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United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION
**CENTRAL AFRICAN
REPUBLIC**



INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability
responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT
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INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION: Central African Republic

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the first Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Central African Republic (CAR), carried out by the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP. The evaluation covers UNDP interventions implemented in the context of the country programme from 2018 to 2021, which was extended to 2022.

CAR has suffered waves of violence and armed conflict since its independence in 1960, making it one of the most fragile countries in the world. CAR's post-independence history has been marked by a succession of authoritarian regimes put in place following *coups d'état* or disputed elections and associated with mass crimes and serious human rights violations. In 2013, CAR entered a period of unprecedented insecurity and humanitarian crisis following the overthrow of the Government by a coalition of rebels. A ceasefire agreement amongst the belligerents was signed after the Brazzaville Forum in 2014, which paved the way to the organization of the Bangui National Reconciliation and Reconstruction Forum in May 2015, with a focus on reconciliation and the fight against impunity, and to the 2019 peace agreement. Yet, sociopolitical instability has persisted in CAR, and the country remains one of the least-developed countries globally, at the bottom of global human development rankings.

The UNDP country programme was designed to support the Government in the implementation of its national Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan to respond to the needs of Central Africans in the areas of governance, peacebuilding and rule of law, but also in its efforts towards towards stabilization, recovery and resilience-building. UNDP has been an important contributor to the wider efforts of the international community to restore the rule of law, which is generally considered an essential precondition to realize peace, human rights, gender equality and economic development. The Special Criminal Court and the Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, which UNDP is helping to put in place in collaboration with the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission and national Government, are concrete examples of mechanisms that could allow the country to provide justice for victims and reinforce opportunities for peace and reconciliation. However, despite these gains, much still needs to be done to bring justice, peace and security to Central Africans, including better understanding of the structural causes of the conflict.

As UNDP advances in the development of a new programme framework for CAR, the country office will need to make more strategic use of its resources, internally, by strengthening synergy across its upstream and downstream interventions, and externally, by better coordinating its actions with other development and humanitarian actors operating in the country. UNDP should also capitalize on vertical funds to catalyse livelihoods outcomes, while also tackling environment, energy and climate change adaptation as such opportunities have not been sufficiently exploited.

I would like to thank the Government of Central African Republic, national stakeholders and colleagues from the UNDP country office and the Regional Bureau for Africa for their support throughout the evaluation. I hope that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will help in strengthening the formulation of the next country programme strategy to enable peace and sustainable development pathways for the people of Central African Republic.



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	National Elections Authority
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil society organization
DIM	Direct implementation modality
DPC	Data processing centre
EAD	United Nations Electoral Assistance Division
EIW	Employment-intensive works
EU	European Union
FACA	CAR armed forces
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment
HCT	Humanitarian country team
HDN	Humanitarian-development nexus
HDR	Human development report
HHI	Harvard Humanitarian Initiative
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
ICTJ	International Centre for Transitional Justice
ID	Identity
IFI	International financial institution
IGA	Income-generating activity
ILO	International Labour Organization
INL	United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
ISF	Internal security forces
IT	Information technology
JSP	Justice Sector Policy
LDC	Least-developed country
LDP	Local development plan
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation

MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
NIM	National implementation modality
OAI	Office of Audit and Investigation
ODA	Official development assistance
PAF-CPS	Joint Project to Support the Functioning of the SCC
PAPEC	Electoral Support Project
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PwD	People with disabilities
RBA	UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa
RCPCA	National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan
RESA	National Strategy for the Restoration and Extension of State Authority
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report
SCC	Special Criminal Court
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
TJRRC	Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission
ToC	Theory of change
UMIRR	Joint Unit for Rapid Intervention and Eradication of Sexual Violence against Women and Children
UNDAF+	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNPol	United Nations Police
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

Evaluation Brief: Central African Republic

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted the first Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) of UNDP Central African Republic (CAR) in 2021. The purpose of the evaluation is to inform the development of the next UNDP country programme, strengthen accountability to national stakeholders and the UNDP Executive Board, and contribute to organizational learning and decision-making.

The CAR ICPE assessed the current programme cycle from 2018 to 2021 (extended to 2022), which covered two outcome areas, namely: 1) governance, peacebuilding and the rule of law; and 2) stabilization, recovery and resilience-building. UNDP supported the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan by providing technical, financial and administrative support to the national Government.

CAR, a sparsely populated landlocked country, is one of the least-developed countries in the world. It has suffered waves of violence and armed conflict since its independence in 1960, making it one of the most fragile countries in the world. Violence and conflict have had a devastating impact on national government institutions, public order and the rule of law, while the perpetrators of crimes and human rights abuses proliferate with impunity. Despite a ceasefire and peace agreement, signed in 2014 and 2019 respectively, nearly 1.4 million Central Africans are internally displaced or living as refugees in neighbouring countries. Over two thirds of Central Africans live in poverty, and an estimated 71 percent of the population was living below the international poverty line in 2018. Women and young girls are among those who suffer the most from the political and security crisis affecting CAR since 2012.

Findings and conclusions

The country office has achieved mixed results, with strong variation between programmatic areas, which reflects the inherent challenges of operating in a highly volatile environment. While UNDP was relatively successful in delivering many of its expected products and outputs, higher-level results were less often achieved.

One of the flagship projects with success in achieving medium-term results is the support to the electoral process which allowed the country to undertake a credible nationwide voter registration process and hold national elections with a relatively high voter turnout, despite the challenging environment. Other strategic projects, such as support to the special criminal court, to the redeployment of internal security forces and to the Joint Unit for Rapid Intervention and Eradication of Sexual Violence against Women and Children, have been relatively successful in delivering planned activities, but have not yet yielded the expected longer-term results.

At community level, UNDP resilience-building efforts to create employment opportunities and strengthen social cohesion have benefited nearly 24,000 people. Their actual effectiveness, however, has been hampered by the short-term, small-scale and (programmatically and geographically) fragmented nature of the interventions. Throughout the programme, ensuring national ownership of these processes has been a challenge for UNDP, even though national ownership remains a necessary condition to achieve sustainable results over time.

UNDP presence and operations in CAR nonetheless constitute an essential part of the international community's recovery, peacebuilding and development efforts in support to the Government. The UNDP value addition lies in the fact that it is recognised as a trustworthy and transparent partner, able to administer donor resources and conduct procurement processes in a credible manner, while also having the programmatic flexibility to respond to the country's development needs, thus distinguishing itself from other humanitarian actors operating in the country.

Despite being one of the most aid-dependent countries in the world, CAR does not figure in the top 20 official development assistance (ODA) recipients in fragile contexts. In this climate, UNDP has remained dependent on a handful of donors, and with reduced fiscal space and anticipated budgetary constraints in donor countries due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is little diversification of opportunities in sight. In this context, the evaluation noted that UNDP did not sufficiently capitalize on the potential to synergize, reduce duplication, and make more coherent use of donor funding by implementing truly coordinated joint projects or programmes with other technical and financial partners.

In a country where gender inequality and sexual and gender-based violence are among the highest in the world, UNDP can be commended for its efforts to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment into its programme and operations. At programmatic level, however, most UNDP expenditure is still oriented towards projects and activities that make limited contributions to gender equality. With women, including victims of sexual and gender-based violence, remaining largely marginalized from decision-making spheres and having limited access to justice, more blatant efforts to provide public services adapted to girls and women in these areas remains critical.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. UNDP should capitalize on its integrator role by seeking to become a thought leader on ways for the United Nations to play a more transformative role in CAR. This could be through a structured reflection process led by academics, involving civil society, governmental and non-governmental organizations. This effort should recognize that State-building is an endogenous process and that State legitimacy is driven by State-society relations.

Recommendation 2. UNDP should seek to improve the linkages between its upstream and downstream interventions, while also focusing on intervening more coherently, for longer periods of time, in a reduced number of locations at community level.

Recommendation 3. UNDP should move forward with the formalization of its portfolio approach by consolidating its projects into coherent, interconnected programmes. It should develop 'nested' theories of change (ToCs) for each of its portfolios to facilitate the process of moving away from the project-focused approach that still prevails in areas other than rule of law. These portfolio-level ToCs should be consolidated into a country programme level ToC and/or, if possible, a ToC at United Nations country team level.

Recommendation 4. UNDP should advocate through the Durable Solutions Working Group for the common adoption of an area-based approach by the United Nations country team and Humanitarian Country Team, to be informed by a review of United Nations/UNDP geographical positioning.

Recommendation 5. To bolster progress on gender equality and women's empowerment, UNDP should continue its upstream support to create a more favourable policy environment. More efforts should be deployed at midstream and downstream levels to ensure that justice, security and political institutions are able to address gender inequalities and, most importantly, sexual and gender-based violence. This needs to be accompanied by the establishment of a more reliable system for the collection of robust statistical data on harmful practices and violence against women.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts independent country programme evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and present evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to national development priorities, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results.

ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.¹ The purpose of an ICPE is to support the development of the next UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD), strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders and the Executive Board, and contribute to organizational learning and decision-making.

This is the first ICPE for the Central African Republic (CAR), with no ICPE or Assessment of Development Results previously conducted. The ICPE was conducted in 2021, towards the end of the current UNDP programme cycle of 2018-2021 (extended to 2022), with a view to contributing to the preparation of the new UNDP programme starting from 2023. It covered activities implemented in the current 2018-2021 cycle, while taking into account interventions which started in the previous cycle (2012-2017) but continued or concluded in the current programme cycle.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology was guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines.² In accordance with the ICPE Terms of Reference (See Annex 1), the evaluation addressed four main evaluation questions presented in Box 1.

An evaluation matrix (see Annex 2) was designed to guide the evaluation process, structured around Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) criteria, and providing evaluation questions, sub-questions, indicators and data sources. This was used to organize the available evidence by key evaluation questions and support the evaluation team in drawing well-substantiated conclusions and recommendations. Gender was mainstreamed by including gender-related evaluation sub-questions under all criteria.

The evaluation collected, analysed and triangulated qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary sources to ensure the validity of its findings, conclusions and recommendations.

BOX 1. Evaluation questions

1. What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
 2. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
 3. To what extent has UNDP been able to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and support country's preparedness, response and recovery process?
 4. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP performance and the sustainability of results?
-

¹ See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>.

² UNEG (2020) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866> and UNEG (2016) Norms and Standards for Evaluation: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

The evaluation relied on the following sources and methods:

- **A portfolio analysis and desk review** of all available UNDP documents (programme documents, Results-Oriented Annual Reports [ROARs], evaluations, financial data), as well as background documents on the national context, documents prepared by international partners during the period under review and documents prepared by United Nations agencies and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).
- **Key informant interviews** with more than 175 stakeholders, using remote and in-person semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Among the key informants were government counterparts, civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, United Nations agencies, MINUSCA, multilateral organizations, bilateral agencies, UNDP staff at the country office and Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA), programme implementing partners and beneficiaries at community level.
- **Site visits and direct observation** of project activities were conducted by national consultants in Bangui, Bambari and Bossangoa. These projects and locations were selected through a review of project documents and discussions with portfolio and programme managers, to ensure coverage of interventions in diverse geographical locations based on accessibility and security constraints. Site visits allowed the team to interview community members and local authorities.
- **A pre-mission self-assessment questionnaire** completed by the country office, addressing key issues covered by the evaluation.
- **A presentation of preliminary findings** at the end of the data collection phase, to validate initial findings with country office staff and collect any additional information.

To analyse the effectiveness of the UNDP country programme (evaluation question 3), results achieved at project and output levels were assessed, alongside the extent to which they have contributed to achieving the intended CPD outcomes. In this process, positive and negative, direct and indirect as well as unintended results were considered. The examination of relevance and programme effectiveness also considered the capacity of UNDP to adapt to the volatile context of CAR (evaluation question 2). To better understand UNDP performance, factors that influenced results were also examined. Also considered were the utilization of resources to deliver results, and how management practices impacted the achievement of programmatic goals, including for the mainstreaming of gender equality across the programme.

The evaluation team assessed UNDP efforts towards reaching those most in need and towards coherence *vis-à-vis* the work of other humanitarian and developments actors in the country, including MINUSCA.

In line with the UNDP gender equality strategy, the ICPE examined the level of gender mainstreaming at programmatic and operational levels. Gender-related data were collected from available corporate sources (such as the Gender Marker) and programme/ project sources (documents and interviews), where available, and assessed against the programme outcomes.

In addition to addressing the evaluation questions, the ICPE has applied the ICPE rating system, developed by IEO to quantify programme performance. The rating system includes key parameters, indicators and data sources that were aligned with and integrated into the evaluation matrix. The rating is based on a four-point scale and applied for the five evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.³ The rating was first computed for each output or portfolio, and then aggregated to arrive at the programme-level performance score. Each rating was produced and validated by the lead evaluator and evaluation consultants to ensure consistency and reliability.

³ 4=satisfactory/achieved; 3=moderately satisfactory/mostly achieved; 2=moderately unsatisfactory/partially achieved; and 1=unsatisfactory/not achieved.

The report went through a series of internal and external reviews in line with the IEO peer-review process to ensure that findings, conclusions and recommendations are useful and credible. Following the reviews, the draft ICPE report was shared first with the country office and RBA, and then with the Government and national partners in CAR.

Since the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic did not allow international evaluators to travel to CAR, data collection and analysis relied on the support of a team of national evaluators from the University of Bangui who were able to meet with national partners and visit project sites. They also helped to ensure that the findings, conclusions and recommendations took adequate consideration of the national context.

1.3 Limitations

The main limitation faced in the conduct of this evaluation was the security situation in CAR. Data collection outside of Bangui was only considered later on in the process when and where security conditions were deemed appropriate, using United Nations humanitarian flights to Bambari and Bossangoa. Travel to other intervention sites was not possible due to the ongoing armed conflict in the country.

Furthermore, the health situation in CAR and globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic prevented members of the evaluation team who were not based in CAR from travelling to the country altogether. However, the team of national evaluation consultants from the University of Bangui, in close coordination with the ICPE lead evaluator and the UNDP country office, was able to travel to Bambari and Bossangoa in August 2021 to collect information and conduct interviews with administrative and local authorities (institutional beneficiaries), implementing NGOs, as well as direct beneficiaries (groups and associations) of UNDP projects in the visited prefectures.

The evaluation team also faced several telecommunications issues, as a fire in the facilities of a central telecommunication provider left part of the country without a reliable cellular and internet connection during the month of June 2021. While the situation was resolved after nearly three weeks, conducting virtual interviews remained a challenge throughout the assignment.

Several mitigation strategies were put in place, including a stronger reliance on the national team to conduct in-person interviews in Bangui, in compliance with national COVID-19 restrictions, and the utilization of the country office conference room to conduct several virtual meetings.

1.4 Country context

CAR is a sparsely populated landlocked country of 4.9 million inhabitants,⁴ and one of the least-developed countries (LDCs) in the world, ranking 188 out of 189 countries in the 2020 Human Development Index.⁵ Despite its abundant natural resources, impressive agricultural potential and vast mineral resources and forests, over two-thirds of Central Africans live in poverty, and it is estimated that about 71 percent of the population was living below the international poverty line (US\$ 1.90 per day in purchasing power parity) in 2018.⁶ While low productivity, weak markets and high gender inequality are all contributing factors, the

⁴ UNFPA, World Population Dashboard, 2021 data: <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/CF>.

⁵ Based on 2019 values. UNDP (2020) HDR, Central African Republic Briefing Note: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/CAF.pdf. At the time of developing the 2018-2021 CPD, and based on 2016 values, CAR was the least-developed country in the world.

⁶ World Bank (2021) CAR overview: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/centralafricanrepublic/overview>.

high levels of poverty were exacerbated by the 2013 ethno-political crisis and ensuing insecurity. Violence, looting and displacement in recent years have resulted in a sharp decrease in agricultural production, which remains the country's main economic activity.

Political context

CAR has suffered waves of violence and armed conflict since its independence in 1960, making it one of the most fragile countries in the world. CAR's post-independence history has been marked by a succession of authoritarian regimes put in place following *coups d'état* or disputed elections and associated with mass crimes and serious human rights violations that have generally gone unpunished. War crimes and crimes against humanity reached a first peak when former president Ange-Félix Patassé was overthrown by François Bozizé in March 2003. Numerous unsuccessful attempts to end the conflict through the negotiation of peace agreements were undertaken between 2007 and 2012, but atrocities continued to take place and impunity remained prevalent.

In March 2013, CAR entered a period of unprecedented insecurity and humanitarian crisis, following the brutal overthrow of the Government by a coalition of rebels, the *Seleka*, who rapidly went out of control forcing the *Seleka* leader to announce their dissolution. With the simultaneous dissolution of all of the State's security apparatus (armed forces, police, gendarmes) the anti-*Balaka* 'self-defence' armed group emerged, engaging in widespread reprisal attacks across CAR, most notably in Bangui and the west of the country. A ceasefire agreement was signed by the belligerents after the Brazzaville Forum in July 2014, which paved the way for the organization of the Bangui National Reconciliation and Reconstruction Forum (the Bangui Forum) in May 2015, with a focus on reconciliation and the fight against impunity.

On April 10, 2014, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2149,⁷ which established the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The 2014 Resolution recognized the complex security situation in CAR and expressed concerns over the dire humanitarian situation in the country, highlighting the need for the revitalization and acceleration of the reconciliation process to end the conflict. The Resolution further called for support to the Transitional Authorities and acceleration of inclusive political dialogue, with the aim of holding free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections as soon as possible. Elections were finally held in 2016, allowing a return to constitutional order. To implement its mandate, MINUSCA deployed 15,498 personnel, including over 11,195 troops, 2,307 police and 1,230 civilian personnel.⁸ The mission's mandate has been extended annually, and the last resolution to date extended the mandate of MINUSCA until 15 November 2022.⁹

CAR was able to hold another presidential election in December 2020, which led to the re-election of Faustin-Archange Touadéra for a second term. A total of 695,019 voters cast their ballots (37.4 percent of registered voters), while 3,243 of 5,448 polling stations (59.5 percent) were operational nationwide and abroad.¹⁰ However, political tensions significantly increased around these elections as a result of the trust deficit between the Government and the opposition over the electoral process. The Constitutional Court decision to invalidate five of the 22 presidential candidates, including former president François

⁷ S/RES/2149 (2014).

⁸ As of September 2021. See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusca>.

⁹ UNSC/RES 2605 (2021).

¹⁰ United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary General, Central African Republic, 16 February 2021 (S/2021/146). P.2. The Secretary General report provides a turnout figure of 37.4 percent and then says the Constitutional Court set a turnout rate at 35.25 percent.

Bozizé, led to some armed groups attempting to disrupt the electoral process and constitutional order. Violence perpetrated by armed groups, mainly in the north-west and south-east, had an impact on voter participation and the number of polling stations that could open.

Rule of Law

The insecurity affecting the country is both the cause and the consequence of long-standing structural problems experienced by the country since its independence, including chronic poverty, an extremely centralized State, limited State authority outside of Bangui, a weak judicial system, and insecurity fuelled by a degraded social fabric, the availability of weapons and competition for natural resources.¹¹ The security crisis is further aggravated by regional conflicts involving neighbouring countries, as well as tensions within and between communities in CAR due to ethnic, religious and economic factors. The concentration of power, resources and infrastructure in and around the capital Bangui has exacerbated feelings of exclusion by large parts of the population, fuelled political grievances and undermined the legitimacy of the State.

Violence and conflict have had a devastating impact on national government institutions, public order and the rule of law in CAR, while the perpetrators of crimes and human rights abuses proliferate with impunity. The lack of a sizeable police, gendarmerie or justice presence in cities and areas outside of Bangui fosters conditions that allow armed groups to retain control of cities and towns and continue to operate and terrorize local communities. Prefectural authorities are, in most cases, weak or non-existent, as the last local elections were held in 1988. By the end of 2021, the Government only controlled around 25 percent of the country, giving space for armed groups to exert control over parts of the rest of the territory. Efforts were undertaken by the Government to regain control of this territory, but the situation in the first quarter of 2022 was still difficult to quantify.

In response to the collapse of the justice system and the general impunity that followed the overthrow of the Government in March 2013 by armed groups, the international community has supported the country to rebuild its judicial system in an effort to end impunity. Following the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in 2015, and the progressive return of constitutional order in CAR in 2016, several justice mechanisms and measures have been put in place or strengthened, including the national ordinary judiciary system and transitional justice mechanisms such as the Special Criminal Court (SCC).

