

Zambia is a lower middle-income country with a medium human development index. Zambia is considered a least-developed country, with the third-highest level of income inequality in the world. Zambia’s economic growth reversed during this country programme cycle. The impact of recurring droughts and floods, exacerbated by climate change, low global prices for copper, increasing public debt and the COVID-19 pandemic slowed Zambia’s economic growth. Development financing is a major constraint for Zambia’s development ambitions, due to national debt, waning donor interest and the ‘middle-income trap’¹

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country programme document (CPD) 2016-2021 was premised on the priority development areas identified in the Zambia Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) (2017-2021). To support the Government of Zambia in achieving its priorities, UNDP is organized into three core areas of work, with attempts to create a more integrated approach: 1) inclusive growth and social development, 2) environmentally sustainable economic development, and 3) governance and participation.

Conclusions

UNDP’s country programme 2016-2021 is on track to deliver most of its expected project-level results and outputs. However, evidence of sustainable contributions to the expected development outcomes is limited. UNDP is strategically positioned in the country, but its responsiveness has been in decline.

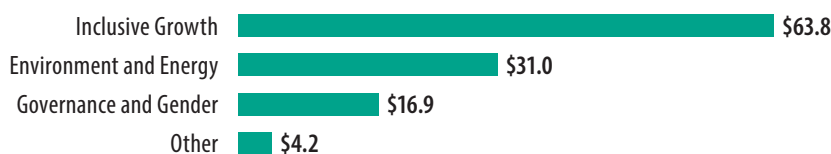
While UNDP is highly trusted and recognized for its support to democratic governance, particularly in elections, it fell short of its goal to enhance transparency and accountability in government, a key issue that has affected the credibility of the country in securing adequate development funding.

UNDP made good progress in successfully integrating efforts on climate change and resilience with natural resource management and the promotion of livelihoods for income earning opportunities. However, there is no evidence that efforts have significantly influenced the expected outcomes of economic growth and environmentally sustainable economic development to reduce poverty and inequalities and to lower carbon emissions.

UNDP made relevant advances in mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment in the programme. However, gender mainstreaming was mostly focused on gender parity and the inclusion of female participants. Only its sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) support used more responsive approaches with adequate attention to improving the legal framework for women’s rights and opportunities in Zambia. UNDP lacks a holistic approach that integrates the entire programme in a gender transformative way and in more alignment with the Leave No One Behind principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UNDP helped improve Zambia’s health supply chain management and access to HIV and other health-related basic services. However, there was limited progress on sustainably strengthening national capacities and removing barriers hindering targeted key populations’ access to HIV and AIDS services.

Programme expenditure by thematic area, 2016–2020 (million US\$)



¹ Economic development situation in which a country that attains a certain income gets stuck at that level. The World Bank defines as the ‘middle-income range’ countries with gross national product per capita that has remained between \$1,000 and \$12,000 at constant (2011) prices.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Capitalizing on its unique positioning and long-term partnerships in Zambia, UNDP should position the next country programme to provide more innovative and accelerated development solutions. This would help Zambia recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and build forward better. It would advance inclusive economic diversification for poverty reduction, and good governance for enhanced transparency and accountability.

Recommendation 2. UNDP should build on its integrative efforts to support sustainable economic development through improved community governance and management of natural resources, linking this to livelihood promotion, with a more comprehensive

theory of change and a partnership strategy to fund and scale successful initiatives for more significant and sustainable COVID-19 recovery, poverty reduction and inclusive economic diversification in Zambia.

Recommendation 3. To enhance transparency and accountability and build the confidence of the donor community to invest in the country, UNDP should leverage the trust and global UNDP capacities – built through the success of initiatives linked to elections and COVID-19 – to promote transparent and innovative digital solutions for good governance and public services.

Recommendation 4. UNDP should build on its gender-responsive approach to improve access to justice for victims of SGBV, to further integrate multi-dimensional strategies to address the structural and root causes of persistent gender-based violence, human-rights violations and inequalities in a transformative way.

Recommendation 5. UNDP's work on health must address long-standing issues with health supply chain stock-outs, ensure the transfer of capacity to government, and transition focus and resources to concretely removing barriers hindering access of targeted key populations to HIV/AIDS and other services as part of its human rights and Leave No One Behind initiatives.