



Independent  
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United Nations Development Programme

# COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION BENIN





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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability  
responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
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# FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Benin. This is the second country-level evaluation conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office and covers the UNDP programme in the country for the 2019–2022 period.

Over the past decade, Benin has experienced significantly positive changes, owing to various reforms in macro-economic and budgetary frameworks, the business environment and in democratic governance. Despite encouraging results, several challenges remain, particularly in inclusiveness of economic growth, human development, gender equality and security. In 2021, the Government of Benin developed a new government action programme covering the period 2021–2026, with a focus on democratic governance, the structural transformation of the economy and social well-being.

The evaluation highlighted the considerable efforts made by UNDP Benin to adapt its programme and operational capacities to the changing context marked by, among other things, the COVID-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine and the rise of violent extremism in the West Africa region. The evaluation found that UNDP work in the areas of inclusive growth and governance has produced tangible results. However, its interventions remain dispersed, and the catalytic but often short-term, pilot nature of the projects lacks scalability to ensure impact at the national level. The sustainability of positive results produced by UNDP is also affected by the weak commitment of local authorities.

For the next country programme, UNDP should refocus its action on themes and areas founded in its comparative strengths. It will need to refine its gender strategy with the aim of addressing the root causes of gender inequalities in Benin. In its approach to better engaging with stakeholders at the local level, UNDP should ensure the inclusion of local authorities, civil society organizations working at the grassroots level, and target populations when designing a project. It should give greater consideration to their needs and concerns and leverage their knowledge of the local context in the implementation and monitoring of projects in order to improve ownership and the sustainability of results.

I would like to thank the Government of Benin, the various national stakeholders, colleagues from the UNDP country office in Benin as well as from the Regional Bureau for Africa for their support throughout this evaluation. I hope that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will strengthen the formulation of the next country programme strategy to achieve more inclusive and sustainable development for the people of Benin.



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**Director**  
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# CONTENTS

<b>ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>EVALUATION BRIEF: BENIN</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation	4
1.2 Evaluation methodology	4
1.3 Limitations	6
1.4 Country context	6
1.5 UNDP in Benin	11
<b>CHAPTER 2. FINDINGS</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Inclusive and sustainable growth	14
2.2 Governance	23
2.3 Cross-cutting issues	31
<b>CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE</b>	<b>45</b>
3.1 Conclusions	46
3.2 Recommendations	49
3.3 Management response	51
<b>ANNEXES</b>	<b>55</b>

## BOXES

<b>Box 1.</b>	<b>Evaluation questions</b>	4
---------------	-----------------------------	---

## FIGURES

<b>Figure 1.</b>	<b>Country programme budget, expenditure and execution rate by year (2019–2021)</b>	12
<b>Figure 2.</b>	<b>Country programme budget and expenditure by thematic area (2019–2021)</b>	12
<b>Figure 3.</b>	<b>Evolution of budget and expenditure in the area of inclusive and sustainable growth (2019–2021)</b>	15
<b>Figure 4.</b>	<b>Evolution of expenditure and budget in the area of governance (2019–2021)</b>	24
<b>Figure 5.</b>	<b>Total programme expenditure by source of funds and year</b>	38
<b>Figure 6.</b>	<b>Distribution of gender markers by outcomes and amounts (2019–2021)</b>	39

## TABLES

<b>Table 1.</b>	<b>ICPE Benin rating</b>	42
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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AFD</b>	French Development Agency
<b>AfDB</b>	African Development Bank
<b>ASSI</b>	Information Services and Systems Agency
<b>ATDA</b>	Territorial Agricultural Development Agency
<b>CBDH</b>	Beninese Human Rights Commission
<b>CDMT</b>	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
<b>CENA</b>	Autonomous National Electoral Commission
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019
<b>CPADD</b>	Training Centre for Post-Conflict Demining and Depollution Actions
<b>CPD</b>	Country Programme Document
<b>CQM</b>	Trades Qualification Certificate
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CSPEF</b>	Economic and Financial Programme Monitoring Unit
<b>DIM</b>	Direct Implementation Modality
<b>DPPD</b>	Multi-year Expenditure Programming Document
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>GDFD</b>	General Directorate for Development Financing
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>HAAC</b>	High Authority for Audiovisual and Communications
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>ICPE</b>	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
<b>IEO</b>	Independent Evaluation Office
<b>IFI</b>	International Financial Institution
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INRAB</b>	National Institute of Agricultural Research of Benin
<b>INSTAD</b>	National Institute of Statistics and Demography
<b>LOLF/LOFP</b>	Orientation Law of the Finance Law (of Public Finances)
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NA</b>	National Assembly
<b>NAP</b>	National Adaptation Plan
<b>NDC</b>	Nationally Determined Contribution

<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NIM</b>	National Implementation Modality
<b>PAAAJRC</b>	Support for Improving Access to Justice and Accountability Project
<b>PADDPA</b>	Support for the Dematerialization of Administrative Procedures Project
<b>PAG</b>	Government Action Programme
<b>PANA Energy</b>	Project to Strengthen the Resilience of the Energy Sector to the Impacts of Climate Change
<b>PARMAP</b>	Public Administration Reform and Modernization Support Project
<b>PARPOGE</b>	Support for Capacity-Building of Parliament and Election Management Bodies Project
<b>PASD 2</b>	Support for the Operationalization of Development Strategies Project, 2nd phase
<b>PC2D</b>	Growth for Sustainable Development Programme
<b>PCM-Bonou</b>	Millennium Village Programme-Bonou
<b>PDAB</b>	Agrobusiness Development Project in Benin
<b>PMSD</b>	Sustainable Livelihoods Project
<b>PPEEJ</b>	Project to Promote Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship
<b>RAPP</b>	African Network of Parliamentary Staff
<b>ROAR</b>	Results-Oriented Annual Report
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SIDOC</b>	Skills Demand and Supply Information System
<b>SIGRH</b>	Integrated Human Resources Management System
<b>TEF</b>	Tony Elumelu Foundation
<b>TFP</b>	Technical and Financial Partner
<b>UEMOA</b>	West African Economic and Monetary Union
<b>UNCDF</b>	United Nations Capital Development Fund
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>UNV</b>	United Nations Volunteers
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# Evaluation Brief: Benin

Benin achieved middle-income country status for the first time in July 2020. In order to strengthen this status, the country has elaborated a development programme aimed at accelerating the structural transformation of economic activity to increase labour productivity and create jobs. However, despite important results achieved, economic growth remains non-inclusive, and gender inequalities persist in several areas, including participation in decision-making and access to resources, justice and basic social services. The country is also facing challenges related to the environment and climate change, as well as security challenges due to the rise of violent extremism in the northern border areas.

Over the period 2019–2023, UNDP support to the country's development efforts has been structured around two main areas of intervention: (i) the promotion of sustainable and strong economic growth that benefits everyone, and (ii) the promotion of good governance and the rule of law. The total budget and total expenditures for the three-year period 2019–2021 are US\$41.5 million and \$37.7 million, respectively.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The country programme was relevant to Benin's national priorities. It also anticipated and took into account during its design the prevention of violent extremism, which proved to be a major concern during this cycle. UNDP Benin was able to adapt by quickly reorienting its priorities and intervention strategy to the various shocks that occurred during this cycle, in particular the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. UNDP has a clear and recognized comparative advantage in the areas of environment and climate, renewable energy, human rights, governance, peacebuilding and security, among other areas. It also has strong capacity for advocacy with the government. However, there is a tendency for UNDP to disperse its interventions fairly broadly, including in areas where it does not necessarily have a comparative advantage.

UNDP interventions in the areas of inclusive and sustainable growth have yielded tangible results. UNDP contributed to fostering access to financial assets, sustainable employment and entrepreneurship for marginalized groups, in particular youth and underemployed women. UNDP interventions also contributed to the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices to increase production and productivity. However, the implementation of some projects was not well adapted to the capacities and realities of local populations, which impacted the ownership of interventions. In addition, planned private sector support for the programme did not materialize. Challenges were noted with regard to the performance of multifunctional platforms intended to empower beneficiaries through income-generating activities.

UNDP has contributed to strengthening the use of renewable energy in Benin, particularly in rural areas. The programme improved the national legislative and regulatory framework and provided support to strengthen the resilience of national energy infrastructure. UNDP also contributed to strengthening the institutional and organizational capacities of local and national institutions in charge of climate change. Various capacity-building modalities contributed to the adoption of new agricultural techniques, increasing production and incomes, while technical and financial assistance helped to create an enabling policy environment for inclusive and sustainable growth.

In the area of governance, UNDP supported national and local public administration in taking into account the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement in development planning and budgeting. However, programme performance in this area will only be visible after the validation and rollout of the next generation of municipal development plans. UNDP has also contributed to the peaceful

management of conflicts and the prevention of violent extremism through the establishment of local peace management committees, which have helped to lessen the shocks resulting from post-electoral conflicts in Benin and have implemented activities to improve horizontal social cohesion. UNDP interventions have achieved significant results in promoting openness, transparency and accountability through awareness-raising and strengthening internal systems. UNDP helped facilitate the use of digital technologies and big data by public administrations and national institutions to digitalize public services and other government functions. However, there are delays in the implementation of certain digitalized public services. Actions to improve access to justice and accountability also need to be strengthened.

UNDP has established and maintained a wide range of key partnerships with the government, other United Nations agencies and external stakeholders for the implementation of its country programme. There were some examples of synergies established with the programmes of other development partners (e.g., the African Development Bank, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund). However, there is no clear cooperation strategy with local stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector. In terms of resources, despite a difficult national and international context characterized by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the decline in economic growth and the effects of the crisis in Ukraine, UNDP was able to mobilize substantial resources for the implementation of its programme. The main challenges remaining are related to the mobilization and availability of government co-financing, access to private financing as well as budget control of the entire portfolio.