In his inauguration address to the nation in March 2021, the President set out his vision and priorities for his second term, which include good governance, human rights, and implementing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR, which he stressed remains the only valid political framework for peace and stability.¹² The agreement, which was signed in February 2019 with 14 armed groups, provides, *inter alia*, for the establishment of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission (TJRR). The 'Law on the Establishment, Organization and Operation of the TJRR' was promulgated on 7 April 2020. Other mechanisms, such as the Joint Unit for Rapid Intervention and Eradication of Sexual Violence against Women and Children (UMIRR) were also put in place to effectively improve access to justice and move towards the realization of human rights.

Victims of conflict in CAR recount little success in accessing justice through the centralized national judicial system, which is often dysfunctional and marred by corruption, and perennially lacks resources and capacity. As a result, most Central Africans resort to traditional justice practices.¹³ A series of perception surveys on

¹¹ UNDP, Country Programme Document for 2018-2021 (DP/DCP/CAF/4).

¹² United Nations Security Council (2021) Report of the Secretary General, Central African Republic, 16 June 2021 (S/2021/571).

¹³ International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) (2021) Why in the Central African Republic, Reparations Should Come First. Available at <https://www.ictj.org/news/why-central-african-republic-reparations-should-come-first>.

Peace, Justice and Security, undertaken by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) with support from UNDP and MINUSCA between 2017 and 2020, revealed that most respondents (77 percent) believed that justice was possible, yet about half (45 percent) judged that the system was corrupt, and many (33 percent) thought that justice favoured the rich, and payment was required for justice to be done (24 percent). Only one in three respondents expressed the belief that the system worked well (32 percent).¹⁴

Women and vulnerable populations

CAR ranks second lowest in the world for gender equality.¹⁵ Women and young girls are among those that suffer most from the political and security crisis affecting CAR. The crisis has led to frequent and deadly intercommunal clashes and the presence of armed groups among communities across the country, further driving a surge of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and other human rights violations. In addition, displaced women and refugees are at additional risk of SGBV, with very little possibility of care. The Gender-Based Violence Information Management System recorded 9,216 cases of SGBV in 2020, and 6,336 cases had already been reported by July 2021, although the real number is likely to be much higher since the System reports only in a limited geographical coverage and number of providers.¹⁶

The latest available sex-disaggregated statistics on rural poverty, from the 2017 National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA), estimate that 81 percent of women and 69 percent of men in rural areas live below the poverty line. While no recent disaggregated statistics on poverty are available, it is likely that the situation today is worse, given that the overall incidence of poverty has risen between 2019 and 2020 and income inequalities between men and women persist. Furthermore, inequalities affect women in CAR on a wider range of issues, including access to education, health, basic services, electricity and telecommunications, and finance/ the banking system. The poor quality of primary education, the high school drop-out rate for girls, and the numerous cases of violence against women and girls, gives CAR among the lowest education and gender equality indicators in the world.¹⁷ Women's participation in decision-making is low, both at institutional and community levels. The country is made up of various indigenous groups, including the Mbororo Peuhls who have been targeted by the anti-Balaka militias and the Ba'aka Pygmies who, living in a semi-nomadic way, sometimes have difficulty cohabiting with Bantu populations. Marginalized and discriminated against, indigenous women and children have seen their rights violated throughout the conflict.¹⁸

As of February 2022, approximately 692,000 Central Africans were internally displaced, and an additional 736,000 were estimated to be living as refugees in neighbouring countries.¹⁹ The humanitarian situation further deteriorated in the election years 2020 and 2021 owing to violence, population displacement and surging food prices triggered by disruption of the country's main supply route, the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 and declining agricultural production caused by floods. One-third of the population remains displaced. Approximately 388,000 people were newly displaced within the country between December 2020 and March 2021 due to electoral violence, while a further 121,000 people fled to neighbouring countries.²⁰ In December 2021, over half of the population, 3.1 million people, needed humanitarian assistance and protection, of whom 2.1 million were in dire need.²¹

¹⁴ HHI and UNDP (2020) Peace, Justice and Security Polls, Report 5.

¹⁵ UNDP Gender Inequality Index – based on 2019 data.

¹⁶ HNO (2021) Humanitarian Situation Update, Central African Republic.

¹⁷ World Bank (2021) CAR Overview: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/centralafricanrepublic/overview>.

¹⁸ See ILO: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/fr/?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0:NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID:3175057.

¹⁹ United Nations Security Council (2022) Report of the Secretary General, Central African Republic.

²⁰ United Nations Security Council (2021) Report of the Secretary General, Central African Republic, (S/2021/571).

²¹ OCHA (2022) Gender-based violence: a scourge with devastating consequences: <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/car/card/3wnXz0h5EQ/>.

1.5 The United Nations and UNDP in CAR

The foundation for the United Nations intervention in CAR is the 2018-2021 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF+) (extended to 2022), which describes the integrated strategy for United Nations support to recovery and peacebuilding efforts. UNDAF+ is guided by the principles of leaving no one behind, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), sustainability, resilience, and accountability. The UNDAF+ 2018-2021 highlights three key strategic outcome areas for United Nations assistance in CAR, which are aligned to the priorities of the Government described in the RCPCA. The UNDAF+ priority areas are: (i) the consolidation of peace, security and social cohesion; (ii) social welfare and equity; and (iii) economic and sustainable recovery. UNDAF+ is guided by the principle of "Delivering as One", in which the United Nations country team develops a common strategy to respond to the country's priorities. The implementation of UNDAF+ involves 14 United Nations agencies and the integrated mission MINUSCA.²² It was designed to integrate efforts and pool resources from the United Nations country team and MINUSCA, and move towards an effective humanitarian-development nexus (HDN) approach. The budget for its implementation is estimated at \$1.14 billion for the four-year period.²³

Priority tasks in the MINUSCA mandate include: the protection of civilians; support to the extension of State authority, the deployment of security forces and preservation of territorial integrity; support to the peace process and implementation of the Peace Agreement; national reconciliation and transitional justice at national and local levels; creating a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance; the promotion and protection of human rights; and support to the Security Sector Reform (SSR), to reinforce the national judicial system and rule of law in CAR. Finally, a key priority of the mission is to assist the CAR authorities to prepare and deliver inclusive, credible and peaceful elections, by providing security, operational, logistical and technical support, facilitate access to remote areas and coordinating electoral assistance.²⁴

The UNDP CAR CPD (2018-2021) focuses specifically on two outcomes defined in UNDAF+, namely: Outcome 1.1, "By 2021, political and administrative institutions and CSOs promote and contribute to peace, security, national reconciliation and human rights"; and Outcome 3.2 "By 2021, political and administrative institutions, CSOs and the private sector implement policies, programmes and reforms aimed at inclusive economic growth (good governance, recovery and job creation) and ethical transparent and sustainable management of natural resources". In the UNDP CPD, these correspond to: Outcome 1, Governance, Peacebuilding and the Rule of Law; and Outcome 2, Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience-Building.

With an actual budget of \$108 million, UNDP implemented 50 projects over the programme cycle, which represented over \$88.4 million in programme expenditure at the time of the evaluation.²⁵ The significant increase in the programme's budget and expenditure in 2020 presented in Figure 1 below is attributable to UNDP electoral-support projects. As such, expenditure is expected to go back to 2019 levels in 2021.

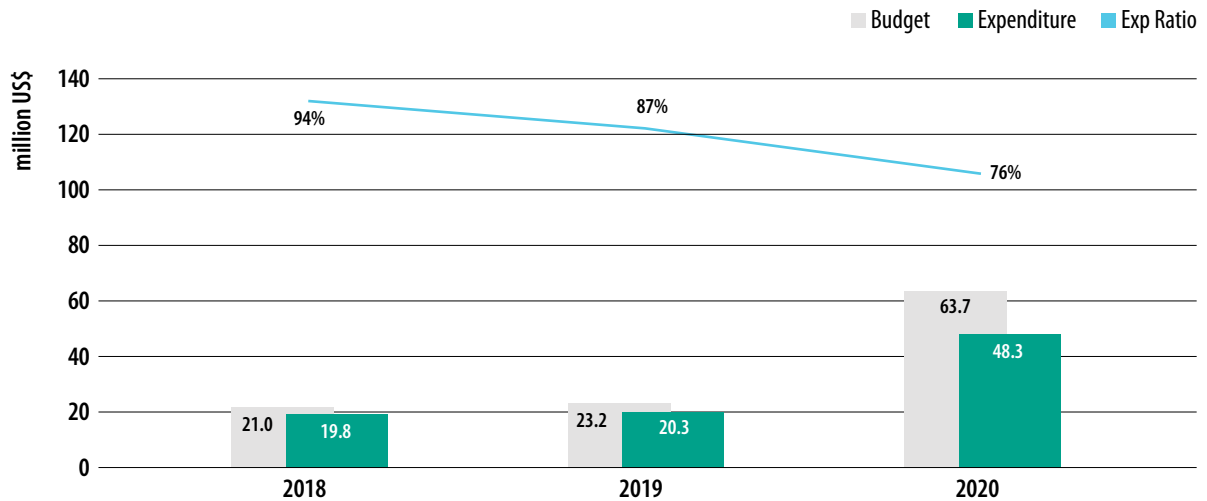
²² BIT, FAO, IOM, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNMAS, UNOPS, UN Women, WFP and WHO.

²³ United Nations (2018) UNDAF+ 2018-2021.

²⁴ United Nations (2020) Security Council Resolution 2552 (2020). S/RES/2552.

²⁵ In addition to the activities defined in the 2018-2021 CPD, UNDP acted as fund managing agent for several projects of the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) in CAR implemented over the period under review. Although CHF-related activities fall under UNDP programme expenditure, they were excluded from the evaluation scope and figures presented in this report, as UNDP is not accountable for results to an extent that would warrant their inclusion in the evaluation.

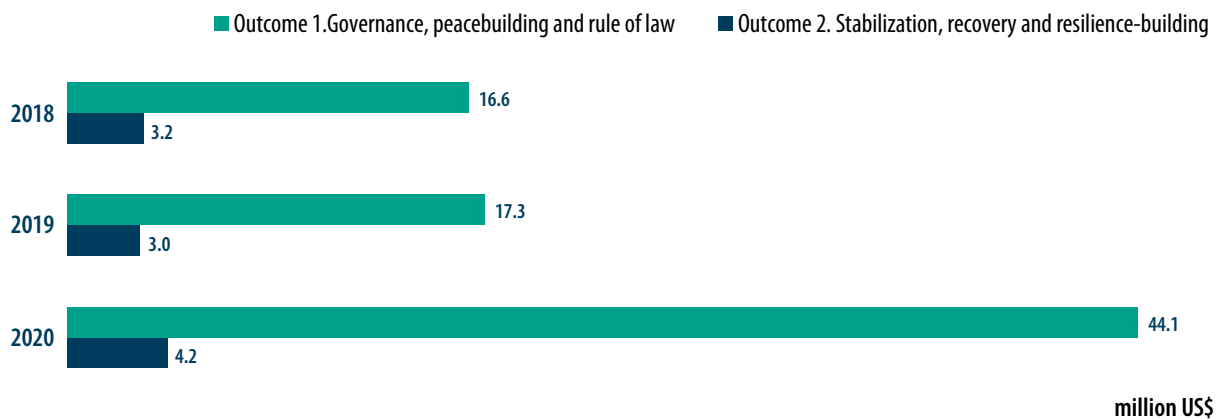
FIGURE 1. Programme budget and expenditure, 2018-2020 (million US\$)



Source: Atlas November 2021

Outcome 1 mobilizes the largest share of programme financial resources, with 88 percent (\$77.9 million) of UNDP expenditure in the period covered by the evaluation. Figure 2 shows that programme expenditure under Outcome 1 has been significantly higher than Outcome 2 in all three years covered by the evaluation.

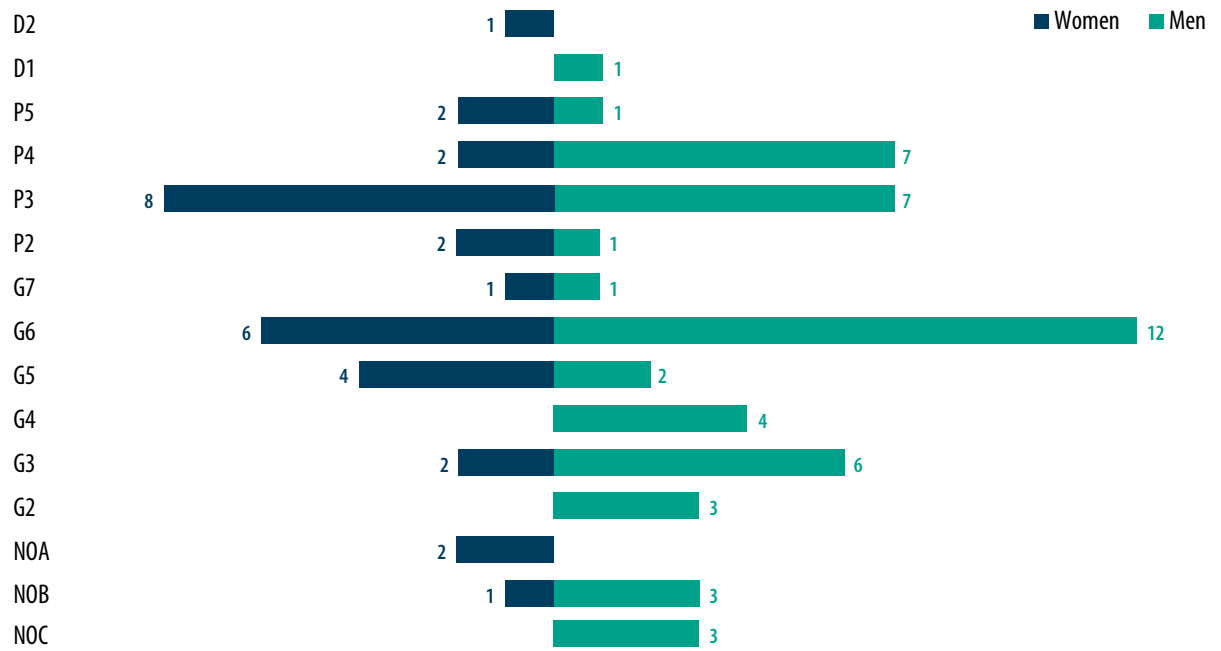
FIGURE 2. Country programme expenditure by outcome, 2018-2020 (million US\$)



Source: Atlas November 2021

To implement the programme, at the time of the evaluation the country office had 82 UNDP staff, nine United Nations volunteers and 38 service contracts. Women represented under 30 percent of the total country office personnel, though were better represented in UNDP staff (excluding service contracts) (38 percent), and slightly more in higher professional positions and management (P3 level and above), where women made up 45 percent of staff (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. UNDP country office staff by position and sex



Source: Atlas November 2021

CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS



This chapter presents the results of the outcome analysis, and an assessment of cross-cutting issues. The main factors that influenced UNDP performance and contributions to results are also described in this section. The assessment was based on an analysis of the correlation between project results, their contribution to the expected outputs under each outcome, and consequently to the overall outcome objectives.

2.1 Governance, peacebuilding and rule of law

CPD Outcome 1. By 2021, political and administrative institutions and civil society organisations promote and contribute to peace, security, national reconciliation and human rights.

Related outputs

Output 1.1. Justice and security services are delivered to the population and criminal cases are adjudicated including by the Special Criminal Court

Output 1.2. Increased women's participation in decision making processes at national and local level

Output 1.3. National policy on decentralization is implemented taking into account the principles of gender equality

Output 1.4. Electoral cycle completed as per constitutional timeline

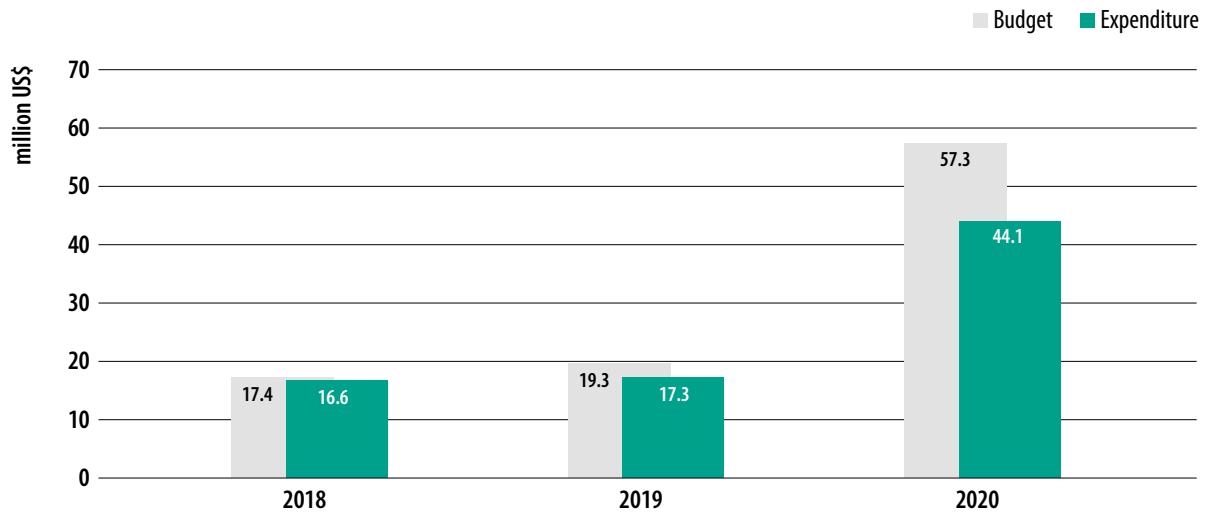
Output 1.5. Public administration has an anti corruption policy elaborated and enforced

Output 1.6. The capacity of the Ministry of Planning and the Permanent Secretariat in development aid coordination and management is strengthened

Outcome 1 of the CPD includes interventions in the areas of governance, peacebuilding and the rule of law. This part of the programme aims to reinforce links between peace and development initiatives by enhancing the capacity of the Government to lead ongoing stabilization efforts. Projects under this outcome are grouped around six outputs: Justice, security and rule of law (Output 1.1); Gender equality and women's participation in decision making processes (Output 1.2); Decentralization (Output 1.3); Electoral support (Output 1.4); Anticorruption policy (Output 1.5); and Planning capacity and development aid coordination (Output 1.6). Outputs 1.5 and 1.6 were kept out of the scope of this assessment given the low level of expenditure for the former and the cross-cutting nature of the latter.

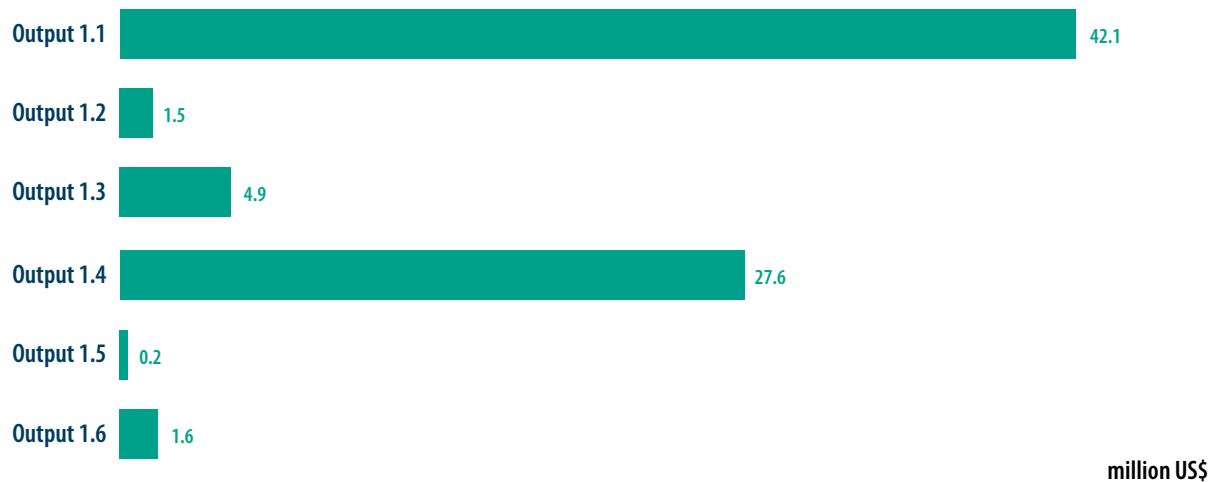
The largest output areas under Outcome 1 were justice, security and rule of law (nine projects) and electoral support (two projects), with cumulative expenditure reaching \$42.1 million and \$27.6 million, respectively. Together, these two outputs represented 89 percent of Outcome 1 expenditure, and 79 percent of total programme spending.

