

Evaluation Brief: Eswatini



The Kingdom of Eswatini is a middle-income country with high levels of poverty and income inequality. Recent declines in economic growth have led to fiscal consolidation, and poverty remains a significant issue, with close to 40 percent of the population living in extreme poverty in 2017. Most of the population relies on subsistence farming and the country remains vulnerable to natural disasters and the effects of climate change.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Eswatini developed a country programme document for the 2016-2020 period, established around objectives that were in line with the National Development Strategy 2013-2022, the King's Vision 2022 and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework outcomes. UNDP's programme in Eswatini planned to contribute to the following three outcomes: i) inclusive economic

growth and sustainable development; ii) resilience and risk reduction, incorporating sustainable natural resource management; and iii) good governance, equity and citizen participation.

Findings and conclusions

The UNDP country programme document for the Kingdom of Eswatini identified priorities for UNDP's interventions that were highly relevant to the country's development challenges, although activities implemented by UNDP have too often deviated from its set objectives and planned outputs. New projects and activities offer opportunities to diversify and attract new funding in areas such as youth, innovation and energy efficiency, but also increase the risk of moving away from UNDP's programme objectives.

UNDP programme expenditure funding sources, 2016-2018



Programme expenditure by outcome, 2016-2018 (million US\$)



UNDP has achieved mixed results across its programme, with some success in the sustainable livelihoods and environment outcomes. Contributions to the governance outcome are mostly small scale and ad-hoc in nature and it is difficult to see their broader positioning or impact. The lack of project monitoring is an important issue that has direct consequences for UNDP's capacity to document progress, learn from implementation and share lessons. It also negatively impacts UNDP's capacity to mobilize resources.

Most projects are implemented through a long list of small-scale activities, without a cohesive approach, strategy or theory of change, and without effective follow-up. The impact and sustainability of many

interventions can be questioned, when technical support on projects is delivered through external expertise and other support comes through the facilitation of workshops. Particularly in policy-level support, UNDP needs to consider a more in-depth and long-term approach.

The country office has limited human resources to support the implementation of its programme, leading UNDP towards ineffective decisions in allocating resources for programmatic activities. The daily activities of its staff do not necessarily align with the planned programme focus and requirements for effective programme and project implementation and results.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1. In the next country programme, UNDP must identify clear areas of intervention that form a cohesive response to a definite set of national development challenges and that can be realistically implemented within its limited resource framework. Overall, in the next programme period there will need to be a clear, focused approach, with fewer partners and clear areas and strategies of support.

RECOMMENDATION 2. UNDP must critically examine its achievements in the implementation of the current programme, understand where its main contribution lies, and where this contribution has the strongest potential to be sustained and scaled up. This process requires regular follow-up on project

activities, improved documentation of UNDP's outputs, and measuring progress on a more regular basis. The monitoring efforts must go beyond data collection and be used as a tool for programme management, learning and reporting. This will help UNDP communicate its contributions, reinforce trust between the organization and its partners, and strengthen its capacity to mobilize resources.

RECOMMENDATION 3. In implementing a more focused programme with a clear theory of change and objectives, UNDP must follow key project management steps more strictly. Priority activities and deliverables must be identified and followed during implementation. UNDP must increase efforts towards reporting

and documenting activities and results for effective follow-up, both during implementation and by partners after project closure. In addition, UNDP needs to redirect its support away from facilitation across numerous activities and give greater and more meaningful support to technical issues.

RECOMMENDATION 4. The country office should review the effectiveness of the allocation of programme and operations staff across the Development Advisory Team structure and find ways to improve the allocation of its limited human resources. A strengthened focus and strategy for programme outcomes will resolve some of the current inefficiencies in implementation.