UNDP has a strategy on gender equality and has emphasized the consideration of gender and human rights in all its interventions. However, the question of the representation of women in decision-making bodies still remains problematic. The UNDP Benin programme is gender-sensitive, but not transformative, given the scant attention given to the underlying causes of inequality in Beninese society in terms of access to productive resources such as land, the use of resources and the control of income from productive activities by women and young people.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** UNDP Benin should continue to position itself in its role to offer integrated solutions. It should focus on a limited number of themes such as environment and climate, renewable energies, human rights, governance and consolidation of peace and security, where its comparative advantage is recognized, as well as in geographic areas where it can demonstrate added value. This strategy should be based on an analysis of the factors hindering performance of the current programme as well as on an analysis of risks, including on the issue of violent extremism.

**Recommendation 2.** UNDP, while developing its theory of change for the next programming cycle, should demonstrate more clearly how its projects collectively contribute to the programme theory of change. This should be accompanied by a system to demonstrate the effects of the programme at macro level. UNDP should also strengthen dialogue with partners and the private sector to raise the level of resources mobilized and facilitate scaling-up of projects to promote the achievement of outcome at national level.

**Recommendation 3.** UNDP should strengthen its engagement with the beneficiaries, civil society and local authorities in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects and programmes to enhance ownership and sustainability of results.

**Recommendation 4.** UNDP should strengthen its contributions to gender equality and empowerment of women by addressing the structural and cultural barriers that prevent women's effective participation in the political, economic and social life of the country. It should improve its strategy and strengthen its efforts to address the underlying drivers of inequality – the social norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate this situation – in partnership with other United Nations agencies. UNDP should also provide greater support to strengthen the capacities of women and youth as agents of development and change.

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



This chapter presents the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, as well as the methodology applied. It also lays out the development context and an overview of the UNDP country programme in Benin.

## 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 collect and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to national development results, as well as the effectiveness of the organization's strategy in supporting national efforts to achieve development results.

The ICPE is an independent evaluation conducted within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP evaluation policy.<sup>1</sup> The objectives of the ICPE are to:

- Support the development of the next UNDP country programme;
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders;
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board;
- Contribute to organizational learning and decision-making in UNDP.

This ICPE was conducted in 2022 and covered the period from 2019 to mid-2022, i.e., the first three-and-a-half years of the current country programme cycle (2019–2023). This is the second country programme evaluation conducted by the IEO in Benin.<sup>2</sup> The ICPE covered all UNDP activities in the country and interventions financed by all funding sources, including internal UNDP resources, donor and government funds. The ICPE also covered non-project activities, such as coordination and advocacy, which are important in supporting the political and social agenda of the country.

## 1.2 Evaluation methodology

The effectiveness of the UNDP country programme was evaluated through an analysis of progress towards the achievement of expected outputs and the extent to which these outputs contributed to the expected outcomes of the UNDP country programme. To better understand UNDP performance and the sustainability of results in the country, the ICPE examined specific factors that have influenced the country programme, either positively or negatively. The capacity of UNDP to adapt to changing circumstances and respond to national development needs and priorities was also examined (see box 1).

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### 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 the country's preparedness, response and recovery process?
  4. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP performance and the sustainability of results?
- 

<sup>1</sup> Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, 'The Revised UNDP Evaluation Policy', DP/2019/29, United Nations, New York, 5 July 2019. <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> The previous assessment of development results in Benin was conducted 14 years ago in 2008 and covered the period 2004–2008. The report can be found on IEO website: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/adr/benin.shtml>

The evaluation methodology adheres to the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group.<sup>3</sup> In line with the UNDP gender equality strategy,<sup>4</sup> the evaluation examined the level of gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the formulation of the country programme and its operations, as well as the results achieved during its implementation. Gender marker data were used to analyse the level of expected contribution to gender equality at programme design. Gender-related results were assessed using the IEO gender results effectiveness scale.<sup>5</sup>

Data collection was carried out during the period May–July 2022. Triangulation of the following elements was central to the methodology:

- **Analysis of the projects and programmes and document review.** The evaluation team reviewed strategic documents including the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) Benin, 2019–2023; the UNDP country programme document (CPD) and associated theories of change; UNDP monitoring and evaluation data, including project reports; decentralized evaluation reports; audit reports;<sup>6</sup> UNDP institutional documents (strategic plan, results-based annual reports, etc.); data on output and outcome indicators (gender-disaggregated when available); and other relevant documents. The main documents consulted are listed in annex 4. Based on this analysis and using the theories of change, the evaluation team mapped the implemented projects against the objectives set out in the country programme document.
- **Country office response to a preliminary questionnaire.** Following the development of the terms of reference (annex 1), a preliminary questionnaire was sent to the country office in March 2022 to gather its reflections on the performance and results of the programme.
- **Key informant interviews and focus group discussions.** In total, 100 interviews and focus group discussions (virtual and in-person) were conducted with UNDP Benin country office staff, representatives and officials of various government institutions at the central and local levels, officials and staff of other United Nations organizations and technical and financial partners (TFPs), civil society organizations (CSOs) and beneficiary populations of the country programme, including community-level stakeholders. The institutions were identified on the basis of the document review (documents on the UNDP programme and the country context in general) and supplemented by suggestions from the country office, and included not only the main partners of the UNDP programme, but also the main development actors in Benin. These interviews were used to collect data and gain insight into the perceptions of development partners and stakeholders on the scope, contributions, performance and results of UNDP interventions, on constraints in their implementation, and on the strengths and weaknesses of UNDP in Benin. A complete list of interviewees is available in annex 3.
- **Field visit.** To complement the document review and interviews, a field mission was carried out as part of this evaluation to visit UNDP projects in the field, assess their results and exchange with target populations. The field mission was carried out from 27 June–8 July 2022 in 13 communes of Benin, with

<sup>3</sup> See the United Nations Evaluation Group website: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'United Nations Development Programme Gender Equality Strategy, 2022–2025', UNDP, New York, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/publications/gender-equality-strategy-2022-2025>

<sup>5</sup> The IEO gender results effectiveness scale classifies gender results into five categories: gender-negative (results have a negative outcome that aggravated or reinforced gender inequalities and limiting norms), gender-blind (results gave no attention to gender, and failed to acknowledge the different needs of men, women, girls and boys and other marginalized populations), gender-targeted (results focused on the number of women, men or marginalized populations that were targeted), gender-responsive (results addressed the differential needs of men, women, marginalized populations and focused on the equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status, rights, etc., but did not address root causes of inequalities), and gender-transformative (results contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discriminations).

<sup>6</sup> Seven decentralized evaluations have been carried out since 2019, including the mid-term evaluation of the country programme, two final project evaluations (one of these two projects was from the previous programme cycle), and four mid-term project evaluations. Only the country programme mid-term evaluation report was submitted to IEO quality assurance, with a rating of 5 (satisfactory).



nine projects visited out of a total of 35. The communes hosting the projects visited were: Savalou, Bantè, Djougou, N'dali, Parakou, Dassa, Bohicon, Abomey, Bonou, Avrankou, Porto-Novo, Ouidah and Cotonou.<sup>7</sup> The field mission included focus group discussions with beneficiaries, interviews with local project focal points and exchanges with communal authorities.

The evaluation used the IEO rating system to assess the performance of the country programme against the criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.<sup>8</sup> Evidence was triangulated against a set of parameters for each of the criteria, and a four-point rating scale was used for the assessment (see section 2.4).

The ICPE was subjected to a rigorous quality assurance process, first with an internal peer review at the IEO and two external reviewers, followed by submission to the UNDP country office and Regional Bureau for Africa and finally to the Government and other partners in the country. The process was concluded with a (virtual) final stakeholder debriefing that brought together key programme stakeholders and provided an additional opportunity to discuss the findings and recommendations contained in this report. The country office provided its management response during the final debriefing.

### 1.3 Limitations

The conduct of this evaluation faced certain limitations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the interviews were conducted virtually, with sometimes significant connectivity problems involving recurrent rescheduling of interviews. In terms of existing evaluative evidence, only a limited number of project evaluations were available. The team tried to overcome these constraints by increasing the number of discussions with different stakeholders in order to better understand the logic of the intervention strategy as well as the results achieved. In addition, the field visits provided an opportunity to observe the progress and achievements of different interventions and to talk to different types of stakeholders and beneficiaries of the programme. In general, despite the difficulties, the data collection process, including the field visits, was satisfactorily conducted and gathered sufficient evidence to draw findings, conclusions and recommendations.

### 1.4 Country context

Located in West Africa, Benin achieved lower-middle income status for the first time in July 2020, with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of \$1,250.<sup>9</sup> This is the result of continued acceleration in wealth creation, facilitated by reforms undertaken by the government since 2016. Indeed, over the period 2016–2019, the growth rate of the Beninese economy accelerated continuously from 3.3 percent in 2016 to 6.7 percent in 2018 and 6.9 percent in 2019.<sup>10</sup> However, momentum slowed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis. Against the initial (pre-COVID) forecast of 7.6 percent, economic growth reached 3.8 percent in 2020.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The identification of sites was carried out based on the review of programme documents and through exchanges with the programme managers at UNDP as well as with national partners. Efforts were made to ensure that the sites visited covered all the main areas of UNDP interventions and that they were representative of UNDP support approaches in Benin.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the UNDP country programme performance rating system, see: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/ratingsystem.shtml>

<sup>9</sup> Serajuddin, Umar and Nada Hamadeh, 'Nouvelle classification des pays en fonction de leur revenu : 2020–2021', World Bank blogs, World Bank, Washington, D.C., July 2020, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/fr/opendata/nouvelle-classification-des-pays-en-fonction-de-leur-revenu-2020-2021>

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Economy and Finance, 'Evolution récente de l'économie béninoise et perspectives à moyen terme', MEF, Cotonou, January 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Economy and Finance, Finance Law 2021; Multi-annual budgetary and economic programming document, 2022–2024.