FIGURE 4. Evolution of budget and expenditure in Outcome 1, 2018-2020



Source: Atlas November 2021

FIGURE 5. Cumulative expenditure by output, Outcome 1, 2018-2020



Source: Atlas November 2021

Finding 1. Justice Sector reform. UNDP technical and financial support has been critical for the reactivation of ordinary courts, which led to the first ever convictions for war crimes and crimes against humanity in CAR. However, ordinary courts are unable to systematically hold the minimum number of criminal sessions prescribed by law. The high degree of centralization of the judiciary system, the limited authority of the State throughout the territory, and the low budgets allocated to the sector remain major barriers to providing full access to justice to Central Africans, most notably those living outside the capital.

During the current programme cycle, UNDP significantly contributed to the creation of a more favourable policy and institutional environment in the justice sector. Jointly with MINUSCA, and in collaboration with the European Union (EU), UNDP provided technical support to the Ministry of Justice for the design, adoption and implementation of the Justice Sector Policy (JSP) 2020-2024, in an effort to create a more

independent, impartial and functioning judiciary system.²⁶ UNDP recruited two consultants to support the Ministry to lead the consultative process at national and local levels and draft the policy. UNDP also lobbied for adoption of the draft JSP by the Council of Ministers.

Since the adoption of the JSP in 2019, UNDP continued technical and financial assistance as the country progressed towards its implementation. An administrative decision (*arrêté*) was adopted in January 2020 to establish the institutional coordination mechanisms for monitoring and implementation of the JSP.²⁷ Six thematic working groups, co-chaired by national and international authorities, meet regularly and have led the approval of thematic work plans for 2020-2021.²⁸ UNDP co-chairs two of these, as well as the overall coordination mechanism, along with national authorities. Finally, UNDP is extending its support to help the implementation of activities emanating from these working groups.

The country office reported that gender considerations guided the elaboration of the JSP and were mainstreamed throughout all of its pillars. However, the evaluation notes that there was no specific working group on women's rights and access to justice or SGBV, issues that require a targeted approach. Neither did UNDP, MINUSCA or the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence (the "Team of Experts") provide support to ordinary courts on war crimes or SGBV.²⁹

Despite these efforts to implement the JSP, interviewed government officials reported that it was still extremely difficult to hold more than two criminal sessions per year due to a lack of financial resources.³⁰ Only 12 criminal sessions have been held in CAR since 2015 (seven since 2018), all financially and technically supported by UNDP and MINUSCA.³¹ Interviewees indicated that without this support, most of these sessions might not have been held. The most visible achievement for the justice sector in recent years was the conviction of five warlords who were sentenced to life with forced labour for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the murder of United Nations peacekeepers. The so-called "Bangassou 2017" case was made possible by the unprecedented efforts of UNDP and MINUSCA, with funding from the United States and the Team of Experts for the entire process.

With UNDP support for the conduct of criminal sessions, the number of criminal cases processed increased from 41 in 2017, to 121 in 2018, and 163 in 2019, shy of the target of 211. No criminal sessions were held in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite this substantial increase in the court capacity to manage criminal cases prior to the pandemic, it is important to note that the actual ability of the courts to prosecute cases remains low. In 2019-20, of the 25 cases on the docket for the criminal session, only seven were heard, and a court decision was given on six of the cases involving

²⁶ Adopted in 2019. The EU has been providing direct financial support to the Ministry of Justice to implement the policy.

²⁷ Arrêté No. 005/MJDH/DIRCAB/CMRJMR.20 portant sur la création du dispositif institutionnel de coordination et de mise en oeuvre de la politique sectorielle du ministère de la justice et des droits de l'Homme [Order No. 005/MJDH/DIRCAB/CMRJMR.20 on the creation of the institutional mechanism for the coordination and implementation of the sectoral policy of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights], 16 January 2020.

²⁸ UNDP (2020) Portfolio of projects in support of the rule of law – Annual Progress Report.

²⁹ The United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict was created by Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) to assist national authorities in strengthening the rule of law, with the aim of ensuring criminal accountability for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence. The Team of Experts is the only dedicated Security Council mandated mechanism to provide this type of support on a global basis.

³⁰ The Law requires the Government to hold at least six criminal sessions per year (two per jurisdiction) to ensure timely access to justice for those accused of crimes.

³¹ Only one criminal session was held between 2011 and 2014. 2015 (one in Bangui), 2016 (one in Bangui), 2017 (one in Bangui, one in Bouar), 2018 (two in Bangui, two in Bouar), 2019 (two in Bangui, one in Bouar), 2020 (none), 2021 (one planned in Bouar and held in Berberati). No sessions have been held in Bambari.

a total of 12 individuals. Four of these cases covered SGBV issues. However, these numbers include the Bangassou convictions. During the programme cycle, the number of decisions remained low,³² and it is difficult to determine the exact number of conflict-related cases processed by the ordinary courts.³³

To address the inefficiency of criminal sessions in the CAR Courts of Appeal, UNDP supported the Ministry of Justice and judicial authorities in drafting a decree establishing and operationalizing criminal session preparation committees. These preparations were piloted in Bangui and Bouar courts of appeal, with notable progress in the efficiency of criminal sessions due to better preparation of the cases presented.

Another fundamental bottleneck in the CAR ordinary justice system is related to effective access to justice. A recent study demonstrated that justice in CAR is an expensive process, with fees at many levels, even to file a simple complaint at a police station. These costs disincentivise people from venturing into a procedure that promises only uncertain and unpredictable results.³⁴ It is in this context that UNDP provided technical expertise to support the drafting of a law on legal aid, that was adopted by the National Assembly in 2019, with funding from the United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). The JSP Working Group 3 is drafting the application texts for this law and working on its implementation.

Witness protection is another key dimension of an accessible justice system. Witness protection schemes were designed for the SCC through UNDP-MINUSCA projects, and recently became functional and operational.³⁵ However, they are not applicable to all criminal courts (such as the ordinary courts and TJRRC).³⁶

The high degree of centralization of the judiciary system, and limited authority of the State throughout the territory, remain major barriers to providing access to justice to populations living outside the capital. Most courts outside of Bangui are not operational as most judges and public officials either live in Bangui or refuse to be deployed outside of the capital for security reasons. UNDP provided human and financial resources for the deployment of mobile courts (*audiences foraines*) in remote areas of the country. A total of six sessions and hearings have been held since 2018 in Mbaiki, Bimbo, Beloko and Berberati, but no data on the number of cases treated was collected by UNDP. While necessary, these sessions mostly address minor criminal cases. As such, these efforts are most likely to remain insufficient to address the scale of serious human rights violations and abuses committed in the last decades.

The budget of the justice sector is not sufficient to scale up these initiatives, the number of women working in the justice system is low and most occupy support functions.³⁷ In September 2021, for example, women represented 19.7 percent of the total number of judicial staff in the country's three appeal courts. Overall, the lack of financial commitment from the Government has resulted in an overreliance of the judiciary sector on the international community and UNDP.

³² DCAF (2021) Évaluation finale du projet conjoint d'appui à la lutte contre les violations des droits de l'homme et à la relance de la justice en Centrafrique. [Final evaluation of the joint support project in the fight against human rights violations and the restoration of justice in the Central African Republic], Final Report. P.35.

³³ According to Amnesty International, "information about the nature of cases examined during criminal sessions in the past three to five years is difficult to obtain, due in part to lack of written judgments being prepared in the days required by law or not being made accessible to the public".

³⁴ Cordaid/ ICTJ (2021) Une goutte d'eau sur une pierre chaude » Justice pour les victimes en République Centrafricaine. [A drop of water on a hot stone : Justice for victims in the Central African Republic].

³⁵ This programme is composed of a Head of Unit (P4), a psychologist (P3), a victim and witness protection specialist, a confidential financial analyst, a victim and witness protection officer. Three of them are women.

³⁶ United Nations Human Rights Committee (2020) Concluding observations on the third periodic report of the Central African Republic.

³⁷ DCAF (2021).

Finding 2. Transitional Justice. UNDP-MINUSCA joint projects were the key mechanism for the international community to channel resources for the establishment and operationalization of the SCC, and for UNDP advice and technical support for the promulgation of the law on the TJRRC. The SCC is one of the few hybrid courts in the world in which UNDP plays a central administrative and financial role. However, it presents a significant reputational risk due to the fact that it has not rendered any judgment in nearly five years of operation, despite having received significantly more support than ordinary courts. Recruitment challenges and lengthy procedures have been identified as the main causes of these delays.

Anticipating that the ordinary justice system alone would not be sufficient to restore the rule of law, in 2015 the CAR authorities established the Special Criminal Court. The SCC is a national tribunal composed of national and international judges with jurisdiction over serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed in CAR since January 2003, in particular for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.³⁸ UNDP and the United Nations were early supporters of the SCC, mostly through a joint project with MINUSCA to support the SCC, designed in 2016 and directly implemented (DIM) and administered by UNDP.³⁹

UNDP contributed to establishing and launching the SCC by managing the funds and procurement process to build its headquarters, supporting the court in the recruitment of its national and international personnel, procuring the necessary computer and office equipment, and managing the training of judicial police officers, notably through the United Nations Police (UNPol).⁴⁰ Other training for lawyers, national and international magistrates on different themes were managed by the recent 'Joint Project to Support the Functioning of the SCC' (PAF-CPS). At the time of this evaluation all SCC staff still had UNDP contracts, despite not being considered UNDP staff, thus demonstrating the centralized nature of the UNDP management role. These efforts allowed the SCC to hold its inaugural session, which also marked the official commencement of its five-year renewable mandate, on October 22, 2018.

At the time of the evaluation, 146 complaints had been received by the SCC, 12 cases were under assessment by the Special Prosecutor's Office, of which three had been subject to preliminary investigation since the end of 2020. 22 complaints had been received by the SCC Investigating Chamber, of which nine were under investigation.⁴¹ While 21 individuals had been arrested, no criminal case had been adjudicated by the SCC due to insecurity in areas where investigations were carried out, difficulties in hiring international judges and staff and, in 2020, the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴²

Recruiting international judges with experience in the civil law system and dealing with international crimes, and willing to move to Bangui, has been a challenging endeavour causing significant delays in SCC operations. In September 2021, the SCC confirmed that two judges had yet to take their posts. Certain interviewees indicated travel restrictions due to the pandemic, which also explained why certain judges did not assume their duties in Bangui. Yet, other factors also contributed to these delays, such as the fact the country of origin of the judge is expected to cover the salary of the judge, a situation that led certain countries to withdraw their applications at the last moment.⁴³

³⁸ Law n° 15/003 3 June 2015. Portant création, organisation et fonctionnement de la Cour pénale spéciale.

³⁹ UNDP CAR. Joint Support Project to the Special Criminal Court of the Central African Republic.

⁴⁰ UNDP CAR (2020) Final evaluation of the joint project to support the Special Criminal Court of the Central African Republic.

⁴¹ UNDP CAR (2020) ROAR.

⁴² Amnesty International (2020) On trial, these warlords lowered their eyes. The Central African Republic's Challenging Pursuit of Justice.

⁴³ UNDP and MINUSCA cover their allowances and security.

The evaluation observed that the creation of the SCC came with very high expectations from the population and certain donors. However, the fact that no judgment has been rendered nearly five years after its creation is eroding public trust in the institution. Data produced by HHI confirms that the local population has a higher level of trust in alternative justice (70 percent) and traditional justice (59 percent) than in the SCC (45 percent). The level of trust in the ordinary justice system is even lower, however, at 41 percent. It also shows that trust in the SCC decreased by eight percentage points between 2018 and 2020, while it generally stagnated or decreased for the other justice modalities.⁴⁴

The evaluation also noted a certain level of discontent with the fact that working and security conditions for international SCC judges are significantly better than for their national counterparts, including those working in ordinary courts. The fact that the SCC receives significantly more international support and funding than the ordinary courts is also a matter of discontent that has led to an ambiguous perception on whether the ordinary courts and the SCC complemented or competed with each other.⁴⁵ This perception is further exacerbated by the fear of differential treatment for victims and witnesses based on whether their case is attended by the SCC, ordinary courts, or the International Criminal Court.⁴⁶ UNDP support to ordinary courts, described above, including its participation in all thematic working groups linked to the operationalization of the JSP, is thus a direct response to the need to strengthen complementarity between ordinary and transitional justice mechanisms.

UNDP has been playing the fundamental role of SCC financial and administrative agent by managing the staff contracts, budget and finances of the court. This role, which was extended until 2023 through the more recent PAF-CPS project, was criticized by several stakeholders as threatening the autonomy and independence of the court and the confidentiality of investigations. Interviews and documents cite, for example, that the conduct of investigations could, in theory, be compromised by the fact that the Office of the Special Prosecutor must submit their budgets to UNDP for approval, thus disclosing information on the purpose and details of field missions and investigations they are carrying out to UNDP staff and even to external service providers such as car rental companies. The SCC is, however, functionally independent from UNDP, as the staff recruited by UNDP work under the authority and supervision of the SCC and UNDP does not intervene in their work at a technical level. The evaluation also noted that SCC staff believe that they play a marginal role in project decision-making, as the steering and technical committees which oversee the project are co-chaired by the Ministry of Justice and UNDP.

Evidence collected for this evaluation, including reports produced by Amnesty International and the International Centre for Transitional Justice, demonstrates that, in the current state of affairs, it is too early to move into national implementation modality (NIM), as the SCC does not have the structure, capacity or expertise to efficiently and effectively administer its operations. Testimonies still indicate that ordinary courts are afflicted by corruption⁴⁷ and nepotism, and lack qualified personnel. This strongly implies that the SCC needs to reach a certain level of maturity before being given these responsibilities.⁴⁸ Furthermore, some experts consider that separation of powers between the judiciary and executive branches in CAR is practically non-existent.⁴⁹ A 2020 Amnesty International report states that, while “no other international or hybrid court in the world has been or is administrated by the UNDP” [...] “to date, there is no body within the SCC capable of, or in charge of, managing the finances”.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ HHI and UNDP (2020).

⁴⁵ Cordaid/ ICTJ (2021).

⁴⁶ The disparities between the witness protection schemes of the SCC and ordinary courts mentioned above support this perception.

⁴⁷ United Nations Human Rights Committee (2020). P. 7.

⁴⁸ Cordaid/ ICTJ (2021). P. 28.

⁴⁹ International Legal Assistance Consortium (2017) Rapport d'évaluation de l'état de droit : République Centrafricaine [Rule of Law Evaluation Report : Central African Republic]. P. 20-21.

⁵⁰ Amnesty International (2020). P. 37-39.

While stakeholders consulted unanimously recognized the importance and relevance of UNDP in the establishment and operationalization of the SCC, and its role as a neutral and credible broker, some highlighted that UNDP administrative procedures did not comply with the principle of celerity that should guide judicial institutions. They notably highlighted that UNDP procedures could be lengthy and complicated, although some stakeholders interviewed recognized that some efforts had been made to increase flexibility for certain types of expenses.

Regarding the integration of gender considerations into UNDP SCC projects, the concluding observations of the Third Periodic Report of the Central African Republic of the United Nations Human Rights Committee noted with regret that “no information has been provided on the practical steps taken to mainstream gender dimensions in all aspects of transitional justice”, including the SCC.⁵¹ The evaluation did note, however, that some efforts had been undertaken since then. The SCC is, for example, processing cases related to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, and specific measures are being taken to protect victims of sexual violence during trials, particularly women. SCC legal and support staff (such as security staff) includes women, who play key roles in bringing SGBV cases to justice and protecting victims. Generally, women are encouraged to apply for positions within the SCC, as well as for support staff roles.

Finally, a major contribution of UNDP to CAR’s transitional justice process has been its active role in technical support and advocacy in favour of promulgation of the Law on TJRC of April 2020.⁵² UNDP and MINUSCA also played a major role in the Commissioner Selection Committee, which appointed 11 members (including five women) by decree on December 30, 2020.

The Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in CAR noted that “the establishment of the main transitional justice institutions was a positive development” in which ordinary courts, the SCC, International Criminal Court and TJRC would each have a role to play.⁵³ The expert highlighted the consultations that preceded the creation of TJRC, to which UNDP and MINUSCA contributed, as a step in the right direction. Once TJRC is fully operational it is expected to pay particular attention to women, as they are disproportionately affected by conflict and violence.⁵⁴

Finding 3. Correctional system. By financing the rehabilitation of prisons, advocating for the adoption of measures to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in prisons and acquiring personal protective equipment for personnel, UNDP contributed to the improvement of detention conditions of inmates and reduced the risk of outbreaks in overcrowded CAR prisons. UNDP is also supporting the demilitarization of prisons through training of the first 300 civilian prison guards. However, despite having been deployed as students, these guards have not yet been recruited as permanent staff, thus compromising the sustainability of this effort.

Prior to the current CPD, the State had no correctional personnel, and prisons were guarded by CAR armed forces (FACA).⁵⁵ This was deemed extremely problematic, and UNDP and MINUSCA, with funding from INL, supported the Ministry of Justice to recruit students willing to become prison guards.⁵⁶ In 2020, one

⁵¹ United Nations Human Rights Committee (2020). P. 3.

⁵² In 2019, UNDP and MINUSCA, in collaboration with ICTJ, provided technical expertise to draft the CVJR bill and actively advocated for its adoption and on gender mainstreaming at the National Assembly’s Law Commission.

⁵³ United Nations Human Rights Council (2019) Human rights situation in the Central African Republic: Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic.

⁵⁴ United Nations Peacekeeping (2021) Paving the Way for Transitional Justice: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/paving-way-transitional-justice-car>.

⁵⁵ ILAC (2017). P. 34-35.

⁵⁶ Soldiers are not trained as prison guards. Moreover, some FACA members have taken part in recent conflicts and may find themselves in the presence of prisoners from the enemy camp, or, on the contrary, may have sympathies for certain detainees. Finally, FACA personnel are men, including in the women’s prisons.

training cycle had been completed through the National School for Administration and Magistracy, and 149 prison interns were deployed in Bangui and across the country with UNDP technical support. Another cohort of 151 prison agents is currently being trained. The recruitment process followed a clear competency framework, and sought gender-balance, which clearly contrasted with the former recruitment process based on clientelism, nepotism and bribes. It is still unclear when the students will be formally recruited by the Ministry, a bottleneck that could hamper the demilitarization process.

At the beginning of the project, there were virtually no secure prisons, resulting in massive escapes and *de facto* impunity for criminals. By the end of the project, six prisons had been rehabilitated, including a women's prison, and the number of escapes had decreased.⁵⁷ It is important to note that the evaluation cannot attribute this change to UNDP support alone, as other factors may have come into play. Most importantly, despite the availability of newly-trained civilian prison guards, these have not yet been officially recruited and integrated into the prison workforce.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP mobilized funds through the Global Focal Point to provide \$100,000 of material and protective equipment for CAR prisons. As prison overcrowding was a major risk-factor in terms of transmission, UNDP advocated for the release of detainees to reduce the detention rate in the most at-risk prisons.⁵⁸ Through Decree No 20.160, CAR authorized the release of people accused, charged or convicted of "minor offences".⁵⁹ However, it also allowed the release of people accused, charged or convicted of raping minors over the age of 14.⁶⁰

Finding 4. Security sector reform. UNDP administrative support complementing MINUSCA technical inputs contributed to: the training of internal security forces (police and gendarmes); the modernization of human resource management practices for police and gendarmes; and rehabilitation of security forces infrastructure across the country. These joint efforts have allowed redeployment across a number of regions. However, populations still do not perceive the police and gendarmes as significant justice and security actors, and self-report that their perceptions of safety and security have not changed in recent years especially as renewed electoral violence in early 2021 led security forces to flee certain areas. This demonstrates that the redeployment of security forces might be a necessary but not sufficient condition to restore security and ensure that populations have access to justice.

The internal security forces (ISF), namely police and gendarmes, are the entry point to the penal chain. It is through the judicial police, police officers (with jurisdiction in cities), and gendarmes (in rural areas) that the population can file complaints and aspire to see cases investigated and prosecuted.

Following the restoration of constitutional order in 2016, the CAR security sector was in a precarious situation. Staffing throughout the system was insufficient in terms of numbers, capacity and equipment. There was a lack of judicial police officers, magistrates, clerks and secretaries, prison guards and lawyers. Women staff were scarce in all positions. Of the country's 182 magistrates, only about 10 were women.⁶¹ As of March 2018, UNPol estimated that there were 2,817 ISF deployed in the country, comprising 1,133 police and 1,684 gendarmes.

⁵⁷ DCAF (2021). P. 38-39.

⁵⁸ UNDP (2020) Rule of law support projects portfolio. Annual Progress Report. P. 19.

⁵⁹ Cordaid/ ICTJ (2021).

⁶⁰ The Decree specifically indicated that persons accused, charged or convicted of raping minors under 14 did not qualify for release.

⁶¹ ILAC (2017).

