

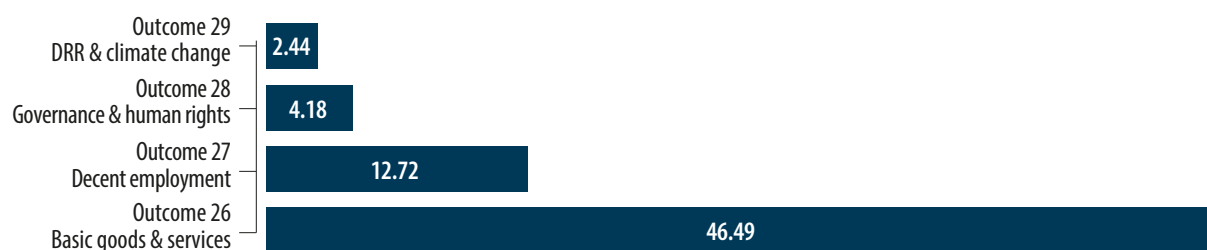
Evaluation Brief: El Salvador

El Salvador has experienced both advances and challenges since its 12-year civil war ended with the signing of peace agreements in 1992. The country has consolidated its democratic system and seen improvements in life expectancy, schooling, health and poverty reduction. However, economic investments have been affected by high levels of citizen insecurity and violence, which particularly limit opportunities for youth, who represent more than half the population. Although strong inflows of remittances have built an informal social protection system, people's limited access to basic goods and services has led to significant social exclusion,

vulnerability and inequality, with wide gaps based on sex, age and geography.

The UNDP country programme for the period 2016–2020 was aligned with the government's five-year Development Plan 2014–2019. The country programme outlined four main priorities: access to basic goods and services; sustainable livelihoods; consensus building; and human resilience to natural events. Over the period of implementation, the country office successfully mobilized non-core resources from government cost-financing and vertical funds.

Programme expenditure by outcome area (million US\$)



Funding sources



Findings and conclusions

UNDP is highly valued as a reliable, credible and trusted partner. It is strategically positioned with the Government through the provision of administrative development services, mainly on procurement, and strategic technical advice on key national priorities. UNDP has played an important role in bringing together diverse actors, creating opportunities for

dialogue on priority and sensitive issues. It has also served as a knowledge broker, helping to increase access to data and information. Over the last 10 years, UNDP has adapted its business model to work increasingly with government cost-financing. Yet the reduction in office personnel in 2016, due to the decrease in infrastructure projects, upset the balance between strategic technical support and administrative operational development services.

UNDP has successfully supported the country's environmental agenda, including by facilitating access to funds, aiding compliance with international commitments and raising awareness on environmental sustainability. At local level, UNDP has contributed to the expansion of protected wetlands through the establishment of institutional frameworks for biodiversity and environmental protection. However, the limited engagement by the country office (CO) on economic development precluded it from addressing poverty, inequality, exclusion and decent employment through an integrated, inclusive sustainable development strategy to promote resilience and sustainable livelihoods. In the areas of women's economic empowerment and youth, efforts remained at initial stages. UNDP's contributions to rural development were limited to a fiduciary role.

The CO prioritized efforts for the prevention of violence, promoting an integrated approach to

citizen security at national level and piloting social reintegration initiatives at local level. Support to justice and human rights institutions to sustain a holistic rule-of-law approach was limited. Efforts to promote citizen participation were limited and did not enable comprehensive implementation of a rights-based approach.

In terms of the effectiveness of results across the portfolio, an important challenge identified by the evaluation team is the fact that institutional capacity development strategies have not been systematically implemented to ensure exit strategies and sustainability for results.

UNDP has not been effective in promoting a culture of learning and strategic knowledge management, focusing more on procedural compliance. The use and dissemination of evaluations has been limited and has not led to learning or adaptive management.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1. UNDP should review the office operational and programmatic structure to ensure it can effectively address the country's priorities in line with UNDP's mandate. The CO should adapt its way of working to proactively position itself strategically with the new Government, promoting more innovation and South-South cooperation.

RECOMMENDATION 2. UNDP should review the underlying strategies and theories of change of its programme to enhance the effectiveness of the human-rights-based approach, institutional capacity-development strategies and knowledge management.

RECOMMENDATION 3. UNDP should reposition itself as a lead agency on inclusive economic development. Through joint initiatives at local level, it should develop integrated and inclusive sustainable development initiatives to further promote resilience and sustainable livelihoods that address the most pressing needs of women and youth in terms of inequality and poverty.

RECOMMENDATION 4. UNDP should expand its institutional strengthening support to justice entities with a comprehensive rule-of-law approach as an enabler of good governance. To improve citizen security and social cohesion results, it should provide significant

capacity-development to the justice system for a more coherent response to the country's violence and insecurity challenges through a rule-of-law approach.

RECOMMENDATION 5. UNDP should ensure that organizational learning and risk management take place at all levels. It should move away from a compliance-focused approach, without appropriate knowledge management, and implement the recommendations of previous evaluations that remain valid and unimplemented, including those from the 2011 Assessment of Development Results that were not fully addressed.