Overall, increased wealth is mainly attributable to: i) improvement in agricultural production, particularly of cotton; ii) increase in ginning activity, linked to the increase in cotton production during the 2019/2020 season; iii) impact on the economy from the operation, beginning in August 2019, of the new Maria-Gleta 2 power plant; iv) resilience of services to the effects of the pandemic and the closure of the border with Nigeria; and v) the impact of tax administration reforms, which have resulted in revenues exceeding forecasts before the pandemic.<sup>12</sup> Continuing the trend, Benin recorded a post-COVID growth rate of 7 percent in 2021. This growth was driven by the good performance of the primary sector (+3.9 percent, compared to 2 percent in 2020) and the tertiary sector, which grew by 7.2 percent in 2021, compared to 4.9 percent in 2020, due to the increase in port traffic, the opening of Nigeria's borders and better governance of the port of Cotonou.<sup>13</sup>

**In order to sustainably strengthen its status as a middle-income country, Benin has undertaken to accelerate the structural transformation of economic activity** by focusing on new growth engines capable of increasing labour productivity and creating quality jobs for its workforce, particularly for young people and women. The structural transformation of the Beninese economy, where the agricultural sector still contributes strongly to growth and employs more than half of the active population, requires the development of the private sector and of industrial activity aimed at transforming the country's raw materials and natural resources. In this context, numerous reforms have been implemented to facilitate the creation of businesses, which have led to the country's progress in the World Bank's "Doing Business" ranking (with a score of 52.4 in 2020 compared to 51.7 in 2019). Benin is ranked as the 149th 'easiest economy to do business' out of the 190 economies that took part in the ranking. At regional level, this performance places Benin 11th out of 48 African countries in terms of starting a business and 8th for obtaining building permits.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, after the launch of the online business creation platform "monentreprise.bj" by the Investment and Export Promotion Agency, Benin has become the world leader in the ease and speed of creating a business, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.<sup>15</sup> Another flagship action of the Government of Benin in favour of the development of industrial activities was the creation of the Glo-Djigbé Industrial Zone, which was designed to be the industrial hub of West Africa in the years to come, with foreseen benefits in economic growth and job creation.

**Benin is highly active in terms of mobilizing resources to finance its development programme**, as set out in the National Development Plan (NDP), 2018–2025 and the Government Action Programmes (PAG), 2016–2021 and 2021–2026. The financial resource requirements of the PAG, 2021–2026 are estimated at 12,011 billion CFA francs, an increase of 33 percent compared to the envelope of the previous PAG (estimated at 9,039 billion CFA francs).<sup>16</sup> To implement its programme, the Beninese government has undertaken reforms to improve its capacity to mobilize its own resources. Tax revenue has steadily increased, rising from 10.2 percent of GDP in 2018 to 11 percent of GDP in 2019. The government has also been active in mobilizing resources on the financial market and from various partners, including the private sector and bilateral and multilateral institutions. Development cooperation increased over the period 2011–2019, rising from about 706 billion CFA francs in 2011 to nearly 2,189 billion CFA francs in 2019, an average annual

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Economy and Finance, 'Évolution récente de l'économie béninoise', op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> African Development Bank, 'Benin Economic Outlook, 2021', AfDB, Abidjan, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> World Bank Group, 'Doing Business, 2020', regional profile, sub-Saharan Africa, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2020, <https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Profiles/Regional/DB2020/SSA.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Economy and Finance, 'Doing Business : Le Bénin devient N° 1 mondial dans la création d'entreprises selon la Conférence des Nations Unies sur le Commerce et le Développement', MEF blog, 3 December 2020, <https://finances.bj/la-cnuCED-classe-le-benin-1er-pays-le-plus-rapide-au-monde-ou-les-promoteurs-dentreprise-creent-leurs-entreprises-en-ligne/>.

<sup>16</sup> Présidence de la République du Benin, 'Programme d'Actions du Gouvernement, 2021–2026', presentation, Cotonou, 6 January 2021.

growth rate of about 15.3 percent.<sup>17</sup> In addition, in 2022 Benin acceded to the Extended Fund Facility of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with a financial envelope of about \$650 million, making it one of the largest IMF-supported programmes in the region.<sup>18</sup>

**Economic growth remains non-inclusive despite efforts to reduce inequality, poverty and youth unemployment.** Benin recorded a decrease in inequality over the period 2015–2018, which could reflect the effectiveness of measures taken by the government to fight corruption and reduce inequality. Indeed, the Gini index fell from 47.8 in 2015 to 37.8 in 2018.<sup>19</sup> However, in terms of human development, the country is still in the low human development category. In the Human Development Report 2022,<sup>20</sup> the Human Development Index (HDI) was 0.525, with a rank of 166/191 (30/53 in Africa) compared to 0.545 and a rank of 158/189 in 2021.<sup>21</sup> The inequality-adjusted human development index is 0.334, which represents an overall loss of 36.4 percent. Thus, in Benin, 36.4 percent of the potential level of human development is lost due to inequality.

**Official data indicate a decline in poverty in all forms.** In 2019, 38.5 percent of Benin's population lived on an annual income below the national monetary poverty line, compared with 39.3 percent in 2015. Poverty mainly affects rural areas, with 44.2 percent compared to 31.4 percent in urban areas. Non-monetary poverty is also declining, from 28.7 percent in 2015 to 26.1 percent in 2019.<sup>22</sup> Poverty is expected to increase as a result of recent external shocks (COVID-19, the conflict in Ukraine), which have led to a significant deterioration in access to food for a significant part of the population. More than 50 percent of the population recognize themselves as being food insecure as a result of declining incomes as well as rising food prices.<sup>23</sup> The unemployment rate in Benin is 2.4 percent, while the underemployment rate is 72 percent. Some 90 percent of the active population are employed in the informal sector.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, 80 percent of employment is generated by the agricultural sector, which contributes nearly 25 percent of the country's GDP.<sup>25</sup>

**Benin also faces challenges related to the environment and climate change.** According to Benin's revised nationally determined contributions (NDCs),<sup>26</sup> the current major climate risks that impact livelihoods in particularly vulnerable sectors (agriculture, water resources, coastal, etc.) include floods, drought, late and heavy rains, high winds, excessive heat and sea level rise. Impacts observed over the last three decades include reduced agricultural yields, disruption of agricultural calendars, lower water levels in drinking water dams due to increased evaporation (3–4 percent annually), prolonged low water period (1–3 months), submergence of riverbanks, etc. In terms of future vulnerability, annual precipitation projections made for different time horizons (2030, 2050) show downward trends. With regard to temperatures, the projections show an overall warming trend by 2030 and 2050. Potential impacts include sea level rise of up to 0.81 m by 2100, with direct effects on coastal flooding and saltwater intrusion into rivers and water bodies. This could affect human settlements, health and fishing activities.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Development Programme and Government of Benin, 'Evaluation of Development Finance in Benin', analysis report, UNDP, Cotonou, 2020, p.7.

<sup>18</sup> International Monetary Fund, 'Le Bénin accède à deux facilités du FMI pour faire face à des vents contraires et soutenir les ODD', IMF, Washington, D.C., 14 July 2022, <https://www.imf.org/fr/News/Articles/2022/07/14/CF-Benin-Taps-IMF-Facilities>.

<sup>19</sup> World Bank, 'Gini Index, Benin', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=BJ>.

<sup>20</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Human Development Report 2021–2022', UNDP, New York, 2022, <https://hdr.undp.org/>.

<sup>21</sup> Sachs, Jeffrey D. et al., 'Sustainable Development Report, 2022', Cambridge University Press, London, 2022, Benin dashboard: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/benin>.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Evolution socioéconomique au Bénin, situation actuelle et perspectives', strategy note, UNDP, Cotonou, February 2022.

<sup>23</sup> United Nations, 'Common Country Assessment, Benin', United Nations, Cotonou, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> World Bank, 'The World Bank in Benin', <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/benin/overview>, accessed 5 May 2022.

<sup>25</sup> African Development Bank, 'Benin: Combined report on the mid-term review of the 2017–2021 country strategy paper and the 2019 country portfolio performance review', AfDB, Abidjan, 2021, <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/benin-combined-report-mid-term-review-2017-2021-country-strategy-paper-and-2019-country-portfolio-performance-review>.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, NDC registry, <https://unfccc.int/NDCREG>.

To tackle the issue of climate change and environmental degradation, Benin in collaboration with UNDP developed a national climate change adaptation plan in 2021, with the objectives of reducing the impacts of climate change, developing resilience and adaptive capacity and facilitating the integration of climate change adaptation into all planning documents.