In 2018, the Ministry of the Interior in charge of public security adopted a comprehensive resizing and redeployment plan for ISF. UNDP supported the operationalization of this plan, facilitating the redeployment of ISF in different regions of the country, rehabilitating police and gendarme stations in nine cities and providing them with vehicles, equipment and *per diems*.⁶² The central police station in Bangui, which hosts the police headquarters, was rehabilitated and inaugurated in October 2020, a process administered by UNDP. A total of 21 police and gendarmes units were rehabilitated across the country.⁶³

Some of the cities supported were not those that the Government, UNDP and partners initially planned to support. The presence of armed groups in Bocaranga, Ippy, Bria and Kaga-Bandoro in early 2020 led UNDP and partners to drop interventions in these sites and intervene in four other cities.⁶⁴ Interviews and first-hand site visits in Bambari showed that, as the security situation further deteriorated in December 2020 due to electoral violence, some of the aforementioned buildings were vandalized and were no longer being used at the time of the site visits.⁶⁵

UNDP also intervened at institutional level to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Interior and Public Safety to manage ISF human resources. Notably, UNDP provided consultancies to help put in place an integrated and computerized Human Resources Management system, that now includes a database of all estimated ISF.

In addition, while no ISF recruitment process had been carried out since 2010-2011, UNDP and MINUSCA contributed to the administration and financing of the recruitment of 250 police officers and 250 gendarmes (of which 23 percent were women) in 2019. A total of 1,500 recruits had been added to ISF at the time of the evaluation in 2021.⁶⁶ As with the infrastructure rehabilitation efforts, armed violence led ISFs to abandon their posts in certain locations and their effective number remains unclear. In 2021, UNPol estimated there to be 6,200 ISF across the country, namely 2,903 police (26.8 percent women) and 3,297 gendarmes (15.6 percent women), 120 percent more than in March 2018.

In 2018, after supporting the rehabilitation of the police academy which had been non-operational since 2015, UNDP supported the creation of a new police academy and an academy for gendarmes. UNDP is now supporting the Ministry of the Interior to update the ISF training system.

Finally, the project facilitated the retirement of police officers and gendarmes who had reached legal retirement age, directly paying part of their salary arrears without transferring the funds through the Government. In total, of 446 eligible people, UNDP facilitated the retirement of 439 ISF, including 58 women.

At policy level, in addition to engagement in the elaboration and adoption of the ISF Capacity-Building and Development Plan 2016-2020, UNDP and UNPol coordinated a consultative process for the development of a proximity policing model, that resulted in the adoption of a Ministerial Policy for Proximity Police. However, operationalization required the establishment of a regulatory framework and capacity-building for local mechanisms (urban security councils and local security committees), for them to develop local security

⁶² MINUSCA (2020) La mobilité des forces de sécurité intérieure accrue pour renforcer l'État de Droit [Increased mobility of internal security forces to strengthen the rule of law]: <https://minusca.unmissions.org/la-mobilite%C3%A9-des-forces-de-s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9-int%C3%A9rieure-accrue-pour-renforcer-letat-de-droit>.

⁶³ UNDP (2020) Rule of law support projects portfolio. Annual Progress Report.

⁶⁴ Bouar, Bambari, Bangassou, Sibut, Berberati, Bocaranga, Batangafo, Bozoum and Bouca were the cities that benefited from United Nations redeployment efforts.

⁶⁵ Armed groups seized Bambari on December 22, 2020 though it came back under government control in 24 hours. However, clashes between rebels and FACA lasted until mid-February 2021.

⁶⁶ DCAF (2021).

plans, which had not been done at the time of the evaluation. UNDP was nonetheless able to support the development of a training curriculum for ISF to pilot and test the proximity police model in four cities, with training for ISF in late December 2021.⁶⁷

An external evaluation observed that the limited success of the project to put in place the proximity police model could be explained by the failure to account for the limited human and financial capacity of the national authorities to sustain the structures and coordination mechanisms promoted. Data from HHI also confirmed that ISF are not able to respond to the emerging training and equipment needs of the proximity police and, more broadly, that ISF are still not favourably perceived by local populations.⁶⁸ UNDP nonetheless reported that the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the need for ISF to focus on the electoral process, were the main factors to explain insufficient progress on the training of ISF on proximity policing.

Most importantly, HHI data indicates that formal security actors, ISF in particular, are rarely seen to be the primary safety and security providers in neighbourhoods and villages, and are rarely present (or seen) outside of Bangui.⁶⁹ In May 2018, only 9 percent of respondents considered ISF the main actors ensuring security, increasing to 13 percent by February 2020. While the increase is not negligible, it is clear that ISF are still perceived as marginal actors. The data also shows that when formal security actors are perceived to be present in a neighbourhood or village, a higher percentage of people identify them as providing security for the community and trust in them increases, thus confirming that redeployment of ISF might be perceived as a positive change in communities. Overall, 47 percent of respondents trust the police, and 54 percent the gendarmes (although fewer women than men trust the police).⁷⁰ Their presence, however, has had little to no effect on people's sense of security.

Finding 5. Sexual and gender-based violence. UNDP efforts to address SGBV have been mainly at institutional level for strengthening UMIRR. While UNDP services enjoy strong demand, which confirms the importance of its work, they remain highly centralized in the capital and mechanisms deployed to attend to SGBV at community level are just starting to have an effect in terms of increased public awareness on the issue, but not yet in terms of effective access to justice for victims.

UNDP has been supporting UMIRR, which was created in 2015 under the joint authority of the ministries in charge of public security, justice, health, and gender and the protection of women, and became operational in June 2017. The UMIRR mission is to prevent and repress all forms of SGBV against women and children.

Interviewees noted the importance of UNDP support to operationalize UMIRR through the rehabilitation of buildings and provision of vehicles and equipment, stating that, alongside the training provided by UNPol and the Team of Experts, this work helped UMIRR to promote the protection of and respect for women while also facilitating good governance, access to justice, and respect for human rights. Judicial officers newly assigned to UMIRR, and some former officers, also benefited from training on techniques for the investigation and prosecution of SGBV, including conflict-related sexual violence, as well as report-writing. Interviewees stressed the insecurity challenges that resulted in the destruction of physical infrastructure that UNDP had supported. Despite this, according to UNDP, over 7,000 victims have used the services of UMIRR.⁷¹ This upward trend is confirmed by HHI data that revealed that, while populations tend to believe

⁶⁷ Bouca, Bocaranga, Bozoum and Bossangoa.

⁶⁸ DCAF (2021). P.42.

⁶⁹ HHI and UNDP (2020).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ UNDP (2020) Rule of law support projects portfolio. Annual Progress Report.

that SGBV should be solved within the family, the percentage of complaints has gone up (suggesting greater reporting rather than incidence), as well as a more positive perception of the services provided to victims.⁷²

Despite the establishment of UMIRR, gaps remain in identifying and reaching victims, processing cases, psychosocial support and the economic empowerment of victims. In addition, the investigations conducted by UMIRR have not yet led to prosecutions, and therefore are not subject to court decisions.⁷³ At the criminal session held in December, cited above, 22 of the 25 cases on the docket were related to SGBV according to the Team of Experts, but most were dismissed (except those related to the Bangassou trial) due to lack of preparation.⁷⁴ Conflict-related SGBV cases have not been addressed either. Finally, despite the efforts of the international community, court personnel continue to treat SGBV as a trivial or normal marital issue.⁷⁵ Most recent data from HHI confirms that perceptions towards SGBV in CAR have not evolved much, and that these types of crimes remain prevalent.⁷⁶

Given social norms in CAR tend to minimize the importance of SGBV, UNDP work with UMIRR has had some unexpected negative consequences. For a segment of the population, UMIRR is perceived as a unit created for women to file complaints against men, or even to target men. Communication strategies supported by UNDP to clarify the role of UMIRR led to a significant increase in complaints, but many were not actual SGBV cases, thus indicating that much remains to be done in terms of civic education. A number of complaints were minor offences that could have been treated by regular ISF.

UMIRR remains centralized in the Bangui area, with only six gender focal points in the ISF (two police officers, two gendarmes and two UMIRR). According to the latest data from HHI, UMIRR users were exclusively located in the prefectures of Bangui, Ombella M'Poko, Ouham Péné and Vakaga, although people had heard of it in all prefectures where data were collected.⁷⁷

Legal clinics established in 2017, and financed by UNDP in nine cities across the country, sought to promote the protection of human rights and provide legal advice, psychosocial support and mediation to SGBV victims. Between 2018 and 2020, a total of 11,127 people benefited from legal and/ or judicial support services, including psychosocial support and mediation.⁷⁸ Given the lack of State capacity to implement these efforts, UNDP partnered with national NGOs such as the Association of Women Jurists of Central Africa to manage these legal clinics.⁷⁹ However, recent independent evaluations commissioned by UNDP observed that staff and paralegals from the clinics did not have sufficient knowledge of the legal system and were not supervised by lawyers. It also noted that linkages between the clinics and judicial actors were weak, as only 2 percent of beneficiaries were referred to ISF and prosecutors, an issue that the UNDP has been trying to overcome since. The United Nations Human Rights Committee, moreover, expressed concern in its 2020 report at allegations that SGBV continues to be used as a weapon of war.

As for the other components of the justice system, legal clinics are heavily dependent on external funding, thus posing a risk to their financial sustainability. The UNDP approach of working with national NGOs as responsible parties for execution might, however, be creating capacity and ownership at community level.

⁷² HHI and UNDP (2020).

⁷³ DCAF (2021).

⁷⁴ United Nations Team of Experts Rule of Law/Sexual Violence in Conflict (2020) Annual Report.

⁷⁵ Cordaid/ ICTJ (2021).

⁷⁶ HHI and UNDP (2020).

⁷⁷ See: <http://www.peacebuildingdata.org>.

⁷⁸ UNDP CAR ROAR 2018, 2019, 2020.

⁷⁹ These local NGOs are the "Association des Femmes Juristes de Centrafrique" in collaboration with the Network of NGOs in Human Rights.

UNDP also contributed to elaboration of: the revised Action Plan of the National Equality and Equity Policy; the National Family Policy; and the plan to mainstream gender within ISF by the Ministry of the Interior. Other efforts are underway, such as support to the Sectoral Plan of the Ministry for the Promotion of Gender and operationalization of its sectoral coordination role.

Finding 6. Restoration of State authority and decentralization. UNDP support to the National Strategy for the Restoration and Extension of State Authority (RESA) and decentralization contributed to the redeployment of public servants and rehabilitation of government buildings outside the capital, though key CPD targets were not achieved. This top-down approach to State-building was accompanied by efforts to strengthen local governance mechanisms and create employment opportunities from the bottom up. The latter interventions, however, had limited reach and results. The resurgence of armed violence, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, significantly disrupted the decentralization process, while also demonstrating how vulnerable the achieved results were to external factors.

UNDP, MINUSCA and the Government worked on the assumption that peace and stability depended on the State's capacity to ensure the security of its population and ability to deliver quality basic services and provide economic and social opportunities to its citizens (a "top-down" approach).⁸⁰ They also assumed that local governance systems and resilient communities would be essential to promote stability from grassroots level ("a bottom-up approach").⁸¹ Several projects have been designed under these principles since 2015, with the overall objective to move towards greater decentralization of authority. During the current programme cycle, these decentralization efforts strongly complemented the aforementioned efforts to redeploy ISF and rehabilitate critical security-related infrastructure across the country.

At national level, UNDP, with partners including France, technically supported the elaboration and implementation of certain aspects of RESA.⁸² UNDP partners considered the legislative reforms on decentralization and de-concentration as among the key results achieved in this programmatic area in recent years. Over the period 2018 to 2021, UNDP provided technical and financial support to the Government which contributed to the validation and adaptation of policies and legal frameworks on the functioning of territorial authorities, Administrative Districts and Prefectural Corps, and the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Local Development.⁸³

Progress made on the enabling environment resulted in a clearer governance structure at institutional level, with numerous ministries and government agencies having clearer functions and responsibilities. Even though the legislative and institutional architecture appeared to be in place with a well-functioning decentralization policy and implementation of RESA, the functioning of these institutions remained weak, with lack of buy-in, poor management and technical capacity, unclear reporting lines and poor communication, and lack of accountability frameworks. As long as these critical challenges remain, it is unclear whether RESA and decentralization have strengthened institutional functioning.

Finally, UNDP also directly supported the redeployment of State officials at provincial and local levels, facilitating their deployment with transportation and *per diems*. UNDP, along with the civil affairs team within MINUSCA, provided office supplies and materials, rehabilitated administrative buildings (particularly in the central and eastern prefectures which were looted during the 2013/2014 crisis), and provided training to officials on topics such as inclusive public service delivery, ethics and integrity. They also coordinated and

⁸⁰ PBSO (2017) Project to support the restoration of the State and economic recovery in Bambari.

⁸¹ United Nations (2017) Joint Local Development and Resilience Programme in the Central African Republic; PBSO (2017).

⁸² The RESA Strategy was validated in 2017, before initiation of the current country programme.

⁸³ UNDP (2021) Consultancy Report on the Elaboration of the National Policy on Decentralisation and Local Development in the Central African Republic. P. 9-10.

monitored the redeployment of State officials by supporting the development of an integrated information technology (IT) system, called *Lisango 2.0*, in 2018.⁸⁴ This contributed to the temporary expansion of State authority throughout the country. While the rehabilitated infrastructure and redeployed State officials were clear contributions to RESA and decentralization efforts, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the increased presence of State authority also led to improved and accessible public services. This was because monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks were lacking, as there was little national ownership of the *Lisango* system, which was not used by the Government to compile data on the redeployment of State officials.

Some positive examples included Bambari, Bossangoa and Bangassou, where a significant number of administrative authorities took office. Key informants mentioned that many of these redeployments had a positive impact on the ground. UNDP interviewees indicated that, as compared to 2016–2017, administrative authorities and ISF were now able to operate in Bossangoa, Bambari and Bangassou, and the latter two especially had seen significant security improvements. However, recent electoral violence in Bambari and Bossangoa had disastrous effects on efforts to redeploy officials and ISF, as many redeployed officials returned to Bangui for security reasons. In addition, structural barriers such as a systematic lack of human and financial resources within a vast but sparsely-populated territory, severely limit the potential to sustainably scale up these interventions.

At local level, UNDP supported municipalities to finalize and validate their local development plans (LDPs), through a participatory and inclusive process.⁸⁵ However, while some LDPs exist, there was no progress on the number of municipalities with LDPs in comparison to the baseline, and as this key objective of the project was not achieved it is doubtful that any significant change took place in the prefectures receiving support. According to UNDP, the authorities in the participating prefectures (notably Vakaga and Bamingui-Bangoran) welcomed UNDP efforts to support their LDP process, but progress was hampered due to unforeseen circumstances such as the deterioration of the security situation and lack of decentralized resources. Obtaining funds to operationalize the plans remains a key bottleneck, and puts into question the relevance of this kind of initiative. The country office aspires to mobilize resources for local elections and support for the operationalization of decentralization laws in the next programme cycle.

Finding 7. National elections. The effective management of the electoral Basket Fund and support to the National Elections Authority (ANE) were key contributions of UNDP to the country's effort to undertake a credible nationwide voter-registration process and hold national elections within the constitutional timeline, with a relatively high voter turnout, despite the challenging environment. Voters appeared to be confident in the integrity of the elections. However, the capacity of ANE remains fragile, requiring continued support.

United Nations assistance to electoral processes in CAR was primarily provided by UNDP through the Electoral Support Project (PAPEC) and MINUSCA, through its Electoral Division which leads election assistance in the mission context.⁸⁶ PAPEC was based on the recommendations of the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) electoral Needs Assessment Mission of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), and the 2018/2019 electoral mandate from the Security Council. UNDP efforts focused on ensuring that key parts of the electoral process (voter registration, polling and results tabulation)

⁸⁴ Additional information on Lisango is available here: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/fr/developpement-dun-systeme-informatique-pour-appuyer-le-deploiement-des-fonctionnaires-grace-au>.

⁸⁵ In total, six LDPs were finalized and validated, and two others were developed but not yet validated due to the inter-community crisis in the communes concerned (Ridina and Ouandj in Vakaga prefecture). Six are under development.

⁸⁶ UN Women contributed to the mobilization of women and their promotion as candidates although the entity was not part of the integrated United Nations electoral assistance team.

were technically as credible as possible, to encourage participation and build public and political confidence in the integrity of the process and its results. UNDP also mobilized funds, managed the electoral Basket Fund, procured equipment and sensitive and non-sensitive electoral material, supported by MINUSCA primary and secondary logistics within the country.⁸⁷

Interviewees considered that UNDP support for the reconstitution and re-equipment of the ANE Data Processing Centre (DPC), and training of its operators, was one of the greatest achievements.⁸⁸ DPC manages voter-registration data and printing of voter lists, as well as managing the candidate registration database, developing candidate lists for ballot printing, and tabulating the election results. Training for ANE was primarily election-focused, targeting registration and polling workers, ANE field staff and DPC staff in particular. African Union (AU) observers, only present in the capital, found polling workers competent and professional with a good understanding of the rules and procedures, and felt that polling there for the March 2021 elections had met national and international standards.⁸⁹

UNDP technical support resulted in the development of a reliable and updatable electoral list. A total of 1.85 million voters were registered of a target 2.3-2.5 million. This was fewer than the 1.95 million registered in 2015, but registration was not possible in all areas of the country because of insecurity.⁹⁰ People in the country and the Diaspora in 14 countries were registered in 2020, but no refugees were registered due to the lack of legislation prescribing their inclusion, a politically motivated decision.⁹¹

Voter turnout was high for these elections, demonstrating popular interest in the electoral process and selecting representatives. The turnout for those December 2020 polling stations able to open was 76 percent, but this was only 32.25 percent of all registered voters due to the number of polling stations that were not able to open.⁹² Turnout declined slightly for subsequent rounds, but was still 73 percent for March 2021 and 62 percent for May 2021.⁹³ Data for July 2021 remains unavailable.

With DPC strengthened through the IT support provided by UNDP, ANE was able to tabulate and announce the election results within the legal timeframe. This also increased the transparency of the efforts, as ANE was able to provide parties and candidates with copies of the results by polling station, enabling them to compare the official results with the information collected by their party agents, and increasing the credibility and acceptance of the results, as well as voter confidence. Big-picture data available through the Varieties of Democracy Index nonetheless show relatively little change in ANE capacity from the 2015-2016 process to 2020-2021, with improvements notable in voter registration and election irregularities, but a dramatic decline in the broader electoral environment.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ Contributors to the Basket Fund included: the CAR Government, EU, UNDP, MINUSCA, Germany, France, Italy and Morocco. Other contributors to the election project, outside of the Basket Fund, were Japan, the United States and South Africa.

⁸⁸ The DPC was notably equipped with two servers (one main server and one off-site backup server to safeguard the voters' list) as well as with other IT equipment such as printers (to produce voter IDs), generators, etc.

⁸⁹ African Union, Mission d'Observation Electorale de l'Union Africaine Pour le Premier Tour des Partielles et le Second Tour des Elections Législatives du 14 Mars en République Centrafricaine, Déclaration Préliminaire [African Union Election Observation Mission for the First Round of By-Elections and the Second Round of Legislative Elections of 14 March in the Central African Republic, Preliminary Statement]. P. 5.

⁹⁰ PAPEC (2020) Annual Progress Report, P. 7; UNDP, Final Independent Evaluation of the CAR Electoral Cycle Support Project (PACEC) 2014 - 2016, Final Report. P. 20. In addition, 46.67 percent of these were women compared to 48.36 percent in 2015. 28 percent were youth (under 24 years of age), with 47 percent of these girls.

⁹¹ Registration in 2015 had included refugees except for those in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

⁹² Constitution Net, Constitutional court of the Central African Republic upholds election results.

⁹³ PAPEC (2020) P. 22. The United Nations Security Council, CAR Report of the Secretary General S/2021/571 puts turnout at 63 percent.

⁹⁴ Varieties of Democracy, CAR Country Graph: https://www.v-dem.net/data_analysis/VariableGraph/. See variables ("EMB capacity", "election voter registry", "election other voting irregularities", "elections free and fair").

ANE is now in a better position to support the local elections expected for 2022, in terms of the equipment and infrastructure funded by the Basket Fund, as well as work with the UNDP, MINUSCA and other experts on policies and procedures for voter registration and elections, public communications, logistics and operations. In addition, ANE has the fully-equipped DPC and voters list, which according to experts, with periodic updating, can be reused for up to three electoral cycles. Institutional capacity-building is becoming more of a focus since the national elections, to help ANE develop its strategic plan. The current increased engagement and commitment of ANE to assistance efforts has been noted and appreciated by the international community. However much of the project funding has been depleted and fund mobilization is needed for UNDP to continue its support and assist the local elections.

