

# Evaluation Brief: Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean



Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean countries enjoy relatively high levels of national wealth and human development. Their sustainable growth is, however, constantly challenged by significant exposure to a number of environmental, economic and social risks, which leave the countries vulnerable. Climate change and the continued overexploitation of natural resources threaten the rich biodiversity of the countries' forest and marine ecosystems. Their strong dependence on international tourism and associated industries, combined with constrained fiscal space and the limited availability of official development assistance, make the countries particularly susceptible to external shocks. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) forecast that the decline in gross domestic product across the region could reach 10 to 21 percent.

## Findings and conclusions

In the area of *social protection, quality services and sustainable economic opportunities* UNDP has, until recently, had a limited role. While UNDP importantly introduced methods to look at poverty beyond income limitations, it did not achieve expected results in terms of enhanced capacities for measuring multidimensional poverty. Since 2019, UNDP has positioned itself more in the area of social protection through stronger partnerships with other United Nations agencies, and scaled up its support on Blue Economy issues. The office responded promptly to the COVID-19 outbreak with technical advice, procurement support and the acquisition of protective equipment.

In the area of *climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and clean and sustainable energy*, UNDP was extensively involved in recovery and reconstruction work after the 2017 hurricanes. Prompt support from UNDP was highly relevant to the countries' needs, although the effectiveness of projects was challenged by limited capacities and procurement

delays. UNDP has also enhanced the availability of tools and best practices for early warning, and supported planning and monitoring of adaptation and mitigation measures in some countries. Furthermore, UNDP promoted the use of renewable energy and energy-efficient practices, although many of the supported policies and bills are yet to be approved. Pilot projects at community level enhanced community resilience.

In the area of *natural resources and ecosystem conservation and restoration*, the overall effectiveness of UNDP work on protected areas remains strongly dependent on government approval of proposed actions, as well as the creation of mechanisms for financial sustainability. UNDP built the capacity of communities for better understanding of sustainable natural resource management and incentivized good practices to mitigate the risk of counterproductive behaviours. The lack of baseline assessments and systematic monitoring of key natural resource variables hampered the assessment of conservation gains.

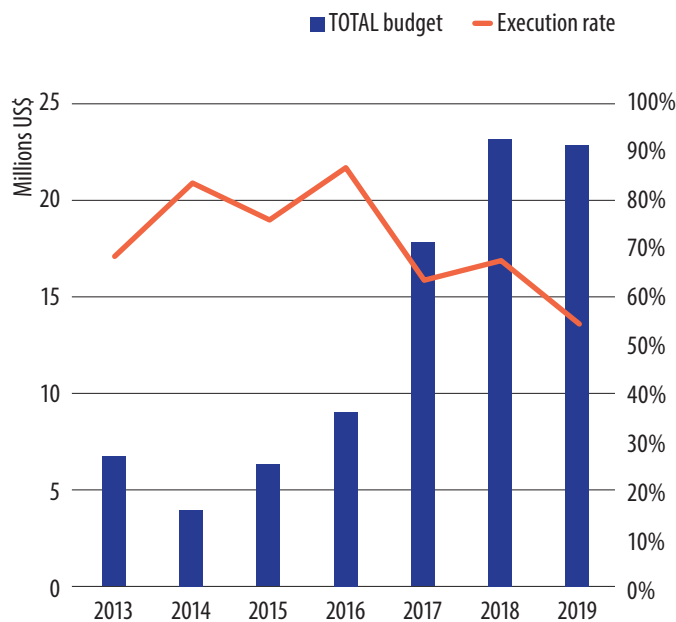
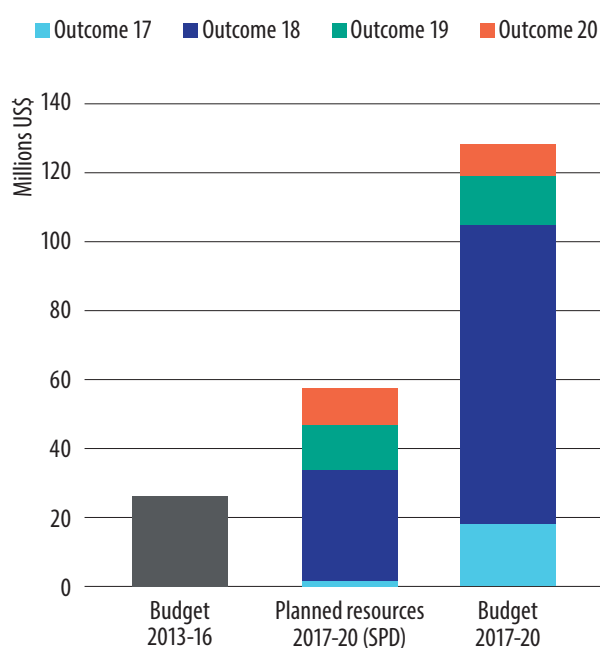
In the area of *access to justice, protection, citizen security and safety*, UNDP set the basis for strengthening national capacity for data collection on the functioning of crime and rule of law institutions, and supported the digital recording of incidents in police stations. While relevant, the effectiveness of the sole project in this area has been significantly affected by ambitious design, budget cuts and procurement challenges.

UNDP mobilized a significantly higher amount of resources than expected. While its financial sustainability remains high risk, revenue from resource mobilization efforts granted the office valuable short-term stability. The inflow of programmatic resources was, however, not accompanied by adequate operational strengthening and risk management. UNDP delivery was affected by significant delays in procurement processes, the limited capacities of national institutions, as well as stretched internal resources to cover the large portfolio.

UNDP effectiveness was also challenged by the breadth of its coverage, with resources thinly spread across countries. While average delivery did not significantly diminish in the case of multi-country projects,

project effectiveness and sustainability appear to be inversely proportional to the number of countries covered, with diminishing returns in particular for large multi-country projects.

### UNDP budget growth and delivery 2017-2020



## Recommendations

To strengthen UNDP work in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean in support of national development priorities, the Independent Country Programme Evaluation made five recommendations:

**Recommendation 1.** UNDP should maintain its strategic engagement in the Eastern Caribbean islands focused on mitigation of the countries' economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities, and with a stronger focus on inequality reduction and sustainable employment.

**Recommendation 2.** UNDP should seek ways to improve the delivery of its projects, by strengthening its operational support and ensuring better integration of procurement in project planning and management.

**Recommendation 3.** UNDP should enhance the design and management of its projects to better account for the local context, and with activities tailored to promote outcome-level change. Adequate resources should be allocated to provide quality assurance, support delivery, and promote sustained institutional strengthening, particularly in the case of projects under national implementation modality.

**Recommendation 4.** UNDP should further leverage its partnerships with United Nations agencies, regional

organizations and non-state actors. Opportunities for UNDP to partner with non-resident agencies in areas of shared interest should continue to be explored.

**Recommendation 5.** UNDP should take measures to ensure the financial sustainability of its office in the Eastern Caribbean, which supports the needs of ten vulnerable countries.