

Evaluation Brief: ICPE Seychelles

Country context and UNDP programme

Over the past decade, Seychelles has registered sustained improvements in per capita income and achieved a relatively high level of human development. In 2015, Seychelles joined a group of 81 countries in the World Bank's high-income classification, and in 2018 was removed from the OECD list of countries eligible to receive Official Development Assistance (ODA). In 2018, Seychelles ranked 62 in the world and number one in Africa on the Human Development Index. Seychelles has achieved all but one of the Millennium Development Goals (combating HIV/AIDS). Absolute poverty is minimal.

Seychelles high-income status has limited the scope of UNDP support. Since 2017, Seychelles has received just \$50,000 of core resources annually, which means that the UNDP programme is almost entirely dependent on non-core contributions. The rapid fall in ODA to Seychelles, from close to \$50m in 2010 to around \$5m in 2017, means that resource mobilisation opportunities are very limited. Currently, funding through global environment institutions accounts for over 86 per cent of UNDP programme delivery. The graduation of Seychelles to high-income status is likely to further constrain its access to climate-related concessional funding.

Findings and conclusions

Notwithstanding strong progress on economic and social indicators, Seychelles faces some significant challenges. As a small island state with limited land mass and resources, Seychelles will face high costs in adapting to the consequences of climate change, especially from expected sea level rises. Meeting these challenges effectively will depend heavily on the ability of Seychelles to protect and preserve valuable marine and terrestrial biodiversity, which accounts for about 70 per cent of its gross domestic product.

Government partners consulted for the evaluation valued the role of UNDP in facilitating access to funding to face these challenges through global environmental and climate change organisations. Resources mobilised by UNDP through these mechanisms have been important to extend the reach of government programmes, trial new approaches and develop the evidence base to underpin reforms. Some good results have been achieved with this support, including: the reform of the governing framework for the Seychelles National Parks Authority; analysis to underpin improved financing and management of protected areas; and the introduction of ecosystem-based adaptation approaches, which have significant potential to influence government thinking on water-resource management issues.

The contribution of UNDP to targeted outcomes has been undermined by implementation challenges affecting four of the five major projects considered by this evaluation. The contribution of UNDP to improved resource efficiency has been modest. UNDP work in water-resource management has significant but mostly unrealised potential. Despite some challenges, progress towards the outcomes, outputs and indicators set out in the Country Programme Document (CPD) in the area of protected area management has been adequate, especially following adjustments made after mid-term reviews of the two projects. However, due to delays in passing the draft Nature Conservancy Act (something not in the direct control of UNDP), targets to expand marine and terrestrial protected areas have not yet been achieved. As yet, there is little evidence of actual improvement in the management of the protected area estate of the Seychelles.

The uneven performance of the programme reflects four main factors:

First, it reflects the recognised challenges of working effectively in small island states. In particular, the small size of Seychelles bureaucracy means that

the capacity of key institutions and decision-makers is often stretched, with broad mandates and heavy travel schedules which can slow things down.

Second, it reflects challenges in developing designs that provide solid frameworks for implementation. In project designs for physical works, some sub-projects have not been subjected to sufficient feasibility testing and needed to be substantially modified or dropped in light of more detailed information. The unnecessary complexity of some project designs increased the project management risks, given external challenges.

Third, it reflects inconsistencies in the quality of technical backstopping and support from UNDP regional technical advisors in Addis Ababa. While most of the programme received good technical backstopping and support, and the current level of engagement is good, there was a period when engagement in two of the five projects was weaker, reducing the quality of oversight. Consistent engagement from technical experts, including at the design stage, is especially important given the small size of the Seychelles country office.

Finally, it reflects weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation, documentation of lessons learned, communications and use of results-based management practices in the country office. At the programme level, existing reporting frameworks have limited utility for either learning or accountability and should be revised. Because of weaknesses in project formulation, many of the current projects have weak results frameworks, which do not provide a sound basis for monitoring and reporting results or encourage adaptive management. Across the projects, more emphasis needs to be given to monitoring and evaluation, documentation of lessons learned and communications to maximize their influence and retain lessons. Currently, there is limited capacity to develop a common narrative across the programme on the challenges it is helping the Government to address, or to adapt support to its changing needs outside of the constraints of individual projects.

Given the high-income status, but small size of Seychelles, UNDP can play a significant role in contributing knowledge and advisory services in areas where it has a direct role and global expertise. There is room for improvement in this area.

Recommendations

In developing the new CPD, care should be taken to reflect the particular needs and issues of Seychelles as a small island state that has attained high-income status, and the capacity of UNDP to provide support. UNDP should focus its limited resources on strengthening the focus of the programme on environmental management and climate change, and synergies between its different components.

The country office should ensure that future project designs avoid the unnecessary

proliferation of components and counterparts and include only well-reasoned, straightforward monitoring and evaluation frameworks and targets. Where designs include plans for complex physical works that have not been subject to detailed feasibility studies, sufficient time should be allocated to complete these, and flexibility should be provided to accommodate and respond appropriately to the findings.

The country office should improve results-based management by ensuring that

programme level reporting frameworks only include objectives, targets and related indicators when there is a realistic prospect for UNDP to have a measurable influence over them. It should strengthen monitoring, evaluation and research capacity by building it into individual project designs, or by establishing a shared resource to provide analytical support across the Programme Coordination Unit. Finally, it should develop a shared narrative across the programme about the challenges it is helping the Seychelles Government to address.