Voters appeared to be more confident in the integrity of the elections. 73 percent of respondents in pre-election polling done in December 2020 (72 percent of women and 74 percent of men) perceived the upcoming elections as credible. The levels of confidence varied by prefecture, ranging from 45 percent in Lobaye, to 94 percent in Nana-Gribizi. 77 percent of voters also had a positive perception of ANE (77 percent of women and 76 percent of men).⁹⁵ While the high level of confidence cannot be attributed to any one factor, the fact that the voter-registration process had been completed at that point, and voters had received a higher quality photo identity (ID) card, was likely to have contributed to these positive perceptions.

Finding 8. Factors affecting the electoral project. The security and country context and the COVID-19 pandemic directly affected the electoral process, preventing the first round of elections from taking place as planned in nearly 40 percent of polling stations, and resulting in the need for additional rounds, funding and precautions. Beyond these external factors, internal coordination issues between UNDP and MINUSCA, coupled with an unrealistic risk and partnership analysis and a late start in the electoral cycle, hindered implementation of the project.

Some key external and internal factors affected implementation of the electoral project. Firstly, election preparations and participation were complicated by destroyed and decaying infrastructure and armed groups that controlled around 75 percent of the country. Roads were impassable in the rainy season, requiring electoral materials to be distributed by air and some voters having to walk or take canoes to register or vote. New electoral rounds needed to be added for polling stations that were unable to open in December, which stretched the process out for months and extended the event-focused nature of the project. These rounds were also disrupted in some areas, although to a lesser degree as security had been strengthened. These factors significantly increased costs, requiring UNDP to reduce the scope for some of its activities such as voter information and ISF training, and abandon others such as the early warning system, to cover the costs of the additional ballots, materials and payments required to complete the elections. However, as the security threats and logistical challenges posed by poor or non-existent infrastructure were known prior to the launch of the project, the project should have taken a more realistic stance on these risks.

Risks were managed through frequent multiagency meetings, and by identifying lessons learned after each round and applying them rapidly, especially after the December 2020 elections. This included MINUSCA and the Government taking additional security measures for subsequent elections and developing an Integrated Peace and Security Plan, overseen by the Prime Minister. These efforts made an impact. Although the difficult security environment was still noted by AU observers for the March 2021 elections, they felt that

⁹⁵ Harvard Institute, Peace, Justice and Security Survey in Central African Republic #6. P 22.

the additional security measures had provided a better context for voting.⁹⁶ UNDP was also able to support ANE to rerun elections where needed, resulting in the completion of the national elections by July 2021.

Secondly, COVID-19 was a significant factor, complicating logistics and procurement and increasing costs. UNDP took direct measures to address the impact of COVID-19 on its election project, recruiting additional personnel as COVID-19 agents at polling stations, purchasing large quantities of personal protective equipment, adapting its operations to ensure physical distancing and other measures, and chartering planes to ensure the arrival of essential electoral commodities in time for registration and voting. It also bore the extra costs, including for COVID-19 kits for polling stations, purchased at \$275,516, which cost \$1,039,800 to ship by air,⁹⁷ or another \$1 million to charter a plane to transport voter IDs with security features as regular air freight was unavailable (five times the usual cost).

3,559 COVID-19 agents were recruited and deployed to take temperatures, ensure voters washed their hands, and observe physical distancing at polling stations in December 2020.⁹⁸ This was also seen as a way to educate voters about COVID-19. Attendants were not hired for subsequent elections as the extra funding was not available, but the protocols remained in place for social distancing, masking and setting up the polling stations. This relied on radio to reach most voters with voter information, limiting the numbers of people that would gather for other types of voter education activities such as street caravans.

While there is no data on the efficacy of these measures, AU election observers noted that most people did not respect physical distancing or wear masks at the polling stations observed in December 2020, and that the kits provided were not systematically used by polling workers, party representatives or voters at the election sites observed in March 2021.⁹⁹

A third challenge was the long gap in electoral assistance from the end of the 2015-2016 project to the current 2019-2022 one, which contributed to an increased workload for UNDP in 2020 and 2021. To avoid this situation, the 2016 Needs Assessment Mission of the DPPA's Electoral Assistance Division, had recommended putting in place an initiation project, to start in 2017, in order to capitalize on the previous material and financial investments made and the capacity created during the previous project.¹⁰⁰ The initiation project started in April 2019, however, when the equipment had deteriorated and much of the capacity had been lost. This led UNDP to redo work that had previously been done in areas such as voter registration, the ANE website, equipping the DPC, etc. PAPEC also had a very late start in the electoral cycle, with its Chief Technical Advisor arriving in October 2019 and some of the experts in mid-2020.

Fourthly, the late start of the project and failure to capitalize on the previous project negatively impacted effectiveness. For example, the electoral law that was supposed to have been revised after 2016 was not discussed until 2019, or passed until 2020, and the project introduced new voter registration technology

⁹⁶ African Union, Mission d'Observation Electorale de l'Union Africaine Pour le Premier Tour des Partielles et le Second Tour des Elections Législatives du 14 Mars en République Centrafricaine, Déclaration Préliminaire [African Union Election Observation Mission for the First Round of By-Elections and the Second Round of Legislative Elections of 14 March in the Central African Republic, Preliminary Statement] P. 6.

⁹⁷ PAPEC (2020) P.37.

⁹⁸ Ibid. P.16.

⁹⁹ African Union (2020) Mission d'Observation Electorale de l'Union Africaine Pour le Premier Tour des Elections Présidentielle Législatives du 27 Décembre 2020 en République Centrafricaine, Déclaration Préliminaire [African Union Election Observation Mission for the First Round of the 27 December 2020 Presidential and Legislative Elections in the Central African Republic, Preliminary Statement]. P.3. and Mission d'Observation Electorale de l'Union Africaine Pour le Premier Tour des Partielles et le Second Tour des Elections Législatives du 14 Mars en République Centrafricaine, Déclaration Préliminaire [African Union Election Observation Mission for the First Round of By-Elections and the Second Round of Legislative Elections of 14 March in the Central African Republic, Preliminary Statement]. P.5.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations EAD (2016) Needs Assessment Central African Republic. P.6. According to the final evaluation of the previous project, in 2015 UNDP had rehabilitated the centre and provided 360 micro-computers, 10 large capacity servers, 15 scanners, 7 printers and 135 worktables and 300 chairs for data operators. UNDP, Independent Final Evaluation of the CAR Electoral Cycle Support Project - PAPEC. P.18.

with tablets without enough time to test them before registration started. There was limited time for coordination and synergy to be developed with complementary programming to improve the sociopolitical and security environment and make it more conducive for holding credible, peaceful elections.¹⁰¹ There was, however, complementary funding from a UNDP internal security reform project for elections-related police and gendarmerie training with UNPol. Furthermore, UNDP saw its support for upcoming local elections, which have not been held since 1988, as synergistic with its decentralization focus as these would bring government and decision-making closer to the people.

Finally, the project was designed to have a sizeable staff of 12 people at headquarters (five international, four national and three United Nations volunteers) and 51 United Nations volunteers in the field, with a larger programmatic scope than support to ANE and civic education. However, following the EAD recommendation, UNDP did not recruit United Nations volunteers as MINUSCA, which already had 68 electoral posts budgeted, also included 37 United Nations volunteers.¹⁰² Despite the fact that the project was designed as an integrated electoral effort, coordination with MINUSCA was difficult, which meant that UNDP had to implement the project with only 10 staff and no United Nations volunteers. Consequently, resource constraints led the United Nations to delegate non-ANE/ civic education activities to other implementers such as the Belgian cooperation agency. Although coordination with MINUSCA somewhat improved after an integrated operational plan and team were created, based on the recommendations of a November 2020 EAD-UNDP mission, the siloed nature of the interventions persisted, remained problematic and affected implementation.

Finding 9. Political participation of women and marginalized groups. Despite UNDP efforts to promote the participation of women candidates in elections, no political party complied with the Law on parity requiring 35 percent of all nominative and elected positions to be filled by women. Concurrently, while women's political participation in the National Assembly slightly improved in comparison with previous legislative elections, their overall participation in political life remains severely constrained by multiple sociocultural and economic factors.

UNDP promoted GEWE and sought to increase women's participation as a cross-cutting issue in the design of PAPEC, although the participation of indigenous peoples was not taken into account. This notably included a partnership with UN Women to directly address gender aspects of the electoral legal and administrative framework, and to mobilize women and their promotion as candidates. UNDP initial efforts with UN Women focused on the gender aspects of elections: advocacy on the electoral law to ensure compliance with the Law on parity that requires 35 percent of all nominative and elected positions in the public and private sectors to be filled by women; undertaking a gender audit of ANE; and developing a gender strategy for the elections to meet international standards.¹⁰³

PAPEC provided \$500,000 to UN Women to strengthen the capacity of women candidates, put in place a hotline for information and reporting on election-related violence, and sensitize voters and women on the importance of participation and having elected women in office. In addition to women, youth and other vulnerable groups were also targeted in voter education communication efforts disseminated through radio and CSO outreach efforts. Efforts with women candidates increased the number of women standing, in comparison to 2015-2016. Efforts prior to the elections to raise the awareness of 3,000 women

¹⁰¹ United Nations EAD (2018) Report of the Electoral Needs Assessment Mission, Central African Republic. P. 1-2.

¹⁰² General Assembly (2020) Budget performance for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 and proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central African Republic, A/74/737. Add.10. P.5.

¹⁰³ American Bar Association, Seeking Peaceful Governance through Women in the Central African Republic.

in 10 prefectures, and engage men to support women, were cited as success stories. According to project reporting, UN Women trained 312 potential female candidates and coached 119 women for the December 2020 elections.¹⁰⁴

The training of police and gendarmes, funded by the project and implemented through UNPol, is likely to have had a positive impact on the participation of women and other vulnerable groups, as ISF would be more aware of their needs and right to participate. The hotline established by UN Women with UNDP funds was used by female candidates and voters to report issues, including one candidate who reported being threatened and was quickly removed from the situation by the MINUSCA Quick Response Team. Evaluation interviewees noted specific support, with material actions with important effects on the position of women and girls, and to a lesser extent on men and boys. These included the financing of an office in the parliament building for the *Forum des Femmes Parlementaires de Centrafrique* to serve as a meeting and training location.

By the end of the electoral process, 17 women were elected to the National Assembly, raising the proportion of women in Parliament from 7.2 percent in 2016 to 12.5 percent in 2021.¹⁰⁵ There was, however, no data available on how many of these women had participated in the project. Even if these results were perceived by interviewees to be a positive development, cultural stereotypes and other barriers still made it difficult for women and other vulnerable groups to compete on a level playing field. Numerous political parties were easily able to find legal exemptions to meeting the 35 percent quota for women candidates on their ballots, as the Constitutional Court allowed 27 parties to field candidates in the legislative elections despite not meeting the quota.¹⁰⁶

Anecdotally, civic education efforts that targeted youth and used youth volunteers strengthened participants' interest in public affairs and awareness on the importance of their vote for the future of the country. According to one CSO, this gave them hope for the future. AU observers noted good mobilization of youth and their enthusiasm in the March 2021 elections.¹⁰⁷

CSO sub-grantees also reported increased interest and participation of people with disabilities (PwD), noting that hearing- and visually-impaired voters who needed a translator or aid to understand the process and vote had not previously turned out. AU observers saw PwD being assisted at the polling sites, both in March and in May elections. The *Association Nationale La Main des Sourds pour le Travail et le Développement en Centrafrique* employed some PwD to sensitize others, which was likely to be empowering for the participants. Strengthening access to polling stations for PwD was not part of PAPEC design, and the lack of ramps in some polling stations for persons with mobility issues was an issue noted by observers, although this was reportedly less of an issue in the capital.¹⁰⁸

The voter ID cards provided to all registered voters are being used by people without papers as a national ID, and this has been identified as a positive unexpected outcome of the UNDP intervention. An estimated 50-60 percent of the voters who registered now have official ID for the first time, based on the testimony

¹⁰⁴ PAPEC (2020) P. 27.

¹⁰⁵ World Bank, Data, Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Security Council (2021) Central African Republic, Report of the Secretary-General. P. 3.

¹⁰⁷ African Union (2020) Mission d'Observation Electorale de l'Union Africaine Pour le Premier Tour des Elections Présidentielle Législatives du 27 Décembre 2020 en République Centrafricaine, Déclaration Préliminaire [African Union Election Observation Mission for the First Round of the 27 December 2020 Presidential and Legislative Elections in the Central African Republic, Preliminary Statement]. P. 5.

¹⁰⁸ African Union, Mission d'Observation Electorale de l'Union Africaine Pour le Premier Tour des Partielles et le Second Tour des Elections Législatives du 14 Mars en République Centrafricaine, Déclaration Préliminaire [African Union Election Observation Mission for the First Round of By-Elections and the Second Round of Legislative Elections of 14 March in the Central African Republic, Preliminary Statement]. P.4.

of village chiefs. The card is reportedly accepted as proof of ID by banks and other institutions and at travel check points. The voter list and ID cards could pave the way for the establishment of a more reliable civil registration system in CAR.

2.2 Stabilization, recovery and resilience-building

CPD Outcome 2: By 2021, political and administrative institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector implement policies, programmes and reforms aimed at inclusive economic growth (good governance, recovery and job creation) and ethical transparent and sustainable management of natural resources.

Related outputs

Output 2.1. Green growth objectives are integrated into sector specific policies at national level

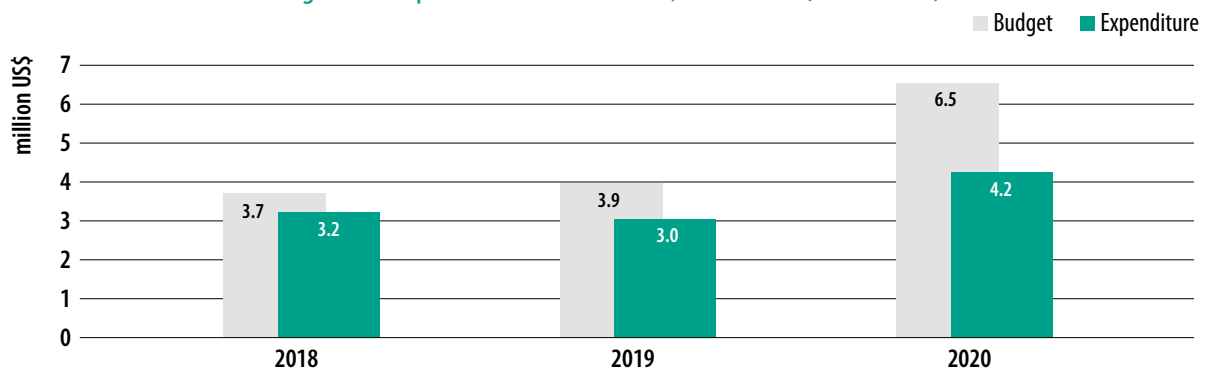
Output 2.2. Increased transparency in the forestry and mining sectors

Output 2.3. Vulnerable populations including returning refugees, displaced persons, ex combatants, women and youth have access to livelihood opportunities and sustainable employment

Outcome 2 of the country programme includes UNDP interventions in the areas of stabilization, recovery and resilience-building. Interventions under this outcome aim to support resilience at the local level, promote green growth through improving energy-efficiency and sustainable and transparent management of agricultural, forest and mineral resources. Projects under this outcome are organized in three outputs: Green growth policies (Output 2.1); Transparency in the forestry and mining sectors (Output 2.2); and Access to livelihood opportunities and sustainable employment (Output 2.3).

The largest output area under Outcome 2 is Output 2.3 on livelihoods and sustainable employment, which includes eight active projects and cumulative expenditure of \$9.1 million in the period under review. Output 2.3 represents 88 percent of Outcome 2 expenditure, and around 10 percent of total programme spending. It is followed by green growth (Output 2.1, two projects), with \$1.2 million in expenditure. Output 2.2 on transparency in the forestry and mining sectors has seen very little financial activity in the period under review, with less than \$100,000 in expenditure.

FIGURE 6. Evolution of Budget and expenditure in Outcome 2, 2018-2020 (million US\$)



Source: Atlas November 2021

FIGURE 7. Cumulative expenditure by output, Outcome 2, 2018-2020 (million US\$)



Source: Atlas November 2021

Finding 10. Social cohesion and economic empowerment. UNDP efforts to provide economic opportunities to populations outside the capital through targeted emergency employment had a modest effect on social cohesion and poverty for participants in some communities, confirming that the approaches were pertinent, despite being unevenly implemented. The scale of these achievements remains limited due to the short-term, small-scale and fragmented nature of the interventions in a context where more than half of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance. The broader enabling environment also remains unfavourable to sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development, as basic infrastructure, policy frameworks and budgets for social protection are inadequate.

UNDP efforts to provide access to livelihood opportunities and sustainable employment to vulnerable populations were based on the assumption that providing economic opportunities to vulnerable populations, especially outside the capital, would reduce the likelihood of radicalization and contribute to increased social cohesion. UNDP sought to achieve this objective by supporting income-generating activities (IGA) and employment intensive work (EIW) programmes for populations, including women, youth and PwD living outside the capital city. With the financial support of the Government of Japan, and NGOs acting as responsible parties, UNDP conducted trainings, awareness-raising activities, provided seed funding and IGA kits, and rehabilitated infrastructure at community level to create local economic activities. According to UNDP, a total of 24,217 persons have benefited from emergency employment or livelihoods, namely IGA and EIW, between 2018 and 2020, including 11,423 women, from periods of time spanning from three months up to a year.

Through the project to support local development and resilience, UNDP EIW allowed for the rehabilitation of roads and construction of bridges in several prefectures,¹⁰⁹ as well as community infrastructure such as town halls, prefectural buildings, etc.¹¹⁰ Several other rehabilitation works are in the pipeline. Other projects such as the youth joint programme or the IGA project supported participants to join together to receive three-month trainings and starter kits to allow them to start micro-enterprises (mechanics, sewing, livestock breeding, catering etc.).

Targeting populations outside the capital, including in the central and eastern parts of the country that are largely occupied by armed groups, was a relevant effort appreciated by all stakeholders consulted. Pragmatically, most UNDP interventions were conducted in cities controlled by the Government, though locations such as Ndélé, Mobaye, Alindao and Obo were often surrounded by areas largely controlled by armed groups, thus posing serious risks to the implementation of projects and causing interruptions, as

¹⁰⁹ Local communities in the prefectures of Bamingui-Bangoran, Nana-Gribizi, Ouaka, Basse-Kotto, Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou.

¹¹⁰ Community radio in Birao, slaughterhouse, and recreational area for the women's organization in Mobaye.

in Alindao. Other cities such as Birao, Titingoulou and Zemio were often out of Government control, thus posing an even more serious security risk. A vast majority of roads presented high and potential risk of travel, requiring UNDP to mobilize MINUSCA or use humanitarian flights (see Annex 7).

Interviews with target populations and site visits to Bambari and Bossangoa provided anecdotal evidence that the 'FSJ2'¹¹¹ and 'FSJ3'¹¹² projects, funded by Japan through a supplementary budget, contributed to creating favourable conditions for stronger social cohesion between communities, for example, between Muslims and Christians in Bambari. Respondents mentioned that the joint nature of activities, in which beneficiaries from different communities were grouped and required to collaborate, led to positive changes, even when the project ended. Furthermore, a significant proportion of beneficiaries interviewed for this evaluation reported that their participation in the projects led to improved technical skills and enhanced knowledge on IGA. The literacy, simplified bookkeeping and business plan development courses run by Finnish Church Aid were highlighted as particularly relevant. In their opinion, these activities allowed them to gain more financial autonomy and stability, and empowered some women. However, security developments often hampered this fragile improvement. For example, after beneficiaries received better access to livestock-rearing and agriculture in Bossangoa, many of them lost their businesses due to the deteriorating security situation in the area.

According to interlocutors, the integration of the 'Five S-Kaizen Stepwise' approach, developed by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, into UNDP rehabilitation projects enabled State agents and project beneficiaries to adopt new ways of working and generate income, and also to train others in the approach.¹¹³ UNDP reported that this approach had helped to strengthen the capacities of IGA beneficiaries in localities such as Mbaïki and Bossangoa, and allowed beneficiaries to strengthen their business management capacity.

Similarly, the '3x6' approach was considered relevant because it allowed beneficiaries of temporary employment to enrol in and sustain IGAs. The approach is strongly based on inclusion and bottom-up processes, involving local authorities, community leaders and beneficiaries.¹¹⁴ This approach proved successful in several localities where UNDP worked, for instance enabling youth-at-risk and women's groups to undertake economic activities, although the evaluation found that insufficient attention was paid to purposefully targeting women.¹¹⁵

While both approaches were seen as effective and relevant to the work of UNDP, some critical issues were also raised, particularly regarding the implementation of specific phases of the 3X6 approach. Some implementing partners and beneficiaries raised issues with the engagement element of the inclusion phase, specifically that relevant stakeholders were not always included in the project development phase.