**Benin is heavily dependent on external energy sources, particularly Nigeria and Ghana, which together account for over 90 percent of its electricity supply.**<sup>27</sup> The government has placed the energy sector at the heart of its strategy in the PAG, 2021–2026, with about 10 percent of the budget allocated to the energy sector.<sup>28</sup> The government's efforts in the energy sector resulted in an increase in electricity access in 2020. The national electrification rate was estimated at 30.4 percent in 2020, compared with 30 percent in 2019, against a target of 33 percent.<sup>29</sup> In urban areas, this rate rose from 54.9 percent in 2019 to 68.5 percent in 2020, exceeding the forecast of 60.87 percent. In rural areas, the rate was 9.6 percent in 2020, compared with 6.6 percent in 2019.<sup>30</sup> Less than 5 percent of the population has access to a clean cooking source.<sup>31</sup> The level of fossil fuel consumption (% of total energy consumption) is 36.7 percent,<sup>32</sup> while the share of renewable was 4.35 percent in 2020.<sup>33</sup> Benin is experiencing blackouts at more than twice the rate of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.<sup>34</sup> The advanced degradation of wood fuel producing areas, limited energy alternatives and the difficulties relating to the supply of electricity are all obstacles to meeting household energy needs and could aggravate the country's energy deficit.<sup>35</sup>

**Benin enjoys broad political and institutional stability. However, in recent years the country has experienced several political crises, illustrating that democratic gains remain weak.** Democratic governance in Benin is considered stable, with regular elections and transfer of power. However, recent elections have been characterized by strong tensions, and the 2019 election in particular led to a socio-political crisis.<sup>36</sup> The overall context is still characterized by political governance that is under strain, a rule of law in which individual and collective freedoms are sometimes threatened, a public administration that is still not very efficient despite the efforts made in terms of digitalization of services, a justice system that is neither efficient nor transparent, insufficient quality in the allocation of public resources, and the presence of corruption in several spheres.<sup>37</sup>

In terms of citizen participation, the functioning of political parties in Benin has not yet developed the spirit of popular engagement in the management of public affairs at national and local levels. Civil society is working to improve the participation of the population and the development of a culture of transparency.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>27</sup> African Development Bank, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Energy, 'Essor du secteur de l'énergie en 2022 : Le MCA-Bénin 2 et les DG des structures sous tutelle engagés', Cotonou, 2022, <https://energie.gouv.bj/article/essor-du-secteur-de-lenergie-en-2022-le-mca-benin-2-et-les-dg-des-structures-sous-tutelle-engages>

<sup>29</sup> United States Agency for International Development, 'Power Africa in Benin', fact sheet, USAID, Washington, D.C., <https://www.usaid.gov/powerafrica/benin>

<sup>30</sup> Government of Benin, 'Growth for Sustainable Development Programme: Progress report 2019', Cotonou, 2019.

<sup>31</sup> International Renewable Energy Agency, 'Energy Profile Benin', IRENA, Abu Dhabi, 2022, [https://www.irena.org/RENADocuments/Statistical\\_Profiles/Africa/Benin\\_Africa\\_RE\\_SP.pdf](https://www.irena.org/RENADocuments/Statistical_Profiles/Africa/Benin_Africa_RE_SP.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Global Change Data Lab, 'Share of Electricity Production from Renewables, 2021', GCDL, Oxford, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/share-electricity-renewables>.

<sup>34</sup> Hughes, Sarah et al, 'Benin Policy Reform and Institutional Strengthening Project: Evaluation Design', Mathematica, Washington, D.C., 2019.

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Project PANA Energy', project document, UNDP, Cotonou, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations Common Country Assessment, p.7.

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Development and Planning, 'National Development Plan, 2018–2025', Cotonou, 2018.

<sup>38</sup> National Development Plan, 2018–2025.

**Gender inequalities persist in several areas, including participation in decision-making and access to resources, justice and basic social services.**<sup>39</sup> Benin has a gender inequality index value of 0.602, which ranks it 152 out of 191 countries in the 2021–2022 index.<sup>40</sup> The level of underemployment, which remains high in Benin, also affects women (65.4 percent) more than men (41.5 percent).<sup>41</sup> Young people and women entrepreneurs in Benin face multiple challenges, including identifying business opportunities, introducing innovations, developing new technologies, and accessing finance and counselling, among others. These challenges are made more complex by the COVID-19 crisis, the consequences of which diminish the hope of entrepreneurship among young people and compromise the chances of success of their enterprises.<sup>42</sup> The persistence of inequalities is due to the low level of education of women (18.3 percent of adult women have at least a secondary education, compared to 33.9 percent of their male counterparts), as well as to socio-cultural constraints.<sup>43</sup>

**Benin faces security challenges in the northern part of the country due to the rise of violent extremism.** Benin has experienced nine attacks attributed to militant Islamist groups in its border areas since December 2021. Two of these were sophisticated operations involving improvised explosive devices on the Beninese side of the W-Arly-Pendjari Park (W-Park) complex.<sup>44</sup> This security threat at the country's borders is of concern to the Government of Benin and all its partners, who have initiated programmes to prevent violent extremism in the border areas between Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo.

**The COVID-19 pandemic has had strong impacts on inclusive growth and development in Benin.** In the short term, containment measures have led to an increase in unemployment and underemployment, affecting the annual number of hours worked in Benin by some 15 percent,<sup>45</sup> which could lead to a decline in growth. This in turn affects public finances (lower revenues, higher expenditure and debt), but also private and public consumption, private and public investment, foreign trade, household income, inequality, the incidence of poverty, increasing vulnerability and food and nutritional insecurity. The crisis has also affected access to basic social services, including health and education, at national and local levels. Estimated job losses range from 360,000 to 620,000 people in 2020, according to a COVID-19 socio-economic impact study conducted jointly by the United Nations, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the government.<sup>46</sup> The pandemic also had an impact on vulnerability. Estimates in 2020 suggested that the incidence of income poverty, which was 38.5 percent in 2019, would reach between 45.4 and 49.1 percent in 2020, and that income poverty would affect between 5.5 million and 6 million people.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, inequality among the poor has increased. Dysfunctional value chains have led to a disproportionate increase in food prices (for example, a 24 percent increase in the price of gari), thus increasing the risk of food insecurity. Vulnerability has affected households (36.8 percent) and businesses (40 percent) including tourism, hotels and restaurants, transport, trade, industry and construction. The informal sector, which represents 90 percent of Beninese businesses, was most affected.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>39</sup> United Nations Common Country Assessment.

<sup>40</sup> Human Development Report, 2021–2022.

<sup>41</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Human Development Report 2020', UNDP, New York, 2020.

<sup>42</sup> Tony Elumelu Foundation, 'Seme City Activity Report, Youth Entrepreneurship Project, 2021'.

<sup>43</sup> Human Development Report 2021, African Development Bank, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup> Brottem, Leif, 'The Growing Threat of Violent Extremism in Coastal West Africa', Africa Center for Strategic Studies, March 2022.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations, African Development Bank and Government of Senegal, 'Study of the Socio-economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Benin', final report, Cotonou, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations Common Country Assessment.

<sup>48</sup> Study of the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in Benin.

## 1.5 UNDP in Benin

UNDP has been present in Benin since 1974, working in partnership with the Government of Benin, technical and financial partners, United Nations agencies, civil society and grassroots communities to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth, rule of law and good governance. UNDP strategy and programming in Benin has evolved significantly over time. In 1996, the UNDP Executive Board approved the “First Country Cooperation Framework with Benin, 1997–2001”, which was subsequently extended to 2003, followed by a country programme outline, 2004–2008. Throughout this period, programmes in the thematic areas of poverty and governance were at the core of the country programme. In the country programme document 2009–2013, environmental concerns, albeit treated as a cross-cutting sector, took on a more important programmatic dimension.<sup>49</sup> For the period 2014–2018, the country programme document indicated the agency’s focus on three priority areas: (i) inclusive growth, employment, food security and welfare; (ii) governance, participation and decentralization; and (iii) management of the environment, climate change and disasters.<sup>50</sup> UNDP has been a key partner of the government for the formulation of development policies and prioritization of a number of SDG targets, as well as contributing to electoral processes and promoting employment and a better understanding of climate challenges.

The UNDP CPD, 2019–2023 flows directly from the planned outcomes of the UNSDCF, 2019–2023, taking into account national priorities as set by the government in the PAG, 2016–2021, NDP, 2018–2025 and the Growth for Sustainable Development Programme (PC2D), 2018–2021.

The UNDP country programme, 2019–2023 is structured around two main areas: (i) promoting strong and sustainable economic growth that benefits all by stimulating the local economy, facilitating access to employment for youth, women and people with disabilities through adequate services, and investing in sustainable livelihoods, with a focus on vulnerable and at-risk populations, namely young graduates, unemployed or partially unemployed women, people with disabilities, the extremely poor and those living in rural or border areas; (ii) promoting good governance and the rule of law by strengthening the capacity of public administration and local institutions to carry out reforms that pave the way for economic diversification, accelerate sustainable economic growth, raise incomes and improve the delivery of basic services, by promoting citizen and popular participation in the design and implementation of public policies.<sup>51</sup>

The evolution of the budget and expenditure, as well as budget implementation rate of the country programme during the period 2019–2021, is included in figure 1. Total budget and expenditure for the three year period was \$41.5 million and \$37.7 million, respectively.<sup>52</sup>

