

# Evaluation of UNDP Suriname Country Programme 2017-2021

## SUMMARY

The final evaluation of the Country Programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Suriname 2017-2021 was carried out in February – May 2021. The evaluation was requested by the UNDP Suriname and carried out from Panama and Suriname by a two-person external Evaluation Team. The timing of the evaluation was related to the preparation of United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (UNMSDF) 2021-2025 and the development of a new mid-term (5 years) development plan, the National Development Plan of Suriname (NDP) 2021-2026. The *objective* of the Evaluation is to generate relevant and useful information to support evidence-based decision making and provide strategic direction and inputs to the preparation of the next UNDP CPD and the next UNMSDF, both scheduled to be prepared in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021.

As per the Terms of Reference, this Evaluation has been designed with *dual purposes*: 1) to allow national counterparts and UNDP to meet their accountability objectives, and 2) to capture good practices and lessons learned. It also aimed to assess the *relevance* of the CPD and UNDP's overall intervention, including an assessment of the appropriateness of its design, including objectives, planned outputs, activities, and inputs, factors (both positive and negative) that have affected the implementation of the programme, the extent to which adequate monitoring was undertaken throughout the period and the extent to which evaluation systems were adequate to capture significant developments and inform responsive management. The primary *users* of the evaluation results are UNDP Suriname and the Government of Suriname.

The present evaluation was a summative and formative non-random process and result evaluation at the outcome level. Using the standard evaluation criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability, and the additional criterion of Gender Equality, Equity and Human Rights, the evaluation assessed the CPD in its entirety, covering the period from January 2017 to-date, including the Results Matrix that constitutes the basis for the monitoring and evaluation of the 3 established outcomes, its 23 indicators, baselines and targets for 2021, budget and funding sources and the responsible parties. The evaluation also assessed the extent to which the programme contributes to the advancement of human rights for the rights holders, especially the women and most disadvantaged, marginalized, and excluded or those at risk of exclusion.

The evaluation reviewed more than 120 sources of written information and conducted forty-eight virtual individual and group interviews with eighty-three respondents representing the Government of Suriname, the UN Agencies operating in the country (both in-country as well as from exterior), international development partners, national and civil society representatives, including the private sector. The evaluation did not encounter major limitations, the most notable ones were related to limited timeframe and delays in confirmations from stakeholders, which resulted in the extension of the timeline as well as absence of stakeholders from the past Government. The most important challenge was absence of important documentation, such as annual, quarterly and final reports, annual workplans, project extensions and other such information.

The Evaluation made the following conclusions:

**Conclusion 1. Relevance, Effectiveness, sustainability:** The Country Programme (CP) was formally relevant as it correctly identified the country's development challenges and needs and offered a logical programmatic response; however, its actual scale does not fully match the identified needs and the implemented programme is disconnected from the intended goals. This disconnect limits the CP's overall effectiveness and sustainability to the area of Environment and Natural Resource Management, where it has achieved most notable results and has the best potential for sustaining them.

**Conclusion 2. Relevance, Effectiveness, GEEHR:** Despite the disconnect between the programme's intended logic and its actual scale, UNDP has been making important efforts to increase the Programme relevance and effectiveness. The programme developed some interventions that are more in line with the intended programme logic, although these interventions were not formally tied with the CPD Outcomes and Outputs.

**Conclusion 3. Relevance, effectiveness, sustainability:** While UNDP is appreciated as a trustworthy partner, the Country Programme's limited relevance, effectiveness and sustainability are due to the disconnect between the intended programme vision, and the limitations of its design and implementation; reduced flow of resources to MIC and specifically, lack of funding available to for Democratic Governance and Social Development areas; significant challenges imposed by institutional weaknesses and lack of political will and national uptake; disruptions in programme continuity due to elections, turnover in civil service and COVID-19 pandemic; ineffective business model and human resource capacities.

**Conclusion 4. Relevance, coherence, GEEHR:** UNDP enjoys a good standing among all stakeholders and is viewed as a trustworthy, responsive and competent partner in specific areas of their involvement, capable of mobilizing funds for environment, provide operational support to project implementation and provide technical assistance; however, few beyond the UN are aware of the entirety of UNDP's mandate and portfolio and its specific value added.

**Conclusion 5. Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, GEEHR:** UNDP's programme is heavily supply-driven as the most relevant, effective and efficient endeavors are those linked with donor funds and/or regional or global programmes or interagency endeavors. The CO has not yet been able to expand the demand for its services and position itself as the integrator of diverse development interventions under its global Human Development mandate.