¹¹¹ Support for stabilization, socio-economic recovery and prevention of radicalization of vulnerable populations (FSJ2).

¹¹² Rapid assistance for peacebuilding and social stabilization in conflict-affected communities (FSJ3).

¹¹³ Japanese International Cooperation Agency (2018) Japan's approach towards improved quality and productivity: Kaizen, the driving force of Japan's rapid growth.

¹¹⁴ UNDP (2016) Global Toolkit on the 3x6 approach: Building resilience through jobs and livelihoods; UNDP, Livelihoods & Economic Recovery in Crisis Situations; UNDP (2015) Guide on Livelihoods and Economic Recovery in crisis and post crisis contexts; UNDP Strategic Plan (2014-2017).

¹¹⁵ The approach consists of three organizing principles (1. Inclusiveness; 2. Ownership; and, 3. Sustainability) and six fundamental steps (implemented in three distinct phases, that is, 1.1 Engaging; 1.2 Generating Income; 2.1 Savings; 2.2 Joint Venturing; 3.1 Investing; 3.2 Accessing Markets) hence 3x6.

Examples were given of non-functional pilot committees, lacking the participation of implementing partners or not sufficiently representing the interests of beneficiaries. In some cases, the committees were reportedly rarely meeting or not meeting at all. Respondents pointed to the need to better manage these committees to strengthen local engagement. Furthermore, respondents felt that local authorities and sectoral ministries or departments could have been more involved in project development and implementation. Different CSOs were responsible for implementing the 3x6 approach, and the evaluators noted that they did not implement it uniformly, thus sometimes creating frustration among participants who perceived that other groups were better supported.

The last phase of the 3X6 approach involves making informed investment choices, developing market systems and making sure that the jobs created evolve into sustainable employment. However, these interventions were implemented as short 6-12 month pilot projects. The phases aiming to consolidate IGA achievements through longer-term support to entrepreneur groups (over 18-24 months) through revolving credits to finance their business plans did not take place. Lack of access to additional funding or credit and insufficient marketing opportunities limited the growth and sustainability of small businesses, leaving some implementing partners with the impression that the project did not reach its full potential.

The absence of financial services such as banking or microfinance institutions outside of Bangui (and more recently Berberati and Bouar) is a key structural barrier to economic development of the country. To overcome this, UNDP staff had to carry money, with MINUSCA escorts, to ensure that it reached target populations. This shows the magnitude of the transaction costs incurred by UNDP in its efforts to work with hard-to-reach populations in a context where basic financial and economic institutions are lacking. Moreover, UNDP emergency employment interventions and IGAs did not sufficiently explore the possibilities to ensure that their efforts would translate into longer-term sustainable jobs.

Overall, the evaluation observed that these interventions tended to be short-term, small-scale and lacked integration with one another.¹¹⁶ Efforts to complement interventions with the expertise of partners such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) (for value chains, employability, decent work, etc.) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (for transhumance, IGA, rural development, etc.) were also limited. In CAR, as in other conflict-affected countries, there are not sufficient social protection systems or institutional frameworks into which these employment efforts could be embedded to build sustainability. Prospects for reviving the local economy remain limited due to the absence of financing structures that could support them in the long term, as well as the weak managerial capacity of local actors. Despite an attempt to link upstream interventions such as decentralization efforts (output 1.3) to downstream resilience-building efforts, there was insufficient progress in the establishment of a more favourable enabling environment. UNDP did play a key financial and technical role in the establishment of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism Radicalization (2018), which includes a pillar on community resilience.¹¹⁷ Yet, its action plan, in which socioeconomic development has a marginal place, is rather succinct and is not a substitute for a more comprehensive socioeconomic or rural development policy. This is coupled by the insufficient budgets allocated to social protection and economic development by the Government.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ According to the evaluation of the PBF portfolio in CAR (2019), the lack of coherence of IGA or cash-for-work activities funded by the PBF was flagrant and prevented the projects from maximizing their impact.

¹¹⁷ Government of CAR (2018) National Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization.

¹¹⁸ With a CPIA social protection rating of 2, CAR has one of the lowest values in the world, indicating its policy and institutional framework does not foster growth and poverty reduction.

Finding 11. Energy access and natural resource management. UNDP played an important role in fostering policies and advocating for institutional changes to improve energy access, but progress to set up a network of small hydroelectric power plants and increase transparency in the forestry and mining sectors has been limited as these objectives appear overly ambitious. UNDP did not see through efforts to mobilize the financial and technical resources necessary to position itself more strongly in this area, and missed the opportunity to capitalize more strongly on vertical funds and further integrate livelihoods approaches with environment, energy and climate change adaptation initiatives at community level.

The project to set up a network of small hydroelectric power plants managed to support the development of some key legislative and normative documents, most notably the Decentralized Energy Policy that was adopted by decree in 2020.¹¹⁹ It contributed to the establishment and operationalization of the National Guarantee and Investment Fund in 2019,¹²⁰ to attract investors in the energy sector.¹²¹ UNDP financed and organized several workshops to support these processes, and provided technical guidance. The process to update the National Energy Policy is currently underway under UNDP leadership.

Feasibility studies for the development of a network of small hydroelectric power plants in four sites are ongoing, but related project and CPD output indicators are unlikely to be achieved by the end of the CPD cycle. There was no improvement in access to electricity amongst the target population. Limited progress was made in resource mobilization for the construction of the power plants, and delays related to the electoral crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic were the key factors affecting project implementation.

An independent midterm evaluation noted that the hydroelectric power plant project was highly relevant and had good potential for sustainability, but was highly vulnerable to political instability and insecurity, and dependent on external funding. It confirmed that, two and a half years after its launch, little to no concrete progress had been achieved. Most of the targets listed in the project results framework had not been achieved, and only the legislative and institutional framework aspects received a satisfactory assessment of results.

UNDP also sought to support the Government in its effort to mobilize resources from the Green Climate Fund. However, after failing to secure this funding in the previous programme cycle (2015-2018) due to capacity and implementation issues at government level, interviews indicated that this effort was no longer being prioritized.

There were no clear achievements in progress towards improved transparency in the forestry and mining sectors. Both UNDP staff and government officials indicated that not enough was done to advance in these sectors. The evaluation nonetheless noted that the geostrategic nature of these sectors, closely related to the armed conflict, constituted a significant barrier for UNDP to strongly position itself as a central partner. Interviews also revealed that the country office had been absent from key decision-making committees with government and development partners, including those related to the extractive sector. Finally, the evaluators noted that gender equality considerations were only marginally taken into account in this area.

Evidence gathered in other conflict-affected settings indicates that it is possible to use vertical funds to catalyse livelihood outcomes through efforts to tackle environment, energy and climate change issues at community level.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Government of CAR (2019) National Energy Policy (Decree N° 10-092) 2020-2030.

¹²⁰ Final report on the operationalization of the National Guarantee and Investment Fund (2019).

¹²¹ Mid-Term Review, Small Hydroelectric Power Project in the Central African Republic (23/11/2020 to 22/02/2021).

¹²² UNDP IEO (2020) Evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries. P. 43.

2.3 Partnerships and strategic positioning

Finding 12. Partnerships with international actors. UNDP coordination and collaboration with other United Nations entities, most notably with MINUSCA, has been uneven and has impacted the performance of the country office electoral support and livelihoods interventions. Furthermore, despite initial efforts to design joint projects with other United Nations agencies, most notably through the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), implementation has often been fragmented thus missing the opportunity to capitalize on potential synergies.

UNDAF+ was designed to be implemented following the ‘Delivering as One’ approach, and move towards an effective HDN approach. The UNDP CPD and abovementioned interventions are fully aligned with UNDAF+, which itself is aligned to RCPCA 2017-2021.¹²³ However, the evaluation noted that the United Nations, UNDP and MINUSCA often faced challenges in effectively coordinating their actions in certain areas of their work.

For example, United Nations policy requires integrated electoral support from the outset in a mission context, even if the mission and United Nations country team are not structurally integrated.¹²⁴ UNDP election assistance was thus conceptualized as an integrated effort with the electoral division of MINUSCA in its design, as recommended by the 2018 Needs Assessment Mission and United Nations policy. This was not reflected in implementation, however, and coordination remained problematic throughout much of the process, though improving outwardly following a joint EAD-UNDP mission in late 2020 that looked at this issue.

The efforts of both were fragmented, with systemic coordination issues raised throughout interviews. PAPEC had difficulties using MINUSCA offices in the field, and intermittent issues with the delivery of cash for paying election workers using MINUSCA flights and field presence which in one case required UNDP to charter a plane. The evaluation also noted coordination issues among CSO partners, as well as with ANE, MINUSCA and the Ministry of Territorial Decentralization for voter sensitization, who felt that meetings needed to be more regular to improve effectiveness, noting that one CSO team had to be evacuated from Berberati to Bangui by air after armed groups blocked the roads. This situation could have been avoided, and the evacuation done sooner, if there had been better coordination between UNDP and MINUSCA.

While the financial contribution of MINUSCA to UNDP elections projects was relatively small (2 percent of total expenditure, with the EU providing nearly 60 percent), the picture is different for the rule of law portfolio where the MINUSCA contribution corresponds to 18 percent of current expenditure. This coincides with a more constructive and coherent working relationship, in which collaboration with MINUSCA was seen as a key factor in expanding the geographical reach of interventions in the justice and security sectors. However, the unclear distribution of roles and responsibilities from the outset (as seen in the project documents), inefficient communication and unsatisfactory visibility of projects were often mentioned by partners, including donors, as factors hampering the partnership. Collaboration between UNDP and MINUSCA around livelihood interventions (Output 1.3), although limited in scope, was nonetheless perceived as positive by consulted stakeholders and was a facilitating factor in reaching the hardest-to-reach.

¹²³ Some CPD indicators were modified in 2018 after noting a certain misalignment with the UNDAF+ as well as inadequacies in the type of indicators initially established.

¹²⁴ United Nations Focal Point for Electoral Assistance, Policy, Principles and Types of Electoral Assistance. P. 15.

Regarding partnerships with other United Nations agencies, the review of UNDP project documents shows that most projects were implemented jointly with at least one other United Nations agency, fund or programme.¹²⁵ PBF was a key instrument promoting inter-agency collaboration around projects under Outcome 1. It was mostly utilized for joint projects with MINUSCA, and to a lesser extent with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women and FAO.

Project analysis demonstrated that implementation of most of the non-PBF joint projects under Outcome 2 was more fragmented. In some cases, some partners did not implement their component of a project, and where they did, the evaluation noted that each one implemented their component in isolation, without joint planning, and failing in most cases to generate synergy in implementation. The joint youth programme was designed around the collaboration of 13 agencies, funds and programmes, but only a few of them, including UNDP, ended up mobilizing resources and implementing the project.

Evidence collected indicates that efforts were deployed to design joint project documents in an attempt to jointly mobilize resources. However, by adopting a parallel fund management modality for joint programmes (rather than a pooled fund, for example), efforts to mobilize donors were siloed, leading to situations in which certain components of programmes remained unfunded.¹²⁶ The 'Human Security' joint project is an example of this, as evidence indicates that funding agreements were established bilaterally between donors and specific agencies, thus disincentivising the coordination of actions across agencies. Evidence for this joint project also showed that there was no joint planning or management, activities were not always implemented in the same locations or targeting the same beneficiaries, a perception that was confirmed by the project final evaluation.¹²⁷

These results indicate that collaboration and coordination across development actors was not adequate because of the challenging context, the different operational capacities of United Nations partners, difficulties to mobilize resources, and the absence of common will and mechanisms to foster it. They also give a sense of the difficulties UNDP has been facing in conflict-affected countries since United Nations reform delinked the Resident Coordinator role from the UNDP Resident Representative.¹²⁸ UNDP has played a role in aid coordination, notably through its Policy and Strategy Unit and staff placed in the Ministry of Planning, and by maintaining a database on aid effectiveness. In addition, recent efforts undertaken by the new UNDP management in CAR with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to lead the inter-agency working group on durable solutions, the first attempt in years to make concrete efforts to improve coordination between humanitarian and development actors in CAR through an area-based approach.

International financial institutions (IFIs), most notably the World Bank and African Development Bank, were not very visible partners of UNDP in CAR. The World Bank is strongly positioned in the natural resources management area, and its Country Partnership Framework with CAR "aims to boost stabilization, inclusion and resilience, while building state legitimacy and fostering growth", indicating thematic coherence around governance and resilience building as areas of common interest for both organizations.¹²⁹ In addition to providing direct budgetary support to the Government, IFIs are also playing a political role in CAR, along with large donors in the so called "G5" group, a situation that has required UNDP to act cautiously to maintain its privileged relationship with the Government.

¹²⁵ UNFPA, UN Women, OHCHR, FAO, WHO, UNODC and ILO were the partners most often cited in project documents.

¹²⁶ UNEG (2014) Standard Operating Procedures for countries adopting Delivering as One - Guidance note on joint programmes.

¹²⁷ Toe Zongi Robert, Final Evaluation of the "United Nations Pilot Project for Social Cohesion, Conflict Prevention, Violence Reduction and Strengthening Human Security for Central African Youth", December 2019.

¹²⁸ UNDP IEO (2020). P. 32-33.

¹²⁹ See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/centralafricanrepublic/overview#2>.

Actions with the private sector also had limited reach, most notably due to the absence of a strong and diversified private sector in CAR, where foreign direct investment is almost non-existent.¹³⁰ It is also unclear whether the country office was able to establish partnerships with private firms from the Diaspora, as suggested in its resource mobilization strategy.

Finding 13. Partnerships with national actors. UNDP institutional support was often oriented towards infrastructure rehabilitation, construction and the provision of equipment, due to its ability to manage procurement processes and administrative tasks. The limited absorptive capacity of government counterparts led the country office to resort to capacity substitution in order to move initiatives forward. While appreciated by the Government, these approaches have limited transformative potential. They were nonetheless complemented by partnerships with CSOs which expanded the reach of UNDP outside the capital.

The privileged partner of UNDP during this programme cycle was the national Government. The Government, like most national partners, perceives UNDP as a trustworthy partner, but also as one of the few to support them in development rather than humanitarian interventions, through capacity-building, rehabilitation of basic services and infrastructure, and provision of equipment. Through its Policy and Strategy Unit, UNDP provided strategic support to the Government for elaboration of the RCPCA, CAR's national development plan, advice on the SDGs and alignment with national priorities.

Capacity substitution, while not formally highlighted in annual reports, was an essential part of the UNDP contribution, as it was required for the basic functioning of key institutions and mechanisms, such as the SCC, ordinary courts, and the redeployment of ISF and State officials, among other things. Staff turnover, weak technical capacity, and absenteeism among government partners warranted this type of support. This nonetheless led some government partners to feel insufficiently involved in design and decision-making in certain areas, such as rule of law and RESA interventions, or that they had projects "imposed on them". Nonetheless, UNDP remained the privileged development partner and interlocutor of the national Government, with direct access to the Prime Minister and other key ministers.

UNDP relevance is also supported by the high risks associated with moving too fast to more direct budgetary support. Finding the right balance between supporting the Government and pushing for more contentious structural reforms on topics such as impunity, corruption and broader human rights violations remains a challenge.

Partnerships with CSOs were also key for UNDP, especially for the implementation of actions at community level in areas where the national Government had little presence, such as for IGA, EIW and civic education campaigns. This approach allowed the country office to expand its operational reach throughout the territory in a cost-effective manner, while also empowering national actors to play a central role in the development of their country. However, coordination with these partners was not always optimal. For example, CSOs working in the same areas or on the same topics did not coordinate their actions, which led to missed opportunities for increasing the internal coherence of UNDP interventions.

CSOs consulted were eager to collaborate with UNDP given that their organizations often relied on the financial support of the international community and saw these partnerships as opportunities to strengthen their own capacity. These views reinforce the relevance for UNDP to further engage with CSOs to implement its programme, hold government accountable and ensure that national ownership does not only lie in the hands of the Government.

¹³⁰ OECD (2020), *States of Fragility 2020*. P. 55.

Finding 14. Comparative advantage. UNDP positioning at the crossroads of governance, rule of law and human rights, is a key element that distinguishes UNDP work in CAR from that of the predominantly humanitarian United Nations country team. Its added value thus lies more in its ability to provide operational and administrative support. However, there are opportunities to better coordinate its efforts at community level with humanitarian actors, through the Durable Solutions Working Group.

UNDP operates in a predominantly humanitarian country team and a context where the vast majority of ODA is dedicated to humanitarian interventions.¹³¹ With a strong country presence of approximately 150 staff and consultants, UNDP is perceived by partners to be the leading development agency with a longer-term resilience-building perspective in a humanitarian context. It was able to position itself as a central actor in the rule of law sector, primarily by supporting transitional justice mechanisms and redeployment of ISF and public servants. UNDP, along with MINUSCA, is one of the main financial contributors to CAR for SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.¹³² UNDP has been a key player in the peacebuilding process, with a strategic role in supporting the Government to operationalize the 2019 Peace Agreement by facilitating administrative processes.¹³³

Interviews with partners and donors also indicated that the main comparative advantage of UNDP resided in its global track record in the area of governance and rule of law. In the specific context of CAR, it was also perceived to be one of the most reliable, transparent and accountable entities for donors to work with, as evidenced by the fact that the international community entrusted the delicate financial administration of the SCC to UNDP. This positioning significantly improved in recent years with the arrival of the new management team.

During the current cycle, UNDP comparative advantage was thus mostly apparent at upstream level, working directly at strategic and institutional level with government counterparts, and facilitating administrative and procurement processes. This type of support allowed UNDP to remain committed to 'leave no one behind' principles through a holistic (rather than sectoral or targeted) approach to development. Under Output 2.3 (livelihoods and sustainable development), UNDP implemented multiple projects for \$13 million of mostly downstream interventions. While lauded for their ability to operate in more remote locations, bilateral and multilateral partners still believed that upstream work was where UNDP added more value. Despite UNDP operating different project offices during the programme cycle, other humanitarian agencies tended to have much more operational capacity and flexibility to operate outside of Bangui.

UNDP is trying to capitalize on its pre-existing downstream work to play a more significant role in operationalizing the HDN approach. Sitting in both the humanitarian country team (HCT) and United Nations country team, and as co-lead with UNHCR of the newly created Durable Solutions Working Group, UNDP has been active in advocating for an area-based approach to development, although no concrete interventions based on this approach have yet been designed. An area-based approach aims to put in place the necessary conditions for the United Nations to deploy a multisectoral effort in a targeted location, to jointly tackle different humanitarian and development issues (e.g., local governance, rule of law, participation in democratic processes, women's economic empowerment, livelihoods and social cohesion). Progress in this field has been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the resurgence of violence, and the fact that elections work dominated discussions in the United Nations country team.

¹³¹ OECD (2018).

¹³² UNSDG. Central African Republic, Linking Investments, Partners and the Sustainable Development Goals in Central African Republic: <https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/central-african-republic>.

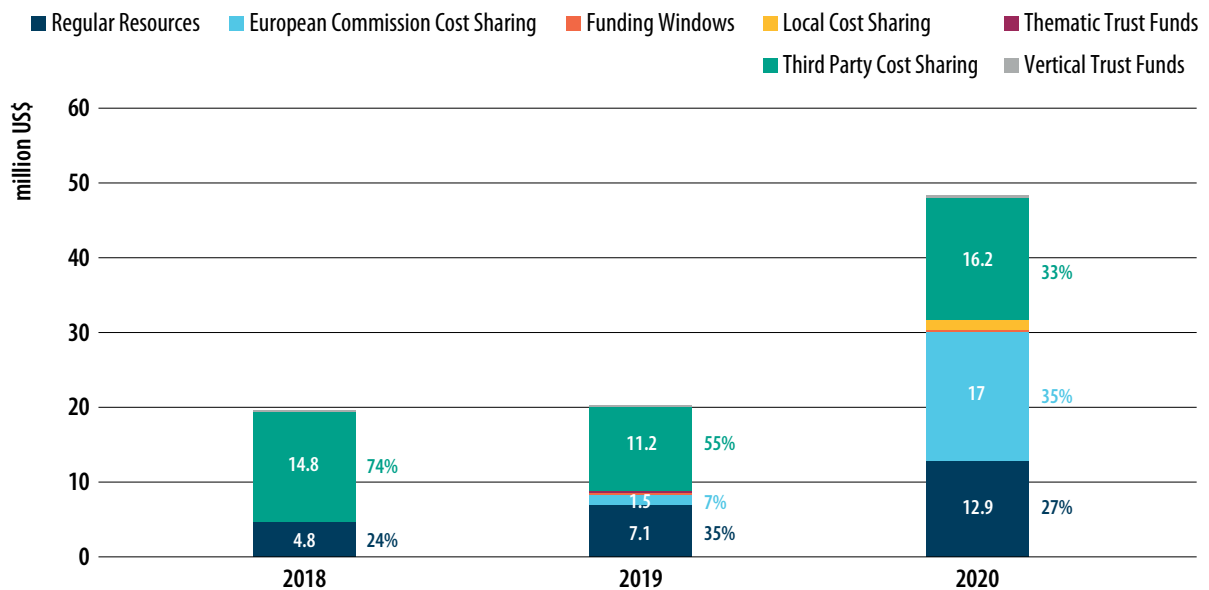
¹³³ Establishing transitional justice mechanisms, decentralization, reforming the security sector, promoting IGAs were key dimensions of the 2019 Peace Agreement.