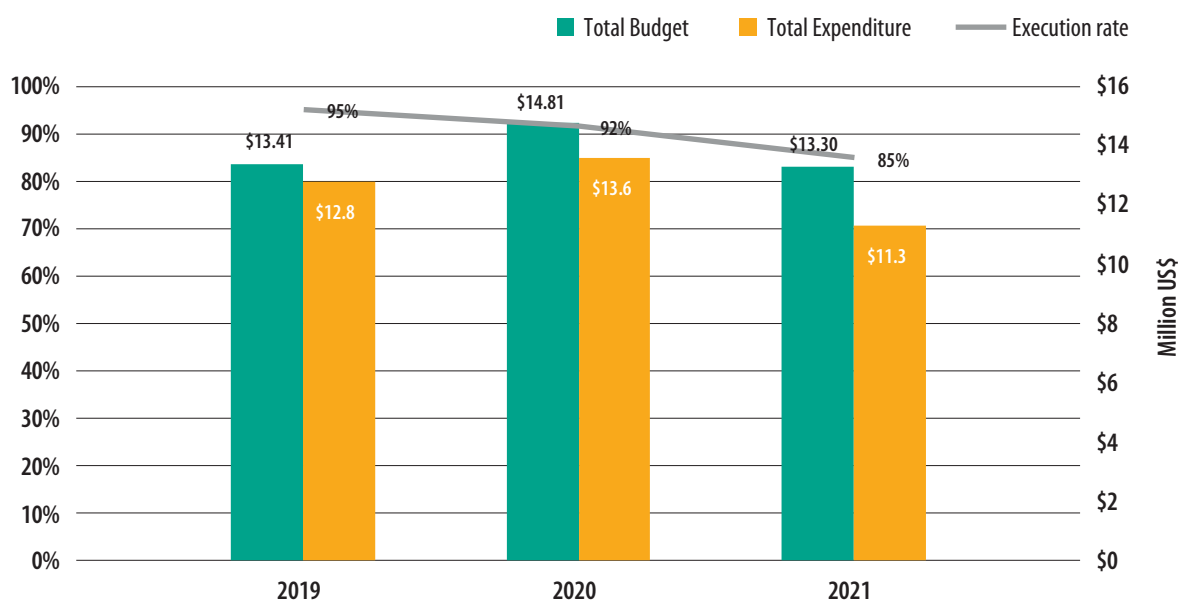
<sup>49</sup> United Nations Development Programme, ‘Assessment of Development Results: Evaluation of UNDP contribution, Benin,’ UNDP, New York, 2008, [http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/documents/ADR/ADR\\_Reports/Benin/Benin-ADR.pdf](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/documents/ADR/ADR_Reports/Benin/Benin-ADR.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, of the United Nations Population Fund and of the United Nations Office for Project Services, ‘Country Programme Document for Benin, 2014–2018,’ DP/DCP/BEN/2, United Nations, New York, 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, ‘Country Programme Document for Benin, 2019–2023,’ DP/DCP/BEN/3, United Nations, New York, 2 July 2018.

<sup>52</sup> As of 16 October 2022, the country office had recorded total programme expenditure for the current period at \$39.8 million.

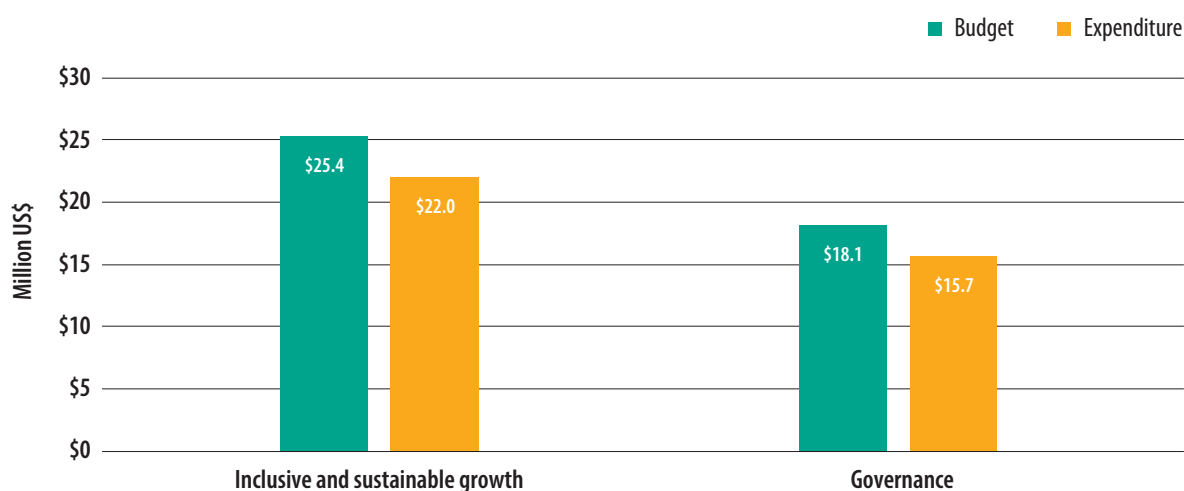
**FIGURE 1. Country programme budget, expenditure and execution rate by year (2019–2021)**



Source: Atlas Project Data (Power BI, as of 17 January 2022)

The budget and expenditure of the two thematic areas (inclusive and sustainable growth and governance) can be found in figure 2. As of 2021, the implementation rate for both outcomes stood at 87 percent.

**FIGURE 2. Country programme budget and expenditure by thematic area (2019–2021)**



Source: Atlas Project Data (Power BI, January 2022)

At the time of the evaluation, the country office had 28 staff and 9 contractors. Women represented 41 percent of staff.

# CHAPTER 2

# FINDINGS





This chapter presents the findings of the outcome analysis and an assessment of cross-cutting issues of the UNDP country programme in Benin, as well as the main factors that have influenced UNDP performance and contribution to results. The assessment was based on an analysis of the linkages between project results and their contribution to the expected outputs and, consequently, to the overall programme objectives.

## 2.1 Inclusive and sustainable growth

**Outcome 1.** By 2023, Benin's population, especially the most vulnerable, are more resilient and have a better quality of life through access to decent employment, food and nutrition security, clean energy, and the sustainable management of natural resources, [as well as improved resilience to] the adverse effects of climate change, crises and disasters.

### **Related outputs.**

**Output 1.1.** Marginalized groups, particularly underemployed youth and women, are empowered to gain access to financial assets, benefit from sustainable jobs and develop entrepreneurship.

**Output 1.2.** Marginalized groups, particularly underemployed youth and women, have improved technical capacity to access agricultural technologies adapted to climate change to improve their livelihoods and productivity.

**Output 1.3.** Solutions adopted for rural and urban populations to achieve access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy.

**Output 1.4.** National and local institutions have improved technical and financial capacities for effective coordination of environmental interventions, ecosystem protection and disaster risk management.

Under this outcome, UNDP aimed to innovate and expand best practices, improve economic opportunities and market access for youth, women, people with disabilities and entrepreneurs, and promote equal pay for work of equal value in small and medium agricultural enterprises. It planned to strengthen the technical and managerial capacities of young entrepreneurs and their access to finance and appropriate equipment, as well as institutions for promoting entrepreneurship, processing techniques and market access to create value chains. UNDP also planned to support Benin in the implementation of its commitments under the Paris Agreement, including by supporting the design of appropriate laws, regulations, policies and strategies on climate change, seeking to strengthen more sustainable management of natural resources and improved resilience to climate change.

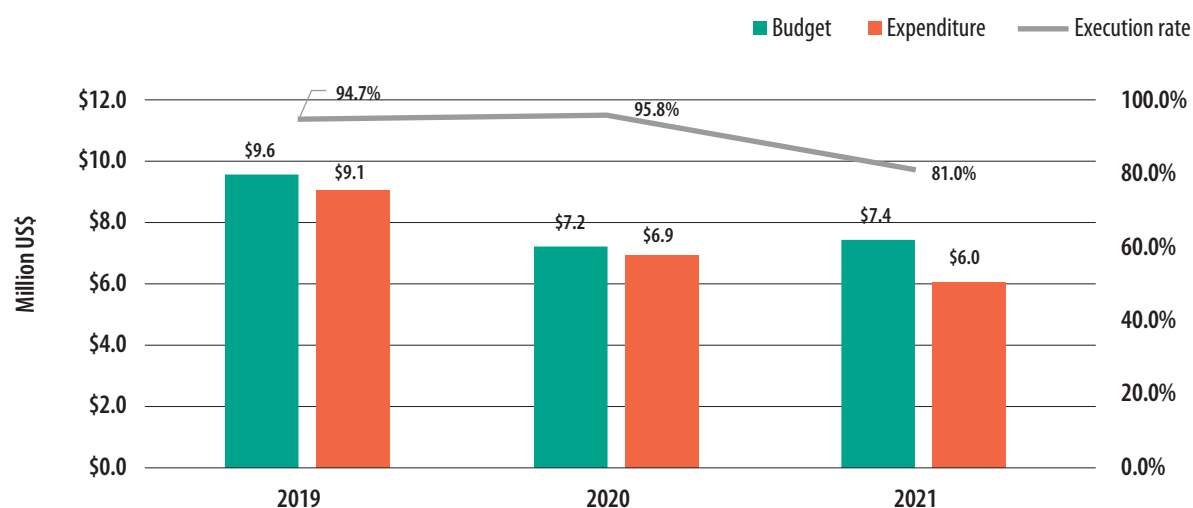
Work in this area comprised three main service lines: (i) increasing the well-being and incomes of people, especially youth, women and people with disabilities, through the provision of local socio-economic infrastructure and facilities to meet basic needs, the development of economic activities and the promotion



of self-employment, employability and entrepreneurship; (ii) conservation, improvement and restoration of forest ecosystems and natural resources, and promotion of clean and affordable energy; and (iii) improvement of the resilience of populations to extreme hydrometeorological and climatic events.

The overall portfolio included 17 projects of varying sizes totalling \$24.9 million (see list of projects in annex 5) financed through UNDP core funds and those of other partners, the most important of which in terms of value were the Government of Benin, the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund. Figure 2 below shows the evolution of UNDP expenditures under inclusive and sustainable growth over the period 2019–2021. The graph shows that, in line with its ambitions, UNDP began the country programme with significant investments in 2019, with a total of \$9.1 million spent. Thereafter, there is a downward trend in spending, with \$6.9 million and \$6.0 million spent in 2020 and 2021, respectively. This drop in expenditure is explained by the advent of the COVID-19 crisis in early 2020, which affected the implementation of activities and the mobilization of resources.