**Conclusion 6. Effectiveness GEEHR:** UNDP has developed strong and innovative partnerships with the government, the UN, NGOs and private sector, which it can use to enhance its integrator role in Social Development, Democratic Governance and most importantly, to accelerate the progress on SDGs and develop more integrated and comprehensive solutions to assist the country in the aftermath of COVID-19 towards green recovery.

**Conclusion 7. Efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, relevance, GEEHR:** In its current state, UNDP’s business model is not efficient and conducive to a stronger performance and impact. UNDP’s current project-based model driven by ENR funding is not sufficient for a more comprehensive and efficient tackling of complex systemic challenges to achieve outcome-level changes especially in the areas of governance, social development, gender equality, equity and Human Rights.

Overall, the Country Programme has been rated as Moderately Satisfactory on a scale of 1-5 (1 – highly unsatisfactory; 2 - unsatisfactory; 3 – moderately satisfactory; 4 – satisfactory; 5 - highly satisfactory) as follows:

<b>Evaluation Criterion</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Relevance	3	Satisfactory
Effectiveness	2.5	Unsatisfactory
Coherence	3.5	Moderately satisfactory
Efficiency	3.5	Moderately satisfactory
Sustainability	2.5	Moderately satisfactory
GEEHR	3.5	Moderately satisfactory
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>Moderately satisfactory</b>

The Evaluation made the following strategic recommendations:

1. **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability:** Improve coherence and the programmatic logic of the future CPD by developing a programme Theory of Change as a basis for the new CPD RRF, based on an in-depth understanding of structural and underlying causes, assumptions and risks, including contextual risks and own limitations and strengths.
  - a. Conduct a thorough stakeholder analysis, including the government, civil society and donor community, and carry out stakeholder consultations to identify their priorities, areas of convergence, partnership and financing opportunities and priorities and to define the niches where UNDP has a greater added value and can develop partnerships to ensure the sufficiency of outcomes and complementarity;
  - b. Determine the potential sources of funding in advance to avoid overambitious outcomes and outputs, which cannot be implemented because of the lack of funds;
  - c. Identify the areas of greatest political sensitivity and risk and seek alliances to build alternative proposals;
  - d. Using the findings of the CCA and consultations with the stakeholders and UNCT, identify key deprivations to be addressed and carry out a causal analysis of the main gaps and barriers; define what is needed to address those gaps and barriers and who can address them.
2. **Relevance, GEEHR:** Ensure that the process involves both duty bearers and rights holders to generate actions from the perspective of human rights and equality, including gender equality and women’s empowerment.

- a. Consider carrying out surveys and focus group consultations with key population groups to identify bottom-up needs and build consensus on strategic solutions that transcend the temporality of five-year planning.
3. **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency:** Consider developing programme portfolios with cross-sectoral synergies to increase horizontal integration and enhance programme relevance and effectiveness, using the ENR area as a possible point of entry.
  - a. Using the available corporate resources, consider carrying out “sense-making” exercises to kick-start the thinking about new approaches to complex challenges and develop a comprehensive vision of collective assets, capabilities, relationships and system effects of the entire country programme instead of a separate set of projects;
  - b. Based on the identified strengths and assets, develop packages of proposals for donor funding, leveraging IFIs, private sector and thematic/trust funds.
4. **Relevance, Effectiveness:** Develop the CPD Results Framework based on the Theory of Change (ToC) validated with a broad participation of the key stakeholders with the underlying assumptions and risks reflecting the realistic commitment and participation of all responsible parties, resource availability and mobilization perspectives, etc.
  - a. Consider the concept of attribution/contributing, when developing the CPD outputs, to ensure the coherence and alignment with outcomes;
  - b. Consider developing intermediate outputs, to reduce the gap between the outcomes and outputs following the if/then logic of the ToC.
5. **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, GEEHR:** Improve the RBM capacities and gender-responsive M&E culture in the CO and improve the monitoring at project and output level to track progress towards the outcomes.
  - a. Strengthen the mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and reporting, establishing minimum reporting benchmarks (at least annual and final) and minimum common formats and standards for project and programme monitoring;
  - b. Ensure that the CO collects quality data disaggregated by gender, age, and other parameters for the construction of the baselines and targets and monitoring the progress of projects, and ensuring the Human Rights and Gender-Based approach in programming;
  - c. Carry out regular training on Results-Based Management and ensure timely planning and accountability;
  - d. Consider a position for a M&E specialist, through core or project funding.
6. **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence:** Ensure constant course correction and adjustment of the CPD ToC, especially after the elections and subsequent changes in government, or other major events that affect the programme and the country in general.
  - a. Ensure continuous monitoring of progress according to the Theory of Change and risk analysis;
  - b. Carry out mid-term review of the CPD regularly to verify the validity of the ToC and its assumptions and risks.