As the leading development agency of the United Nations, UNDP is well positioned to propose longer-term development solutions for the country, as a key actor able to design or participate in multidimensional and integrated initiatives. However, the CAR country office has not fully capitalized on existing opportunities to better integrate its interventions with other development actors in the country (see Findings 13 and 14).

Finding 15. Resource mobilization. Despite being one of the most aid-dependent countries in the world, CAR does not figure in the top 20 of fragile-country ODA recipients. In this climate, UNDP has remained dependent on a handful of donors, and with the reduction in fiscal space and budget constraints in donor countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is little diversification of opportunities in sight.

The evolution of funding between 2018 and 2020 shows a slight diversification of sources over the period, but three sources still represent over 95 percent of all funding over the last three years: UNDP regular resources (also referred to as core funds), EU funds; and third-party cost-sharing (or other resources).¹³⁴ Local cost-sharing (contributions from the Government) is not significant, which is to be expected for a conflict-affected LDC. In 2020, EU funds were almost exclusively dedicated to supporting the electoral process (through PAPEC), explaining the drastic increase in overall expenditure for that year.

FIGURE 8. Expenditure by funding source, 2018-2020



Source: Atlas November 2021

The UNDP core fund contribution is high in share percentage and increasing in absolute value (the proportion of core funds to total funds is higher than for the region and globally). These high levels of core funding illustrate the importance of CAR for UNDP (based on its LDC status and crisis situation) and at the same time is a reflection of the lack of external resources and donors funding development programmes in the country.

¹³⁴ Regular Resources: UNDP resources that are co-mingled and untied. These include voluntary contributions, contributions from other governmental, intergovernmental or non-governmental sources and related interest revenue and miscellaneous revenue. Other Resources: resources received for specific programme purposes, consistent with the policies, aims and activities of UNDP and for the provision of management and other support services to third parties. When a programme country government or other partner (also called third-party), such as a donor government, contributes resources to specific UNDP programmes or projects, the arrangement is known as cost-sharing. The revenue generated through cost-sharing forms part of the other resources of UNDP.

Five donors have consistently constituted the third-party funding stream since 2018 (contributing over 90 percent): PBF, MINUSCA, the United States, Japan and the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF). While the latter's contribution has decreased, bilateral funding from the Netherlands and Germany emerged in 2020. The Netherlands mostly funds SCC projects, while Germany contributed to the elections project.

Overall, the high share of funding from UNDP core funds, in addition to the relative dependence on a small number of large donors, represents a sustainability risk. Evidence collected during the evaluation indicates that all future funding opportunities would come from the United States, PBF, EU and Japan. Yet, opportunities still exist to mobilize vertical funds, including the Green Climate Fund, for UNDP to position itself more strongly in the area of environment, climate change and natural resource management. Resource mobilization through South-South cooperation, the private sector and global foundations did not yield significant resources.

The existence of a resource mobilization and partnerships strategy for 2018-2021, which clarifies the roles and responsibilities of staff in terms of fundraising, is recognized as a good practice that is also aligned to the 2018 OAI audit recommendations. The lack of an adequate pipeline, in particular between 2015 and 2017 when only \$1.9 million were mobilized, represented a major risk to the office in the past. Pipeline management has significantly improved since then. In mid-2021, the country office already had a mature pipeline of approximately \$18.85 million through its traditional donor base, thus demonstrating that its resource mobilization efforts had become much more effective.¹³⁵

In terms of human resources, the evaluation notes that the country office relies on only three P5 staff, which includes the Deputy Resident Representative for Operations and the PAPEC chief Technical Advisor (CTA), whose contract may end in 2021. Given the importance of advocacy and resource mobilization for the successful implementation of the CPD, this raises the question of whether there is sufficient seniority to perform these tasks successfully across all the portfolios that are expected to be created.

2.4 Programme implementation

Finding 16. Programme design. The country office has piloted a portfolio approach in an effort to strengthen synergy between its projects and improve internal coherence, but only across the rule of law pillar. While the adoption of the portfolio approach allowed the country office to better communicate its rule-of-law objectives and results with internal and external stakeholders, it is unclear whether this yielded better results. Other pillars (gender, decentralization and modernization of the State, livelihoods) have not fully moved towards a portfolio approach, as a common strategy, ToC and integrated reporting is still lacking, and integration of projects, where visible, tends to be *ad hoc*.

In order to increase the internal coherence of its programme, the country office has been moving towards a portfolio approach that has been piloted under the rule of law pillar. According to the country office, this has consisted of bringing together all projects related to reform of the justice sector (including prisons), transitional justice and the security sector under common management, with a strong emphasis on mainstreaming gender by ensuring that women have access to justice and security.¹³⁶ Articulated by a common ToC, this portfolio brings together 10 projects and managed a budget of \$52.56 million over the current programme cycle.

¹³⁵ \$2,155,000 (confirmed) and \$16,700,000 (pipeline maturity level B).

¹³⁶ UNDP (2019) Rule of Law portfolio.

The main advantage of this portfolio approach so far has been to better communicate the country office medium-term (five years) objectives in the rule of law pillar to external stakeholders, especially donors. With a clearer pathway to change, UNDP is also in a better position to mobilize resources aligned with its objectives, reducing the risk of being dragged into donor-driven interventions that do not directly contribute to the stated objective to respond to the justice demands of Central Africans. The country office also moved towards the production of an integrated annual report, highlighting more clearly the progress, challenges and results achieved in the sector, also in an effort to communicate more clearly and coherently with external stakeholders. This approach also allowed the number of steering committees to be rationalized by substituting project-level committees for portfolio-level committees.

While the evaluation cannot conclude whether the 2019 adoption of a portfolio approach in the rule of law pillar allowed UNDP to reach better results, it can confirm that the internal management structure of the portfolio has improved communication and coordination across the three subsectors.¹³⁷ The evaluation also notes that internal coherence between projects within subsectors is significantly greater than that of other projects that have not yet fully moved towards a portfolio approach.

Other portfolios are expected to be created, notably around gender and decentralization and modernization of the State, where projects have been consolidated in Atlas. However, they have not yet reached the same level of maturity since they are generally composed of a more limited number of projects and, most importantly, have no formal sectoral strategy or ToC linking them together.¹³⁸ Output 2.3 on resilience-building and livelihoods remains particularly project-oriented and donor-driven, and appears to be missing opportunities to structure itself around a well-defined ToC and strategy.

Finding 17. Gender mainstreaming. The Gender Seal process provided more visibility to gender issues in the country office, at organizational level, while also bringing concrete tools to advance gender-responsiveness at programme level and support mainstreaming efforts for gender equality across the programme. In terms of expenditure related to specific gender equality results, excluding the elections project, most was for GEN1 projects, contributing ‘somewhat’ to gender equality.

The country office efforts to obtain the Gender Seal started in 2018, with Gold certification officially received in January 2021. The process is based on a self-assessment of gender integration across organizational and programmatic dimensions of the country office. Some positive aspects highlighted in the self-assessment process included the existence of a gender focal team, a gender strategy for the office and key programme interventions marked GEN2 (that significantly contribute to GEWE) or GEN3 (in which GEWE is a principal objective).¹³⁹ Aspects that needed improvement included gender analysis and integration into programmes and projects and internal capacity on gender. The need to further develop an enabling and inclusive environment within the office was also highlighted.

The process leading to the certification encouraged additional efforts to engage all staff in promoting the integration of gender at programme and operational levels. On the operational side, key aspects included the inclusion of operational personnel in the gender focal team, the development of a work-life balance policy, the review of the policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, as well as an emphasis on the

¹³⁷ The portfolio is led by a CTA (P5) and three technical specialists (P4 and P3).

¹³⁸ With the exception of gender and decentralization that have three projects each, other output areas under outcome 1 implement a more limited number of projects.

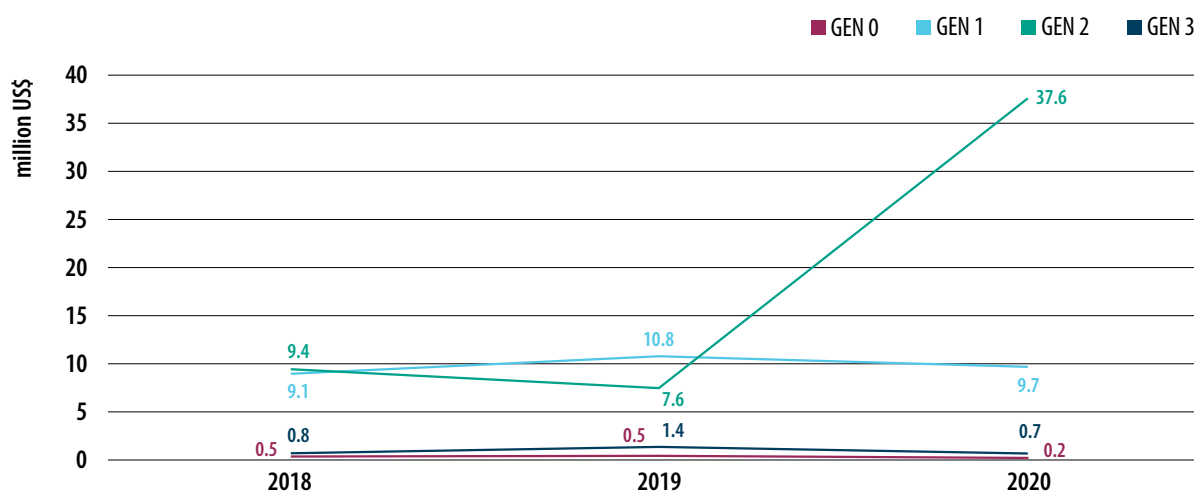
¹³⁹ One of the criteria for obtaining the Gold seal included the proportion of expenditures allocated to GEN2 and GEN3-marked projects. The operation note on the Gender Seal process results indicates that in 2019, GEN2 and GEN3 projects constituted 52 percent of the office's total resources. However, this calculation would include the CHF projects, for which UNDP is not involved in the design or in the implementation. Excluding the CHF projects would result in a proportion close to 44 percent of GEN 2 and 3 projects in 2019.

representation of women in the country office, with efforts made to reach gender parity (see Figure 3 on the distribution of country office positions by sex). As of September 2021, while parity has not been achieved, women represent 36 percent of UNDP staff (29 percent for all types of contracts). However, the strong presence of women in management positions has increased support for a more gender-sensitive programme.

On the programme side, the certification process shed light on lessons learned and challenges in mainstreaming gender equality across the programme. The importance of adequate reporting tools for gender results was highlighted, as well as the need to strengthen consideration for gender aspects in programme design, planning and implementation. Considering this, a “gender checklist” was introduced to assess the integration of gender in new project documents at design phase. However, based on the available documents, some newly-developed projects (COVID-19 response and ‘Stabilization and Prevention of Radicalization’, for example) do not include specific interventions for women.

An analysis of the distribution of programme expenditure by gender marker shows that, on the one hand, 62 percent of expenditure was associated to interventions that aspired to ‘significantly contribute to GEWE’ (GEN2), and an additional 34 percent aspired to have a “limited contribution to GEWE” (GEN1). On the other hand, expenditure on interventions that did not aim to contribute to gender equality at all (GEN0), or had gender equality as the principal objective (GEN3), were limited to less than 5 percent of total expenditure. Before 2020, and the start of the electoral support project, GEN1 projects represented the largest share of the programme.

FIGURE 9. Evolution of expenditure by Gender Marker, 2018-2020

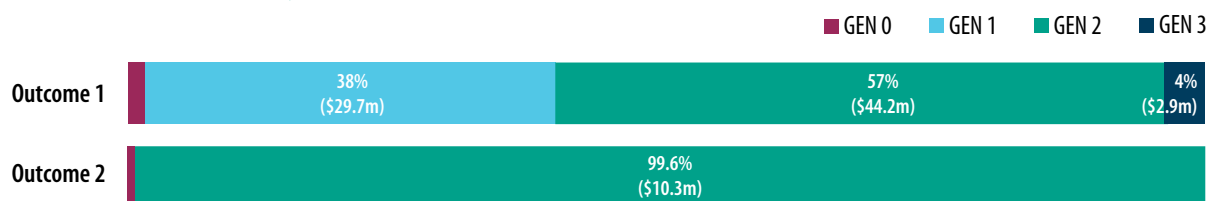


Source: Atlas extraction, September 2021

The sharp increase in GEN2-related expenditure since 2020 corresponds to the start of the PAPEC project, which was assessed to make a significant contribution to gender equality. In reality, while electoral support has an important contribution to make to the participation for women in elections, the project workplan includes only one gender-specific output, out of 13. Moreover, a significant part of the project expenditure (around 70 percent in 2020) is directed towards the development of a computerized voter register, which is not an activity that can be considered gender-sensitive, while the total cost of this activity will count towards GEN2 expenditure. Other projects that were marked GEN2 include the ‘Social Stabilization and Prevention of Radicalization’ project, which aims to reach 50 percent women among its beneficiaries, but does not present a specific or differentiated approach for women’s economic empowerment. Similarly, the ‘Promotion of Small Hydroelectric Power Plants’ project is rated GEN2, but none of the outputs in the

project document have a gender-sensitive dimension. Overall, it would be misleading to view the total GEN2 expenditure over the cycle as a true representation of the programme’s focus on gender equality.

FIGURE 10. Expenditure by Gender Marker and outcome (2018-2020)



Source: Atlas extraction, September 2021

Looking at the gender marker distribution by outcome, Outcome 2 is almost completely made up of GEN2 projects, indicating that the entire portfolio for stabilization, recovery and resilience makes a *significant* contribution to gender equality. Under Outcome 1, a significant proportion of expenditure is linked to GEN1 projects (notably the SCC and the ISF redeployment projects), and over half of expenditure is linked to GEN2 projects (including PAPEC, for which the GEN2 rating can be questioned). GEN3 projects, where gender equality is the main objective, are only found under Outcome 1.

Contributions from UNDP core funds to GEN3 projects is relatively low, and only for the SGBV project. Over the period 2018-2020, UNDP invested the majority of its core funds in GEN2 and GEN3 projects, though spending on GEN3 is based only on one project and has declined slightly. Spending on GEN2 projects has been driven mostly by the elections project. In 2020 and 2021, UNDP continued to invest a proportion of its core funds in projects with a minimal contribution to gender equality.

Finding 18. Efficiency. The country office has significantly improved its internal controls and management practices and obtained a satisfactory rating, for the first time in over two decades, in its most recent audit. Nonetheless, its internal procurement and payment processes remain lengthy and have delayed or impacted the implementation of activities, most notably on SCC projects.

The CAR country office faced important operational issues in the past, which have resulted in unsatisfactory ratings from the Office of Audit and Investigation (OAI) since 1998. The audit that covered the 2016-2017 period, for example, concluded that “the assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were either not adequately established or not functioning well” and that the issues identified could “seriously compromise achievement of the objectives”. It noted that there were: weak oversight and quality assurance mechanisms of NIM and NGO-implemented projects; weak follow-up with non-compliant implementing partners; insufficient capacity-assessment of partners; suboptimal M&E functions; weak travel, fuel and vehicle management; and poor procurement planning. With new management in place since 2019, the country office has addressed most of these issues. In 2021, the OAI gave an overall rating of “satisfactory/ some improvements needed”, for the first time in over two decades.

In terms of efficiency, many interviewees mentioned difficulties in obtaining timely disbursement of project resources, which have in some cases negatively impacted the implementation of activities, including on SCC projects. Several factors can explain delays in processing approvals and payments for projects. First, the national context, which is characterized by an extremely low presence of financial institutions outside of Bangui, as well as low financial capacity of UNDP partners on the ground. This context has justified the use of DIM for all programme activities. The use of DIM eliminates some financial risks linked to the potential misuse of programme resources, but means that operational processes fall entirely under UNDP responsibility, potentially leading to longer transaction times.

Delays in payments to partners and beneficiaries have also resulted from overly complicated processes to request transfers of funds for project activities, particularly compared to other humanitarian actors who are perceived to be more agile than UNDP. In some cases, the lack of knowledge by partners and beneficiaries of UNDP requirements has further exacerbated delays. The country office has, in some cases, responded by providing training to partners on UNDP financial modalities, which have been perceived as useful and with potential to reduce some delays. Partners from CSOs have also indicated that such trainings can contribute to their capacity development. In the case of the SCC project, UNDP introduced more flexibility into the funding mechanisms for some beneficiary structures, which has decreased payment times and increased efficiency.¹⁴⁰ More recently, delays have been attributed to the migration and centralization of certain operational functions to the Global Shared Services Unit in Malaysia, and not all staff are yet familiar with the new processes. Furthermore, within UNDP, offices operating in fragile and conflict-affected countries have to follow the same procedures as offices operating in more conventional settings, a one-size-fits-all approach that is not necessarily adapted to offices such as CAR operating in emergency and rapidly evolving settings.

Another factor that can explain delays is the lack of human resources allocated to projects. Several project evaluations highlighted that the assignment of some staff, including operations and support staff, to more than one project may have reduced their capacity for timely responses to project demands. The low allocation of human resources for the programme is also reflected in the low management to programme cost ratio, which is lower in CAR than regional and global averages, although several other factors can also explain this.

2.5 Country programme performance rating

A four-point rating scale is used, with 4 being the highest and 1 the lowest, to rate the performance of the country programme.¹⁴¹ This table should be read keeping in mind the findings presented in the previous sections, which provide more detailed justification for the ratings. Disaggregated ratings (per output and indicator) and further details on the rating system, are provided in Annex 8.

TABLE 1. Country programme performance rating

Criteria and key parameters	Rating	Justification
OVERALL CPD PERFORMANCE RATING	2	
1. Relevance	3	The country programme was aligned to national priorities, UNDAF+ and the UNDP Strategic Plan, and emphasized gender equality and human rights. It remained highly adaptable given the complexity of the context.
1.A. Adherence to national development priorities	4	
1.B. Alignment with United Nations/ UNDP goals	4	
1.C. Relevance of programme logic	3	

¹⁴⁰ In this project, UNDP has allowed for advance payments to be made for some beneficiary structures, which then provide supporting documents to justify expenditure a posteriori. At the time of the project final evaluation, no misuse of funds had been found.

¹⁴¹ 4 = Satisfactory/Achieved; 3 = Moderately satisfactory/Mostly achieved; 2 = Moderately unsatisfactory/Partially achieved; 1 = Unsatisfactory/Not achieved.

2. Coherence	2	Despite efforts to improve the internal coherence of certain projects under the rule of law portfolio, and in certain cases across outcomes, the country programme remained largely project-driven and lacked a plausible programme-level ToC.
2.A. Internal programme coherence	2	
2.B. External programme coherence	2	UNDP relied on a small number of bilateral partners / donors and did not sufficiently capitalize on the work of international financial institutions (IFIs). Partnerships with United Nations actors were of uneven quality, most notably with MINUSCA. There is room to better engage with CSOs.
3. Efficiency	2	Delays have occurred and cost overruns have been noted linked to armed conflict, difficult access to certain locations in the country, COVID-19, global value chain disruptions, and increases in the price of basic items. However, unclear roles and responsibilities in joint project design, the late initiation of projects and lengthy internal processes also contributed to delays and cost overruns.
3.A. Timeliness	2	
3.B. Management efficiency	2	
4. Effectiveness	3	Results have been achieved across most programme outputs with notable success in providing basic infrastructure, materials and human capacities that allowed national elections to be held. They also ensured the temporary functioning of certain institutions related to the rule of law, with an effort to address SGBV. Short-term emergency employment was also provided to communities outside the capital, including women and PwD.
4.A. Achieving stated outputs and outcomes	3	
4.B. Programme inclusiveness (especially those at risk of being left behind)	3	
4.C. Prioritizing GEWE	3	
4.D. Programming processes adhered to sustainable development principles	3	
5. Sustainability	2	UNDP support was essential to ensure the functioning of key government institutions, and provide short-term emergency employment. However, all these interventions remain highly dependent on the support of the international community.
5.A. Sustainable capacity	2	
5.B. Financing for development	2	

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The country office achieved mixed results, with strong variation between programmatic areas, which reflects the inherent challenges of operating in a highly volatile environment. While UNDP was relatively successful in delivering many of its desired products and outputs, higher-level results were less often achieved. Limited national capacity and ownership hampered the likelihood of sustainability, and UNDP approaches often had a relatively limited prospect of contributing to more transformational results.