**FIGURE 3. Evolution of budget and expenditure in the area of inclusive and sustainable growth (2019–2021)**



Source: Atlas Project data, Power Bi, as of 17 January 2022

**Finding 1.** UNDP has contributed to promoting access to financial assets, sustainable employment and entrepreneurship for marginalized groups, particularly underemployed youth and women. However, planned support from the private sector did not materialize, and challenges were encountered in the performance and functioning of multifunctional platforms designed to empower beneficiaries through income-generating activities.

UNDP work under this thematic area achieved important results, often exceeding planned targets. For example, the Millennium Villages-Bonou project (PCM-Bonou) and the Agrobusiness Development Project in Benin (PDAB) facilitated access to financial services for 7,703 people, including 3,825 women, 2,289 youths and 1,823 people with disabilities, representing 266 percent, 94 percent and 4,558 percent of the end-of-cycle targets assigned to the programme.<sup>53</sup> In addition, nearly 2,000 women received access to microcredit through a partnership with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF).<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Activity Report PCM-Bonou, 2021', UNDP, Cotonou, 2021.

<sup>54</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Results-Oriented Annual Report, 2019', UNDP, Cotonou, 2019.

With regard to job creation and access to employment, 18,526 people, including 4,444 women, 14,152 young people and 44 people with disabilities gained access to employment through various projects, corresponding to 592 percent, 258 percent and 110 percent of the end-of-cycle targets, respectively. Jobs were created through the establishment of income-generating activities, and access was facilitated to various jobs such as: management of the fry production site for the benefit of fish farmers in the communes of Abomey-Calavi and Sô-Ava; management of biogas production units in the commune of Zogbodomé; capacity-building for local masons in the communes of Lokossa and Athiémè to build Ecossan latrines; and the provision of a solar smokehouse for women fishmongers in Avlékété. Other actions were undertaken to strengthen value chains and the certification of products/enterprises as well as to facilitate marketing and the establishment of financing.<sup>55</sup>

On the certification side, in 2019 UNDP contributed to the certification of 19 products to meet the requirements of partnerships with the World Food Programme (WFP) under the school feeding project. For example, WFP sources agri-food products such as red oil, gari, tapioca, parboiled rice, smoked fish, etc. from the beneficiaries of the PCM-Bonou project.

UNDP also supported the development and roll-out of a number of information platforms designed to facilitate collaboration and innovation in the business environment, including the Skills Demand and Supply Information System (SIDOC).

Other UNDP initiatives sought to strengthen and improve the entrepreneurial environment in Benin and make it more favourable to job creation. For example, the Young Entrepreneurs Project, undertaken in collaboration with the Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) and other partners, provided financial support to 350 entrepreneurs to start or expand their businesses. The Project for the Promotion of Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship (PPEEJ) worked in collaboration with the National Agency for Social Protection to identify promising trades and the capacity-building needs of actors in the crafts, tourism, hotel and lifestyle sectors. Through the PPEEJ project, UNDP also supported the development of the National Programme for the Promotion, Support and Monitoring of the Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises and Small and Medium Industries, an initiative of the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Employment Promotion. The government used this institutional framework to obtain new funding from the World Bank, which will strengthen its efforts to support youth entrepreneurship and job creation in the coming years.

Despite these achievements, work under this outcome encountered challenges related to programme design as well as external and contextual factors. For example, the TEF project failed to put in place mechanisms to monitor the use of resources and to coach young people in the entrepreneurial process – a shortcoming that became especially relevant in light of the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 crisis and the conflict in Ukraine, which triggered inflation and made it more difficult to mobilize resources. Of the 350 young people who received \$5,000 grants, there was no operational mechanism to monitor and report on the use of the funds or the actions taken to implement the business plans developed. Private sector commitment was another hurdle. For access to credit, markets and jobs to be sustainable, there needs to be a strong commitment from the private sector; however, there was little such buy-in. Indeed, the financial system in Benin has not yet developed instruments adapted to the financing of entrepreneurship. There is still a perception that entrepreneurship is risky, and that young people in particular represent a risky category for lenders. Even the use of the National Agricultural Development Fund has not met expectations in terms of providing credit for young entrepreneurs. UNDP and stakeholders have reported actions to

<sup>55</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Results-Oriented Annual Report, 2020', UNDP, Cotonou, 2020; United Nations Development Programme, 'Results-Oriented Annual Report, 2021', UNDP, Cotonou, 2021; ROAR 2019.

strengthen private sector engagement, but at the time of the evaluation there was no significant evidence of progress. Indeed, some private sector actors initially interested in the renewable energy sector withdrew when it became apparent that there were no guaranteed funds available.

Additional challenges were related to the performance of the multifunctional platforms set up to create income generating activities, particularly in the processing of local products.<sup>56</sup> In order to promote the sustainable operation of the platforms, it is essential that they have high-quality machinery and equipment, and that beneficiaries are trained in their use and maintenance. These requirements were not always met. In the district of Pélébina, for example, beneficiaries recorded repeated malfunctions after a few months of using the machines for processing soya beans, maize, etc., in addition to low productivity of the machines (ratio between diesel consumption and the volume of seeds processed). During the field visit conducted by the evaluation team, the state of the platform and the equipment gave the impression of an abandoned site, not frequently used and very poorly maintained. According to the interviewees, the same situation can be observed with the tractors provided by UNDP.

**Finding 2:** UNDP interventions contributed to the adoption of **climate-resilient** agricultural practices by marginalized groups, in particular young people and women in underemployment situations, leading to increased production and productivity. The implementation of some projects was however not well adapted to the capacities and realities of local populations, which affected ownership of the interventions and ultimately the achievement of results.

The objective under this thematic area was to increase the number of beneficiaries using climate-resilient agricultural practices and technologies through the PCM-Bonou, Biomass Electricity, Sustainable Livelihoods (PMSD) and 'Strengthen the Resilience of the Energy Sector to the Impacts of Climate Change' (PANA Energy) projects in eight communes. In 2021, UNDP reached 14,174 people: 4,931 women, 9,934 young people and 12 persons with disabilities.<sup>57</sup> A wide range of initiatives were undertaken to achieve these objectives: (i) training of women on approaches, methods and technical process integrating the rational management of natural and energy resources; (ii) preservation and restoration of land and waste recovery; and (iii) capacity-building of 1,338 people, including 961 women, on market gardening at six sites (in Avrankou, Savalou, Bopa and Ouaké) with a view to adopting resilient practices such as irrigation and the use of improved short-cycle seeds, organic fertilizers, etc. Women in five beneficiary villages of the PMSD project were supported with water retention infrastructure and/or developed hydro-agricultural areas, allowing them to increase their productivity and income. Over the course of the programme, 77,161 women in rural areas benefited from better access to renewable energies.

UNDP also supported the development of innovative techniques for the conservation of products and off-season agriculture with water reservoirs operating on renewable energy. Nine water reservoirs were built in Kpakpalaré, Kadolasi, Damè, Aouiankanmè, Kotan, Danmè-Kpossou and Agbodji, allowing beneficiaries to cultivate all year round. Production and productivity as well as income have improved. An additional benefit has been that men, including young men, in these localities no longer have to travel to neighbouring towns to look for work during the dry season. Other potential effects on households in terms of improved access to food, education and health, and reduced pressure on women during the seasons when men are absent, can be highlighted.

<sup>56</sup> The multifunctional platform is a concept developed by UNDP and deployed in a number of African countries. Driven by a diesel engine, the platform powers devices such as pumps, grain mills and generators.

<sup>57</sup> Figures taken from internal UNDP monitoring system.

Here too, however, the condition of project equipment was an issue. During field visits for the evaluation, it was noted that some equipment was in poor condition and recorded many technical failures. For example, the automatic perforated belt system set up for watering the garden at the PMSD project sites deteriorated after a few months, at which point people resorted to watering their gardens manually. Beneficiaries reported other problems with the quality of the equipment, some of which had been defective since their delivery. It was noted, however, that this situation could also be due to misuse and/or lack of maintenance. To overcome these challenges, the project initiated (i) training for beneficiaries on equipment use and (ii) the establishment of governing bodies for the equipment with the support of the local authorities.

Other actions under this output focused on increasing carbon stocks through forest restoration, reforestation and the fight against illegal logging. This included an awareness-raising campaign in the commune of Kalalé, which enabled the commune to negotiate the voluntary departure of 3,000 illegal occupants from the classified forest of Trois Rivières. On a national scale, a total of 925 hectares of forest and forest land were restored, and 2,553 hectares of land, excluding protected areas, were put under improved practices. UNDP also organized reforestation campaigns that mobilized the labour of 8,111 people, including 2,083 women (25 percent). In addition, 140 producers were trained, equipped and established in the beekeeping sector, producing approximately 50,000 litres of honey in these replanted areas.<sup>58</sup>

However, there are difficulties related to the management and maintenance of replanted areas in Gmelia and Acacia. In some localities, such as Bantè and Dassa, the population collaborated with the local authorities to find appropriate mechanisms to manage and maintain replanted areas, with good results. The experience was less positive in other localities such as Djougou and N'dali, where replanted areas have not grown, and nothing is visible on the ground. Exchanges with the populations in these two localities showed that there are challenges in understanding the issues involved in successful replanting. In the case of N'dali, the replanted area was initially destroyed by the local people, who did not support the project and suspected that foreigners were trying to steal their land. Although mediation resulted in a second replanted area, it did not survive due to lack of maintenance. In Djougou, community members indicated they had not been sufficiently involved. The replanted area was subsequently poorly maintained and ravaged by bush fires.