7. **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability:** Improve the visibility and strategic positioning by increasing the communication and awareness on UNDP mandate, focus and programme portfolio.
  - a. Consider communication as the development tool and develop a communication strategy and innovative tools based on a clear understanding of different audiences (government, CSO, donors, private sector, youth, ITPs, PWD, women, rural/urban populations), their needs, and expectations and access to different communication modalities;
  - b. Develop a CO knowledge management strategy and link it with the communication strategy to promote the UNDP offer and generate the demand for UNDP services;
  - c. Allocate funds for communication and public relations and outreach activities
  - d. Identify champions to promote topics of interest (SDG, Violence/GBV, Human Rights (ITPs, PWD), migration, gender, resilience, climate change, youth) in collaboration with the UN Agencies.
8. **Efficiency, Effectiveness:** Strengthen the HR capacity in the area of SD and DG.
  - a. Look for opportunities to fund additional posts to enhance the DG and SD areas, especially if the separate position of Gender Focal Point is not envisaged.
9. **Sustainability:** Strengthen sustainability strategies in projects and for the CPD
  - a. Ensure to develop adequate sustainability and exit strategies for activities and projects under the CPD, based on the original ToC assumptions and risks and follow up through continuous situational and performance monitoring.

The Evaluation also identified a number of lessons learned:

1. The Government term and the UNDP programme cycle do not coincide. In the year that the CPD is being evaluated and developed, the new Government is initiating the preparations of the next National Development Plan. This happens every 5 years and is a good opportunity for the CO to test the validity of the Country Programme Theory of Change, its assumptions and risks and engage with the Government in strategic consultations on its priorities. This will allow, on the one hand, to make necessary adjustments to the ongoing programme and on the other, offer the incoming Government a package of customizable UNDP's services that can reinforce UNDP's comparative advantages and facilitate UNDP's early engagement in planning the national development priorities, thus advancing the preparations of the next CPD.
2. Sometimes old ways can be most innovative – while rightly pursuing modern digital communication platforms and tools, it is important to remember that many communities, especially those in the hinterlands and rural areas, those deprived of liberty, the elderly or people with hearing or vision impairments, may not be able or willing to use modern technologies. In these circumstances, old-fashioned means such as the radio, community message boards and networks, billboards and newspaper ads can be a cost effective and efficient way to reach the most vulnerable and excluded
3. Getting all the key stakeholders on board and reaching a common understanding of the context of the programme to be implemented is a time consuming and challenging process. This was visible with the REDD+ programme where different viewpoints

were at play role and stakeholders were adamant on protecting their interests, which caused certain delays.

4. Capacities and institutional frameworks both for Government and Civil Society are weak and will negatively impact the implementation of proposed programmes and projects. When developing the CPD, national stakeholders may propose and agree with proposed outcomes and outputs but may not be fully aware on the intensity of implementation process and not be equipped and skilled to independently coordinate and implement programmes and projects. This points to the necessity for the UNDP CO to go through an extensive advocacy process with the national stakeholders, to ensure the buy-in necessary for the delivery of planned results and long-term sustainability.
5. Community based activities are essential, not only to advance the UNDP goals and achieve SDGs, but to foster the visibility and increased the awareness about UNDP's work. However, these activities should be integrated into a larger vision towards the overall outputs and outcomes. Since the communities will reach out to the UNDP with proposals of a small reach, UNDP should strive to simultaneously engage the key government institutions with these communities while strengthening and facilitating the community organizations to independentize, expand their scope and expand their outreach.
6. Under the current CPD, the UNDP has provided the coordination and implementation support to other international partners e.g., the CDB and the EU. This has strengthened the CO's capacity to mobilize, coordinate and engage with partners. This capacity should be thoroughly examined to determine the potential in the coming CPD and identify international partners as potential financial contributors.