UNDP operated in an extremely challenging context, characterized by chronic insecurity, poor or non-existent infrastructure, the absence of a banking system outside of the three main cities, a lack of reliable goods and service providers, and limited or non-existent State authority and presence in large portions of the country. With the additional issue of the landlocked nature of the country, procurement processes were costly and lengthy, and this was exacerbated by disruptions in global value chains during the COVID-19 pandemic. The cost of reaching a beneficiary or achieving an objective in such a context is significantly higher in CAR than in any other country. This partly explains why UNDP was more effective when operating at upstream level (working with government institutions in the capital) than downstream (at community level outside the capital).

UNDP institutional support was often oriented towards infrastructure rehabilitation, construction and the provision of equipment, an approach that is aligned to UNDP capacity to support administrative and procurement processes. The limited absorptive capacity of government counterparts also led the country office to resort to capacity substitution in order to provide support to the immediate needs of key government institutions and move initiatives forward. While the relevance of this type of support cannot be questioned in this specific context, it did not address the root causes of State inefficiencies. While UNDP alone is not accountable for strengthening State authority and the rule of law in a sustainable manner, there is scope for a wider reflection on State-building and peacebuilding strategies, in coordination with the Government, civil society and the international community.

At downstream level, UNDP resilience-building work was hampered by the short-term, small-scale, geographically and programmatically fragmented nature of its interventions. Resilience-building is a transformative process that encompasses more than short-term emergency employment, but requires “strengthening the capacity of people, communities and countries to anticipate, manage, recover and transform from shocks.” As such, it calls for a systemic and multisectoral approach to development. Attempts to tie together these downstream interventions with decentralization and local governance efforts yielded limited results, as progress on RESA were hampered by the recurrence of armed violence, and the inherent challenges of operating in remote locations that lack basic transport, security and financial infrastructure.

This context, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, significantly delayed the implementation of projects related to energy and climate change. Furthermore, UNDP did not capitalize on vertical funds to catalyse livelihoods outcomes while also tackling environment, energy and climate change adaptation.

Conclusion 2. The UNDP presence and operations in CAR constitute an essential part of the recovery, peacebuilding and development efforts of the international community in support to the CAR Government. The UNDP contribution was most appreciated in facilitating the 2021 electoral process and supporting the rule of law, where its role in strengthening the justice and security sectors in coordination with MINUSCA has been critical.

The evaluation concludes that the UNDP country programme was aligned with the national priorities laid out in the RCPCA, and clearly responded to the needs of Central Africans.

UNDP was an important contributor to the wider efforts of the international community to restore the rule of law, which is generally considered an essential precondition to realize peace, human rights, gender equality and economic development. The SCC and TJRRRC, which UNDP is helping to put in place in collaboration with MINUSCA and the national Government, are concrete examples of mechanisms to allow the country to provide justice for victims and reinforce opportunities for peace and reconciliation. The UNDP ability to structure its transitional justice, ordinary justice, security and gender initiatives within a portfolio of projects complementing or building on one another was a key factor in ensuring the coherence of its work in this area.

UNDP is positioned as a global leader in the area of governance and electoral support and has a longstanding presence in the country. This led the EU to rely on UNDP to deploy its electoral support, in collaboration with MINUSCA, which allowed the country to hold democratic elections for the second time in nearly two decades. UNDP ability to meet the electoral project objectives within a short timeframe, in a volatile environment, and despite a complex relationship with MINUSCA, while still reaching some of the hardest locations of the country, was a laudable achievement that strengthened the image of UNDP.

UNDP work in areas such as decentralization and livelihoods was equally relevant, given the immensity of needs of populations outside of the capital. However, a lack of internal coherence between UNDP-implemented projects, and the presence of numerous well-funded humanitarian actors with stronger operational capacity and reach on the ground, did not allow the office to position itself as a central actor at downstream level.

Conclusion 3. Attracting little international attention and development aid, CAR is sometimes qualified as one of the forgotten countries-in-crisis. The prevailing fragile sociopolitical situation has hampered UNDP capacity to mobilize funds, but also to design and implement joint programmes. Opportunities to strengthen the overall coherence of the actions of the international community and improve aid effectiveness remain untapped to date.

CAR is one of the most aid-dependent countries in the world, yet it does not figure in the top 20 of fragile-country ODA recipients. This has placed UNDP in a position of high dependency on a limited number of donors whose support to CAR might further decline in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the lead development agency in CAR, and given this context, the need for UNDP to further integrate its actions with other development actors through funding mechanisms such as PBF, but also with humanitarian actors as co-lead role in the inter-agency Durable Solutions Working Group, becomes increasingly great. Despite the desire for this Working Group to move towards implementation of an area-based approach, the evaluation noted that United Nations interventions in CAR, most notably in the resilience and employability sectors, have remained largely fragmented, missing opportunities to capitalize on potential synergy. It also notes the absence of a clear and concerted strategy and operational roadmap to optimize the overall coherence of international aid.

Implementation of this country programme was characterized by an uneven relationship with MINUSCA. The quality of the relationship overall depended on the rapport between individual UNDP and MINUSCA departments, and the resulting variations ultimately had an impact on UNDP effectiveness. However, both organizations depend on one another to achieve their development objectives in an efficient manner. MINUSCA has significant technical and logistical capacity, including military personnel, financial resources to fund and support the implementation of projects, and the mandate to work with other United Nations actors. UNDP has the mandate to implement projects and lead procurement processes.

The evaluation also found little evidence of UNDP coordination or cooperation with IFIs such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, despite sharing similar objectives in the areas of governance, State-building, rule of law, and in the natural resources and extractive sectors. It is also noted that some IFIs, in addition to providing direct budgetary support the government, are also playing a more political role, a situation that has required UNDP to act cautiously.

Bilateral partners have also been key during this country programme, most notably the EU, United States and Japan, with some emerging actors such as Germany, the Netherlands and Australia, and others that may be less visible in the next programme cycle such as France.

Conclusion 4. In a country where gender inequality and SGBV are among the worst in the world, UNDP achievements to obtain the Gold Gender Seal are highly commendable. Programmatically, the majority of expenditure is still oriented to projects and activities that make limited contributions to gender equality. With women, including victims of SGBV, largely marginalized from decision-making spheres and with limited access to justice, more blatant efforts to provide adapted public services for girls and women in these areas remain critical.

By obtaining the Gold Gender Seal, the country office demonstrated that its gender mainstreaming efforts are adequately supported by programme and operations teams, who rely on a gender focal team and on a gender strategy. Improvements are possible in the use of available gender integration tools, more critical use of the Gender Marker tool, and the use of UNDP core funds for projects with stronger contributions to gender equality.

UNDP was a key supporter of efforts to address SGBV, by investing in the infrastructure and training of UMIRR and supporting the establishment and functioning of legal clinics providing legal advice, psychosocial support and mediation to hard-to-reach SGBV victims. However, given the magnitude of the issue of SGBV in CAR, these efforts seem insufficient to ensure effective access to justice and, most importantly, prosecuting perpetrators of SGBV, as these dimensions remain dependent on the functioning of the justice and security sector.

In the justice sector specifically, the evaluation concludes that gender mainstreaming in transitional justice and the SCC has been limited, and highlights that reliable disaggregated statistical data on violence against women and harmful practices is non-existent.

The scope of UNDP accomplishments within ANE to strengthen the participation of women and other targeted groups and raise popular awareness of the process, and the effectiveness of the different training funded by the project, are largely unknown and could be more significant than those found by the evaluation. The lack of staff to monitor, report and act on findings, along with the lack of more performance-based results frameworks and indicators, limited UNDP ability to evaluate its results and strengthen its programming.

Disaggregated data on the effect of UNDP economic empowerment, social cohesion and resilience-building interventions was also non-existent, despite the fact that a majority of women probably participated and benefited from these initiatives.

3.2 Recommendations and management response

RECOMMENDATION 1.



UNDP should capitalize on its integrator role by seeking to become a thought leader on ways for the United Nations to play a more transformative role in CAR. This could be through a structured reflection process led by academics, involving civil society, governmental and non-governmental organizations. This effort should recognize that State-building is an endogenous process and that State legitimacy is driven by State-society relations.

Drawing on lessons from other conflict-affected countries such as Afghanistan and Haiti, whose path to peace and development did not yield the expected results, and on the longstanding UNDP presence in CAR, UNDP should engage in structured reflection with its partners on the strategies to adopt to rebuild State authority and legitimacy (through a working group, with research institutions, etc.).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) will provide a broad technical framework to guide the work of the United Nations in CAR, but a more refined, longer-term, context-specific document should be elaborated to suggest more innovative solutions to the ongoing crisis in CAR.

Infrastructure support and capacity substitution might remain necessary in the medium term, but UNDP should seek to identify what else can be done to restore State authority and the rule of law. Complementing a UNDP-supported, nationally-owned transitional justice process, these concerted State-building strategizing processes should foster constructive State-society relations and give ample room to civil society, youth and women's groups. UNDP should approach CSOs as more than implementing partners, but rather key protagonists of a functioning society.

Management response: Accepted



To feed into strategic thinking, UNDP-CAR will need to have the necessary up-to-date data on certain thematic areas. Given that the Human Development Report (HDR) 2008 dealt with the issue of social capital, updating said report is necessary. The completion of the studies planned as part of the development of the CAR Vision 2050 will allow data gaps to be filled. Following these activities, UNDP will initiate an inclusive strategic reflection on **"State-building"** led by academics, using decentralization as an entry point, the conclusions and recommendations of which will be used in the implementation of the next programme.

Key action(s)	Time range	Responsible unit(s)	Follow-up*	
			Feedback	Status
1.1 Updating the HDR 2008 based on social capital	December 2023	Social Policies Unit		Uninitiated
1.2 Finalize the studies within the framework of the vision RCA-2050 foresight	December 2023	Social Policies Unit	Some studies have already been finalized and others are ongoing	Initiated

◀ Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

1.3 Conduct structured reflections on decentralization in CAR	December 2023	Resilience and Stabilization and Governance Units		Uninitiated
1.4 Adapt the programme to the results of the reflections	December 2027	Heads of Units		Uninitiated

RECOMMENDATION 2.



UNDP should seek to improve the linkages between its upstream and downstream interventions, while also focusing on intervening more coherently, for longer periods of time, in a reduced number of locations at community level.

Internally, UNDP should pilot an area-based approach (or convergent programme) that seeks greater complementarity between upstream programmes (rule of law, decentralization, rehabilitation of infrastructure) where UNDP is already strongly positioned, and downstream interventions (emergency employment, economic empowerment, social cohesion). Such an approach would rely on both policy development and institutional strengthening, but also on more direct support at grassroots level to demonstrate what works and offers peace dividends. It would allow UNDP to “diversify its risk” of working very extensively with the Government, and should contribute to the creation of a more favourable context for the achievement of sustainable results at grassroots level. UNDP should pursue these efforts where there are reasonable chances to reach sustainable results.

At community level, UNDP should more consistently implement the 3x6 approach across implementing partners. Most importantly, it should seek to invest more time and resources in a reduced number of locations and create the necessary conditions to improve the likelihood of sustainability.

In terms of resource mobilization, UNDP should capitalize on vertical funds to catalyse livelihoods outcomes while also tackling environment, energy and climate change adaptation as such opportunities have not been sufficiently exploited. Such funds could be the starting point for a more convergent energy and environment programme that encompasses both upstream and downstream efforts.

Management response: Partially accepted



The needs are so enormous and diverse that an area-based approach over a longer period of time could be misperceived by communities and contribute to aggravating geographical inequalities in development. UNDP envisages the area-based approach in some specific interventions such as sustainable solutions, implemented in partnership with other agencies in well-defined areas of convergence. In these areas, stabilization and recovery interventions will be coupled in synergy with upstream interventions (rule of law, decentralization, infrastructure rehabilitation, etc.) and downstream interventions using access to renewable energy, for greater sustainability of results.

◀ Recommendation 2 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time range	Responsible unit(s)	Aftercare	
			Feedback	Status
2.1 Support the Government in mobilizing vertical funds	December 2025	Environment and Sustainable Development	UNDP will intensify advocacy with the Government to be designated as a recipient and assist the national focal point in the development of concept notes	Initiated
2.2 Strengthening synergy between the energy and stabilization/resilience portfolios under the new CPD	December 2025	Environment and Sustainable Development		Uninitiated
2.3 Capitalize on the achievements of the current UNDP programme projects to identify areas conducive to the revival of economic development and sustainable solutions in order to establish an integrated programme	December 2025	Resilience/ Stabilization and Environment	The aim is to use the results of the current programme to identify the areas most conducive to an integrated long-term approach (area-based approach)	Initiated
2.4 Lead advocacy for resource mobilization to plan long-term activities for peacebuilding	December 2025	Deputy Resident Representative Programme	Few financial partners are in favour of supporting recovery, sustainable solutions in the Central African Republic because there is "fatigue of financial partners" due to the long crisis, the organization of a donors' conference may arouse interest for the consolidation of recovery gains and economic recovery in the country	Uninitiated

RECOMMENDATION 3.



UNDP should move forward with the formalization of its portfolio approach by consolidating its projects into coherent, interconnected programmes. It should develop ‘nested’ ToCs for each of its portfolios to facilitate the process of moving away from the project-focused approach that still prevails in areas other than rule of law. These portfolio-level ToCs should be consolidated into a country programme level ToC and/or, if possible, a ToC at United Nations country team level.

The evaluation confirmed the added value for UNDP to consolidate various projects under a clearly defined portfolio, a process that the country office should replicate throughout its programme. Each portfolio should be structured around sound “nested” ToCs and complemented by a clearly defined portfolio strategy.¹⁴² The “nested” ToC should make explicit the underlying logic that ties together different projects and interventions under a specific portfolio, while the programme level ToC should demonstrate how different portfolios interact with one another in order to contribute to a common higher-level objective. The process of elaborating ToCs should help the country office to strengthen project and portfolio design. They should guide portfolio managers and donors to think about how new interventions complement or build upon existing efforts that are either internal or external to UNDP.

In addition to strengthening the internal coherence of its programme and facilitating internal communication on the way the office intends to reach its objectives, the ToC should facilitate communication with external stakeholders on the process through which UNDP intends to reach these expected results. A ToC could also be used as a resource mobilization tool, as it can give greater visibility to needs and funding gaps, helping UNDP to avoid getting dragged into donor-driven interventions.

Management response: **Accepted**



As early as 2021, the office initiated a restructuring of the programme’s projects into portfolios to reduce the transaction costs of designing, monitoring, implementing, supervising and writing reports. To implement this recommendation, UNDP CAR will conduct an analysis of the portfolio structure of the current programme, fill in the identified gaps and develop portfolio documents with “nested” ToCs linked to a wider ToC for the new programme.

Key action(s)	Time range	Responsible unit(s)	Aftercare	
			Feedback	Status
3.1 Conduct an analysis of the current programme structure by portfolio and identify additional portfolios for the new programme if applicable	December 2023	Deputy Resident Representative Programme	A first analysis was made for the CPD 2018-2022	Initiated

¹⁴² See, for example, Mayne, J. (2015). “Useful Theory of Change Models.” Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation 30(2): 119-142; Mayne, J. (2016). Working Paper “the COM-B Theory of Change Model.”

◀ Recommendation 3 (cont'd)

3.2 Develop existing and initiated portfolio documents, with ToCs taking into account the ToCs of Portfolio and Programme projects	December 2023	Heads of Units		Uninitiated
3.3 Mobilizing additional resources for the implementation of the new CPD portfolios	December 2028	Heads of Units		Uninitiated

RECOMMENDATION 4.



UNDP should advocate through the Durable Solutions Working Group for the common adoption of an area-based approach by the United Nations country team and Humanitarian Country Team, to be informed by a review of United Nations/UNDP geographical positioning.

Complex humanitarian-development-peace issues can be tackled through geographically-targeted, multidimensional and multisectoral interventions rather than geographically dispersed, programmatically-fragmented and short-term interventions, thus calling for the adoption of a United Nations-wide area-based approach. Such an approach can be informed by a thorough review of the geographic positioning of UNDP and key United Nations country team/ HCT actors, but also by the needs and preferences of local populations. This should involve taking a pragmatic stance to ensure that the context meets a minimal set of conditions, allowing for efficient implementation of actions with reasonable sustainability potential. In an effort to leave no one behind, the most deprived geographical areas and areas most significantly affected by SGBV should be prioritized.

UNDP should advocate for the inclusion of such considerations in the next UNSDCF. Most importantly, it should take advantage of its current co-lead role with UNHCR in the Durable Solutions Working Group, and the commitment of donors such as PBF to ensure concerted actions (studies, project, programmes) are undertaken by United Nations actors around commonly-defined challenges in specific locations.

Recognizing that such an approach would be more effectively implemented with the full buy-in of MINUSCA, UNDP and partners should seek to create the necessary conditions to strengthen that working relationship.

Management response: Accepted



Efforts are underway at the United Nations country team level for the implementation of the Humanitarian-Peace-Development Nexus. UNDP will continue these actions by conducting advocacy actions with other agencies, in partnership with the Office of the Resident Coordinator. As gender is a cross-cutting theme, the extent of SGBV may well be one of the criteria to be taken into account.

◀ Recommendation 4 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time range	Responsible unit(s)	Aftercare	
			Feedback	Status
4.1 Continue advocacy for the implementation of the Humanitarian-Peace-Development Nexus	December 2022	Resilience and Stabilization Units	Advocacy was initiated by the Working Group on Durable Solutions	Initiated
4.2 Continue consultations on areas favourable to the implementation of sustainable solutions	December 2022	Resilience and Stabilization Units	Consultations have been initiated and are ongoing. The frequency of SGBV will be added as a criterion	Initiated
4.3 Leading the pitch for the establishment of a Common Fund for Sustainable Development	December 2023	Deputy Resident Representative Programme		Uninitiated

RECOMMENDATION 5.



To bolster progress on GEWE, UNDP should continue its upstream support to create a favourable policy environment. More efforts should be deployed at midstream and downstream levels to ensure that justice, security and political institutions are able to address gender inequalities and, most importantly, SGBV. This needs to be accompanied by the establishment of a more reliable system for the collection of robust statistical data on harmful practices and violence against women.

While efforts were deployed by UNDP to mainstream gender at policy level, operationalization at institutional level did not always yield the desired results. In the justice sector, UNDP should support the training of judges, prosecutors and law enforcement offices to ensure that they can address SGBV appropriately for all types of courts. Future transitional justice projects (SCC, TJRRC) should have specific gender outputs, outcomes or clear strategies showing how women and girls, especially victims of SGBV, will be prioritized.

Similarly, emergency employment and resilience-building interventions should be guided by a formal women's economic empowerment strategy, in order to be more closely aligned to women's capacities, needs, aspirations and realities. A more participatory project design process should be considered. More education and sensitization initiatives, targeting both women and men, should be supported in order to combat stereotypes. These downstream efforts should be results- rather than activity-oriented, and aim to change the knowledge, attitudes and practices of populations on gender issues.

Overall, all projects should strengthen monitoring in order to be able to measure the differential effects of specific interventions on men and women, and ensure that women are effectively benefiting at the transformational level from UNDP support.

Management response: Accepted 

Some ongoing actions (development of the gender sectoral strategy/ policy, the implementation of the women’s economic empowerment strategy and the realization of the socio-anthropological study on SGBV) fit perfectly into this perspective.

Key action(s)	Time range	Responsible unit(s)	Aftercare	
			Feedback	Status
5.1 Support the development of the gender sectoral strategy/ policy	December 2022	Governance/ Gender Unit and Social Policies Unit	The process is ongoing	Initiated
5.2 Develop and implement a women’s economic empowerment strategy	December 2022	Governance/ Gender Unit	The process is ongoing	Initiated
5.3 Implement the recommendations of the socio-anthropological study on SGBV	December 2028	Governance/ Gender Unit		Uninitiated
5.4 Strengthening the system of collection of sex-disaggregated judicial data	December 2028	Governance/ RoL Unit		Uninitiated
5.5 Update periodically (every two years) the CAR gender profile	December 2028	Governance/ Gender Unit		Uninitiated

* The status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC) database.

ANNEXES

Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12794>

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Annex 2. Evaluation framework

Annex 3. People consulted

Annex 4. Documents consulted

Annex 5. Status of country programme outcome indicators

Annex 6. Project list

Annex 7. Security road classification map

Annex 8. Country programme performance rating



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