**Finding 3.** UNDP has helped to strengthen and increase the use of renewable energy in Benin, particularly in rural areas. The programme further reinforced the national legislative and regulatory framework and provided support for the resilience of the national energy infrastructure towards a more climate-resilient energy sector.

Under output 1.3, UNDP continued to support the development and adoption of solutions to enable rural and urban populations to access sustainable, cheap and clean energy. To this end, three smart transformers were put into service with a production of 800KVA per transformer, and seven mini photovoltaic power plants and 84 solar streetlamps were acquired, allowing 151,000 inhabitants in urban and rural areas to benefit from clean electricity.<sup>59</sup> In addition, 742,000 people in urban areas use clean energy produced by the network.

It should be noted, however, that at the time of the evaluation, some mini photovoltaic plants were not functional, for example in Bantè, because of breakdowns and lack of maintenance. More generally, the evaluation noted that local populations do not have the technical skills to ensure the maintenance of the equipment, nor has the project made arrangements for the timely maintenance and/or repair of equipment by external service providers. This being said, the information collected indicates that maintenance is

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<sup>58</sup> ROAR 2019.

<sup>59</sup> ROAR 2021.

formally the responsibility of the public procurement officers of the associated ministries, in accordance with the public procurement procedures in force in Benin. The fact that equipment maintenance is not included in the communes' development plans raises doubts as to the degree of ownership of the interventions by the local authorities.

The programme also focused on strengthening the legislative and regulatory framework necessary for the development of renewable energy. In this regard, UNDP supported (i) the development of the national off-grid electrification policy; (ii) the Framework Law on Renewable Energy in Benin; (iii) the updating and validation of eight wood-energy supply master plans for eight towns and forestry development plans in other towns;<sup>60</sup> and (iv) the establishment of a favourable political, institutional, legal and regulatory framework for the promotion of renewable energy in Benin through the PANA project. UNDP also supported the strengthening of systemic, institutional and individual capacities to act on climate risks in the energy sector; innovative approaches to protect thermal power plants were implemented for the benefit of the Beninese Electricity Company, reducing the risk of breakdowns during extreme climatic events.<sup>61</sup>

The results matrix for this output shows that the penetration rate of renewable energy was 12.18 percent, an increase of about 3 percent from the baseline of 9.74 percent in 2018. The proportion of female-headed households accessing sustainable and clean energy reached 4.91 percent in 2021, compared to the baseline of 4.10 percent. In rural areas, the programme results matrix shows a clear improvement, from 1.14 percent in 2018 to 11.32 percent in 2021. In urban and peri-urban areas, by contrast, the situation has not improved since 2018 (6.99 percent).

**Finding 4.** Local and national institutions in charge of climate change received support from UNDP in terms of institutional and organizational capacity-building. Strengthened skills and competencies in the implementation of the national contingency plan, risk mapping and the operation of the flood risk early warning system should enable institutions to better cope with the climatic and environmental disasters.

Benin experiences floods almost annually, and in recent years, they have grown more severe. In 2019, for example, 37,000 people were affected by floods, resulting in 27 deaths. UNDP supported the government in assessing the damage and losses and supported the development of reconstruction plans by commune and catchment area, including developing the financing, coordination and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms necessary for the recovery of the affected populations. UNDP also supported the development of flood mitigation strategies to reduce the impact of future events.

The implementation of a risk and disaster management system started in 2019 with the development of the national contingency plan, followed in 2020 by the post-disaster needs assessment of the 2019 floods and in 2021 with a risk mapping exercise. The contingency plan identifies the necessary activities to address the challenges and risks and allows the National Civil Protection Agency and its partners to mobilize communities, citizens and actors to respond to shocks in order to minimize the negative impacts on the population. The plan was followed by resource mobilization efforts through the national platform for disaster reduction.

The risk mapping exercise is very recent. It aims to improve flood governance and enable communities to respond to risks. However, to date the work is limited to six communes out of 77 in the country (in the Niger, Mono and Ouémé basins).

<sup>60</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Mid-term Evaluation of the Project "Strengthening the resilience of the energy sector to the impacts of climate change in Benin"', final report, UNDP, Cotonou, 2019.

<sup>61</sup> ROAR 2019.

UNDP also supported strengthening the technical and institutional capacities of local and national institutions to enable them to effectively coordinate actions in the planning and response to disasters, helping to ensure the early warning system remains operational and efficient. Fifty-seven officers, including 14 women, benefitted from capacity-building in the risk mapping process, and more than 919,002 inhabitants of municipalities located in the Niger, Ouémé and Mono basins benefitted from the project's activities.<sup>62</sup> Sixty-five out of 77 communes received agro-climatic equipment and tools. In addition, 218 people were trained in the use of disaster management tools and 108 agro-climatic data collectors were trained.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to this work on flood resilience, implementation of the National Adaptation Plan Project also enabled the establishment of a model tailored to the Beninese context that makes it possible to assess the economic impact of climate change on key development sectors in real-time, and to predict the impacts. Other innovations were developed that allow climate expenditures to be marked in the general state budget (budget coding) in order to assess internal investment in the fight against climate change. The development and operationalization of an integrated model of adaptation and resilience to climate change and socio-economic risks as well as the support to the revision of the country's nationally determined contributions are also notable contributions. Together, these constitute a roadmap for the country's efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

**Finding 5.** The programme contributed to building the knowledge and skills of different stakeholder groups by increasing their engagement and contributions to the review of national policies and processes such as nationally determined contributions and the national adaptation plan. Various capacity-building modalities contributed to the adoption of new agricultural techniques, increasing production and incomes, while technical and financial assistance has helped to create an enabling policy environment for inclusive and sustainable growth.

The programme built the skills, knowledge and competencies of key stakeholder groups on a wide range of topics related to inclusive and sustainable growth, as well as strengthening various institutions that ensure the sustainability of the programme's achievements. The involvement of all parties in the different phases of project management – including design, resource mobilization, implementation and evaluation – contributed to strengthening national ownership and capacity-building. At the national level, significant capacity-building on a wide range of topics covered by the country programme took place. This included collaboration with national government agencies and staff on high-level policy issues, such as the development of the national adaptation plan and the gender-sensitive NDC. These documents were sent before COP26 (November 2021) to the Green Climate Fund Secretariat, thus enabling Benin to honour its international commitments in the sector.

At the local level, the projects have strengthened the capacities of women, youth and people with disabilities, resulting in increased income, job creation and increased productivity. Other actions included capacity-building of national and local CSOs including the Federation of Associations of Disabled People, the University of Abomey Calavi, and microfinance institutions, which received technical and financial support to strengthen their capacity to diagnose, propose and effectively coordinate actions aimed at ensuring that the specific needs of women and vulnerable people are taken into account in their planning, policies and practices, and facilitating their access to productive resources and funding. UNDP also supported the completion of strategic studies, notably on the green economy, the green pact, innovative entrepreneurship and the impacts of floods (with support for the development of an action plan) as well as

<sup>62</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Results-Oriented Report on Benin 2020 Flood Response', UNDP, Cotonou.

<sup>63</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Mid-term Evaluation of the CPD, 2019–2023', final report, UNDP, Cotonou, 2021.



the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 (and the development of a response plan). Evidence also shows the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices and access to institutional markets through contracts signed with the WFP programme. The certification of agricultural products and the strengthening of value chains ensure that these achievements will continue after the project ends. In all project areas, beneficiaries appreciate the programme's contribution to their livelihoods. However, as mentioned earlier, although ownership of the projects is largely demonstrated, there are some social risks that could limit sustainability.

The programme resulted in the successful transfer of technology, including mini power plants, renewable energy irrigation and water storage facilities and the deployment of multifunctional platforms. Support provided by the Accelerator Lab has also strengthened the innovation ecosystem. One of the main achievements of the programme has been the involvement of local government agencies in the implementation of projects at the commune level. Working alongside UNDP experts and consultants, local actors reported improvements in project management and support to citizens and beneficiaries in their areas of intervention. For example, the work of the Territorial Agencies for Agricultural Development was highly appreciated, as was the commitment of the local officials.

Various trainings on gender, integration of the SDGs into national and local budgets, and early warning systems for floods, among others, contributed to building the capacity of government officials and commune representatives, and the learning is expected to continue beyond the initial project period. Support to entrepreneurship and business creation for women, youth and people with disabilities resulted in job creation and increased income for beneficiaries and their households. These gains are also expected to continue after the projects end. This said, the main financial risks related to accessing sustainable credit remain, while other risks related to the mismanagement of entrepreneurship support funds could limit the sustainability and viability of ongoing initiatives.

Overall, the sustainability of the various plans, policies and frameworks supported through the programme lies in their adoption and use for decision-making by national and local authorities. Most of the results of the programme would not be affected by changes in government at ministerial level as long as the PAG, 2021–2026 remains relevant. Respondents encountered by the evaluation were generally convinced that the policies developed with UNDP programme support were already being used by the government. However, others were concerned that sufficient funds were not always available to implement the policies at national and local levels. This concern was expressed, for example, in connection with the national renewable energy development policy, as well as the integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management into municipal development plans. Interviews suggested that the attention of mayors is necessary for the sustainability of results; implementation at local level will depend on availability of funding and local prioritization.

**Finding 6.** Although some UNDP projects have been institutionalized, challenges remain in scaling up pilot initiatives and advocating with government and other partners to adopt best practices.

Some of the programme's achievements have been adopted and scaled up. For example, the government decided in 2018 to reforest 300 hectares of land with its own funds under the PANA energy project. In 2020, following the success of the seven mini solar plants installed through UNDP support, the government decided to build six additional plants with its own funds. The Beninese Rural Electrification Agency also decided to replicate the UNDP model and has produced 14 new solar power plants since February 2022. In addition, the 2020 government decree on the acquisition of public lighting equipment allows councils to take climate change into account in the acquisition of this equipment, based on the experience of the 288 solar streetlamps introduced under the PANA project.

