP has steadily decreased and is now mainly technical capacity, with little direct funding support to activities compared with earlier times. While some ministries and directorates have expressed the desire to switch to NIM, the Ministry of Finance believes that government systems are not yet well enough established to enable this to work well.

**Human resources.** National stakeholders raised the issue of the quantity and quality of UNDP human resources. The country office has steadily reduced its staff in line with the change management exercise, with a reduction of 18 fixed-term posts. The core programme team has been reduced to two national officers and two programme support staff.

Individual projects are managed by chief technical advisers, who appear to operate in isolation. The ICPE found blurred coordination and reporting lines between programme managers and the advisers, all of whom report to the Country Director, making strategic roles and responsibilities somewhat unclear. Further, the substantial overlap noted by the ICPE between the resilience and sustainable development programmes in terms of objectives, areas of focus and partners contributes to the lack of clarity surrounding individual staff responsibilities. In this context, the recommendation of the change management plan for a transparent implementation of a human resource process needs to be implemented to avoid consequences for staff morale.

**Finding 16.** There has been limited collaboration between UNDP and other United Nations agencies despite UNDP activities and interests having substantial overlap with those of several agencies.

There are 11 resident United Nations agencies in Timor-Leste. Although there has been limited collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, UNICEF and UN-Women, the level is far from what could be achieved. A more system-

atic and coherent United Nations-wide approach in such areas as poverty-environment linkages, gender equity and improved subsistence and livelihoods would need to be built on a strong Common Country Assessment and specified in an UNDAF, with a focus on how the United Nations system can contribute to sustainable development in the country. Although such an approach cannot be delivered by UNDP alone, its long and substantive engagement in the country should enable it to promote such a shift through discussions with the Resident Coordinator. Sustainability of UNDP results

could be strengthened through increased collaboration among United Nations bodies in Timor-Leste.

**UNV.** The UNV office, with a programme officer and assistant, closed in 2016. As the number of active UNV staff increased in Timor-Leste in 2017-2018, UNV is in the process of recruiting a programme officer with UNDP support.

There were five UNV staff supporting the UNDP country programme in programme management (governance), M&E/data analysis, communications, finance and procurement.





# CHAPTER 3

## CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP  
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## 3.1 Conclusions

- **Conclusion 1. The UNDP country programme reflects national priorities vis-à-vis resilience, climate risk and environmental management, and strengthening institutional capacities of key democratic governance institutions. The programme has been working at the upstream policy level providing institutional capacity-building support to various public institutions as well as working at community level with mixed results.**

There have been major changes in the external environment within which UNDP operates since the last ICPE. Following the departure of UNMIT in 2012 and the country's transition to middle-income country status, many of the traditional development partners and bilateral and multi-lateral donors have gone or are changing their strategies, and funding for the UNDP country programme has been reduced. Meanwhile, the UNDP Regional Office has envisaged an increasingly "upstream" role for the country office, focused on high-level policy advice and a "think tank" role in support of government and other stakeholders.

Building on the previous country programmes, UNDP has contributed progressively in developing the capacity of democratic governance institutions including the justice sector and electoral management bodies to implement government reforms. This was possible through the adoption, utilization and implementation of improved systems, management practices and institutionalized capacity development and training. UNDP also played an important role in developing capacities and an enabling framework to support decentralization and local governance. Similarly, most of the interventions under the resilience portfolio have delivered substantial amounts of small-scale infrastructure, including clean water systems and irrigation, check dams, slope stabilization and reforestation. However, the upstream policy-oriented interventions under this subcomponent have been delayed by political uncertainty and government changes. At the same time, the sustainability of the community-level infrastructure is challenged due to limited subnational budgets and resources. UNDP also needed

to do more to systematize youth vocational training, certification and creation of businesses.

As a result of diminishing resource mobilization potential, UNDP has had to be opportunistic in its resource mobilization efforts. Moreover, available funding as reflected in the project budgets tend to be of shorter duration of one to two years. This leaves significantly less room or degree of freedom for planning long-term capacity development interventions. At the same time, UNDP core funds (regular resources) and human resources have been steadily reduced consistent with the country's transition to middle-income country status. This has an unintended consequence on the design and sustainability of project interventions that may not be appreciated. With shorter-term funding, projects as a consequence will be designed to follow such funding cycle. This will tend to favour the pursuit of "low hanging fruit" interventions at the expense of project results which may require the lengthy mobilization, consensus-building and longer implementation timeline that many development outcomes require.

The country office is severely challenged by a disconnect between its ambitions and available resources. It is therefore clear that the office needs to focus its objectives at a level of support and coverage which can actually be delivered with the quality and quantity of available resources.

- **Conclusion 2. Outside the governance programme, the country programme is overly dependent on GEF funding and focuses mainly on poverty-environment linkages.** The country office's broader intentions with regard to youth and self-employment, strengthening peace and supporting sustainable development are marginal to the programme as implemented in financial terms. Given the scarcity of donors and their tendency to implement their own programmes, there is no obvious solution to this challenge. The major new potential avenues, such as the GCF, will tend towards further concentration of activities.

GEF-funded projects show a tendency to move towards provision of services and social infrastruc-



ture and the connection with global environmental benefits appears tenuous in some instances.

- **Conclusion 3. Given the programme's concentration around one set of interconnected issues, the current division into three outcome areas is unnecessary.** Projects with similar objectives and approaches appear under different outcome areas, with improved governance an underlying factor for progress in all areas. UNDP support to decentralization, seen by national partners as a major UNDP comparative advantage, could provide an overarching approach to the delivery of sustainable development, incorporating all three current outcomes under one coherent programme.
- **Conclusion 4. Capacity-building, the underlying justification for the continuing engagement of UNDP in Timor-Leste, needs to be approached much more systematically.** Following years of technical support, relevant democratic governance institutions have enhanced institutional

capacities for governance reforms. However, the rest of the portfolio did not demonstrate a well-designed approach to capacity development. Although written into virtually every project, it is often at a generic level without specific objectives and results indicators, which would enable performance to be assessed. There is limited knowledge transfer and no requirement for those trained to develop concrete plans to use this to improve the operations of their institutions.

- **Conclusion 5. Collaboration among United Nations bodies is not sufficient to maintain the status of the United Nations system as a major development partner in Timor-Leste.** The declining human and financial resources affecting all United Nations organizations in the country is seen by government partners as reducing the role of the United Nations. The lack of coordination among agencies exacerbates this situation, creating an impression of competition which is seen as a weakness by national stakeholders.

## 3.2 Recommendations and management response

### Recommendation 1.



The next UNDP country programme should have one outcome area, focused on contributing to sustainable development through support to decentralized and area-based local governance. This would concentrate limited resources around a programme with limited and attainable objectives that make a clear contribution to national development. The outcome should incorporate critical elements of existing projects to ensure long-term sustainability. In governance and institutional strengthening, these include improving access to justice at the local level, strengthening integrity and accountability of local public administration and strengthening the institutional capacity of Oecusse Special Administrative Region.

### Management Response: Agreed



UNDP is committed to reduce the dispersion in the programme; the MCT has already aligned the office resources around a portfolio approach already merging two areas (sustainable dev and resilience-building) in 2017. The office will start the new UNDAF and CPD formulation in 2019 using the new Strategic Plan and integrator role. The environment portfolio is expected to remain an important component of the programme with the potential approval of the GCF which goes beyond governance issues.

Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

Key Actions	Time Frame	Responsible Units	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
SDG acceleration units	January 2019 – December 2019	RR/DRR	Initiated	
Decentralization Project	January 2019 – December 2019	Governance/RR/DRR	Initiated	

**Recommendation 2.**



**The programme should align its objectives to resources which can be realized.** The practice of inflating objectives and targets on the basis of “aspirational” funding from unknown sources and completely unrealistic GEF co-funding estimates should be halted. Future country programmes should be realistic, with clearly identified contributions to nationally-owned development policies and programmes.

**Management Response:**  
**Agreed**



Agreed. Implemented since January 2016.

Key Actions	Time Frame	Responsible Units	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
	January 2016 – present	RR/DRR	Completed	

**Recommendation 3.**



**Future country programmes should be built around a specific capacity-building strategy with clear objectives, realizable targets and concrete plans for increased national ownership and management.** While government bodies recognize their capacity limitations, they also feel that these could be overcome more quickly through a more consistent and effective approach to capacity-building from UNDP. Enhanced technical and operational capacities of the Government and private sector are essential for the phased transfer from direct to national implementation. UNDP approaches to capacity-building need to become more targeted and results-oriented so that progress can be measured and the transition to national implementation can begin as soon as possible.

Recommendation 3 (cont'd)

**Management Response:**  
**Agreed**



Agreed and improvements already under implementation.

Key Actions	Time Frame	Responsible Units	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
SDG delivery unit	January 2019 – December 2019	RR/DRR	Initiated	

**Recommendation 4.**



**In the context of the integrator role defined in the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 and of United Nations system reform, UNDP should systematically consider and map the best opportunities for enhanced results through improved UNCT collaboration and work with the Resident Coordinator to bring these to fruition.** National stakeholders have observed a lack of complementarity and coordination among United Nations bodies. Given overlapping interests and expertise across United Nations agencies, joint programmes or other focused collaboration can strengthen the quality of technical support and maximize use of limited resources.

**Management Response:**  
**Agreed**



UNDP is committed to United Nations reform and to its integrator role. Alignment and coordination depend not only from UNDP commitment but also from the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations agencies. UNDP is witness to constant forces driving United Nations agencies to compete for resources with little capacity and sometimes questionable commitment to joint initiatives. There are some promising leads such the work on youth (with UNFPA, UNICEF), Parliament (UN-Women) and also the Unique ID (UNICEF). In addition, we have submitted two proposals focusing on gender-based violence with UN-Women, UNFPA, the International Organization for Migration and UNICEF, and have jointly organized all international United Nations days.

Key Actions	Time Frame	Responsible Units	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
International United Nations days	January 2019 – December 2019	RR/DRR	Initiated	
GBV proposal	January 2019 – December 2019	RR/DRR	Initiated	

\* 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/9404>.

**Annex 1.** Terms of Reference

**Annex 2.** People Consulted

**Annex 3.** Documents Consulted

**Annex 4.** Summary of CPD indicators and status as reported by country office









Independent Evaluation Office  
United Nations Development Programme  
One UN Plaza, DC1-20<sup>th</sup> Floor,  
New York, NY 10017, USA  
Tel. +1(646) 781 4200, Fax. +1(646) 781 4213

Web: [www.undp.org/evaluation](http://www.undp.org/evaluation)

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