Post-harvest technologies developed by the UNDP Accelerator Lab in collaboration with the National Institute of Agricultural Research of Benin and the Territorial Agricultural Development Agency in the Avrankou region were documented and used as guidelines for extension and support to farmers. These approaches have also been applied in the context of capacity-building support to farmers under the PMSD and PDAB projects. Other innovations, however, have been less successful in terms of uptake.

Challenges in scaling up were also encountered in the Biomass project, where the private sector is struggling to obtain the necessary financial guarantees to invest in biomass energy production. Some 40 independent power producers have prepared business plans requiring support, but this has been slow to materialize. An additional challenge relates to the process of accessing private land for the installation of biomass plantations and gasification plants.

The exit strategy of the PCM-Bonou project aims to ensure the scaling up of the multifunctional platform model through a private sector-led approach, with the creation of a joint stock company for the future management of project assets. If this shareholder approach is successful, it could effectively lay the foundation for the expansion of the PCM model across the country, and also strengthen links between councils. However, if it is not successful, the sustainability of these multifunctional platforms will be at risk.

**Finding 7.** The programme achieved and in some cases exceeded its output targets. However, progress against the outcome-level indicators had not improved at the time of the evaluation due to several factors, including the adverse effects of COVID-19, the localized nature of the projects, the pilot nature of the initiatives and the challenges of scaling up programme achievements.

Outcome 1, *“By 2023, Benin’s population, especially the most vulnerable, are more resilient and have a better quality of life through access to decent employment, food and nutrition security, clean energy, and the sustainable management of natural resources, [as well as improved resilience to] the adverse effects of climate change, crises and disasters”*, is measured through five performance indicators: (i) income poverty rate; (ii) underemployment rate; (iii) growth rate of household expenditure per capita among the poorest 40 percent of the population; (iv) food insecurity index; and (v) proportion of degraded land over total land area.

Over the entire programme cycle, the overall income poverty rate was expected to fall from 40.1 percent to 31.5 percent. However, as of 2021, it stood at 39.96 percent. (Disaggregation between urban and rural was not available.) Moreover, the COVID-19 study indicates an upward trend in the indicator in both urban and rural areas. The underemployment rate expected at the end of the cycle (62.2 percent) instead remained unmoved at 72.9 percent. The gender analysis shows the same stagnation, holding at 85.1 percent for women and 62.2 percent for men. The growth in expenditure of the poorest people, projected at 25 percent, also remained stagnant at 19.9 percent. The food insecurity index, meanwhile, deteriorated sharply in 2021: whereas it was projected to fall from 9.6 percent to 6.9 percent at the end of the cycle, it instead soared to 34 percent, with strong disparities between urban areas (25 percent) and rural areas (43 percent). Finally, while the programme aimed to reduce the proportion of land degradation to 52 percent, it remains steady at 62 percent.<sup>64</sup> This suggests that future programmes should continue to focus on these key issues.

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<sup>64</sup> Mid-term evaluation report, CPD 2021.



There are several reasons for the difficulty in achieving the targets of the outcome indicators. First, there is no direct link between the level of achievement of output indicators and the macro-level changes sought at the outcome level, as discussed further under Finding 16 below. Second, Benin, like all countries, has been severely affected by the COVID-19 health crisis and its reverberating economic and social consequences. These factors will need to be taken into account in the next programme cycle.

Third, scaling up the successes of the programme is a major challenge for UNDP, as its projects are often catalytic and pioneering in nature. The portfolio's interventions are also highly localized, which means that it is difficult in the short term to demonstrate impacts at the national level. The perceived dispersed nature of the initiatives and the lack of a robust system for consolidating the gains of individual projects at country level partly limit the pathways to impact at country level (see also Finding 6).

Finally, outcome-level indicators by their nature rely on the inputs of an entire ecosystem of partners; their achievement lies beyond the efforts of any one actor alone.

## 2.2 Governance

**Outcome 2.** By 2023, Benin's population have equal and inclusive access to effective, transparent and accountable institutions and modern public administration, at all levels, in a climate of peace and security, particularly related to access to justice respectful of human rights.

### **Related outputs.**

**Output 2.1.** The government, Parliament and the National Electoral Commission have improved technical and operational capacities to promote inclusion, transparency and accountability.

**Output 2.2.** Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court and national human rights institutions and systems strengthened to expand access to justice and combat discrimination, with a focus on women and marginalized groups.

**Output 2.3.** Ministries in charge of public services and national institutions are strengthened to use digital technologies and big data for improved public services and other government functions.

**Output 2.4.** Capacities developed across the whole of government, including local government, to integrate the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement into development plans and budgets, and to analyse progress towards the SDGs, using innovative and data-driven solutions.

**Output 2.5.** National capacities strengthened for peaceful management of conflict and prevention of violent extremism in response to national policies and priorities.

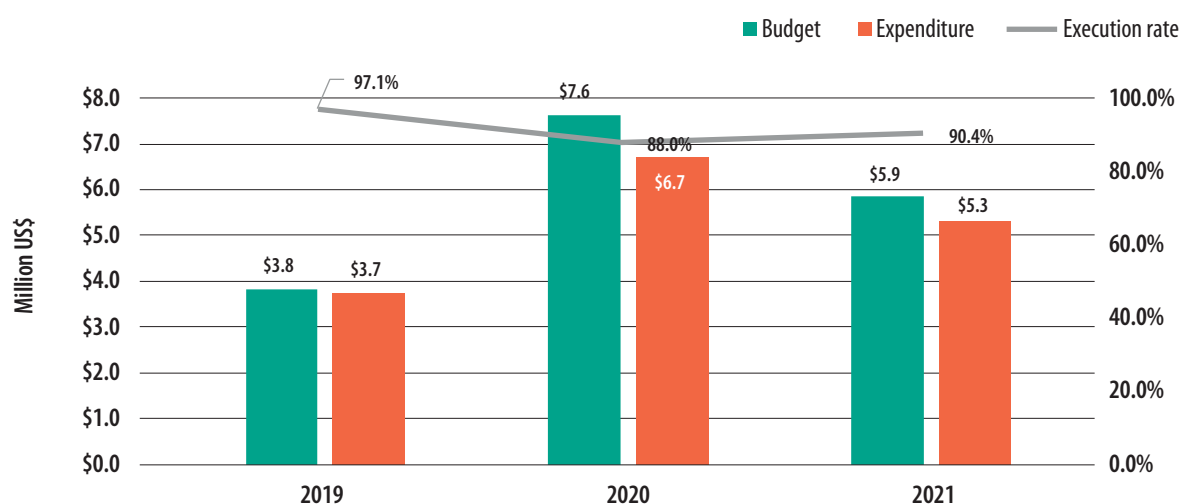
Under this outcome, UNDP aimed to strengthen democratic and electoral processes and establish more equitable justice, gender equality, social cohesion and respect for human rights. To this end, UNDP planned to support Benin in strengthening the capacity of parliamentary institutions and election management bodies to effectively play their roles in promoting transparency, accountability and inclusion in the

management of public affairs, leaving no one behind. UNDP also planned to create favourable conditions for access to justice, without discrimination, taking into account marginalized groups, and to support the digitalization of public services in order to bring administration closer to the citizens it serves. UNDP also aimed to strengthen the capacities of local authorities and public services in the elaboration of development plans and budgets that take into account international agreements, particularly the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. Efforts under this outcome also included putting in place data collection and analysis systems that provide gender- and disability-disaggregated data to monitor progress. UNDP also aimed to support Benin in countering violent extremism and building national infrastructure for peace.<sup>65</sup>

The governance component was operationalized through 18 projects of varying sizes (budgets vary from \$50,000 to \$4.76 million), for a total envelope of nearly \$18 million mobilized through UNDP regular resources and those of other donor partners including the Government of Benin, the Peacebuilding Fund, the Joint Fund for the SDGs, Germany and Japan.

The graph below shows the evolution of UNDP expenditure in the area of governance. After a slow start, with expenditure amounting to \$3.7 million in 2019, the year 2020 saw a considerable increase in expenditure to \$6.7 million. This increase may reflect UNDP efforts to digitalize public services in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. However, UNDP recorded a decrease in expenditure in 2021, with expenditure amounting to \$5.3 million due to difficulties in mobilizing resources in the post-COVID-19 period. UNDP recorded a financial execution rate of 97 percent in 2019, 88 percent in 2020 and 90 percent in 2021. While these performance levels remain very high, they also reflect the challenging context of the advent of COVID-19. The lowest execution rate was achieved in 2020, the year in which the COVID-19 crisis emerged.

**FIGURE 4. Evolution of expenditure and budget in the area of governance (2019–2021)**



Source: Atlas Project data, Power Bi, as of 17 January 2022

<sup>65</sup> CPD Benin, 2019–2023.

**Finding 8..** UNDP has contributed to the efforts of the government, the national assembly and the Autonomous National Electoral Commission to promote openness, transparency and accountability through awareness-raising and strengthening of internal systems. However, the results obtained are not satisfactory in terms of gender. The proportion of women candidates in elections or in leadership positions remains low.

UNDP has made a significant contribution to the efforts of legislative and elective institutions to improve their performance. Several pending and/or overdue laws were passed thanks to UNDP support. For example, the rules of procedure were updated thanks to UNDP support. UNDP also contributed to improving the quality of legislation, including through awareness-raising among deputies of the national assembly about the importance of public consultations. For example, UNDP supported Beninese parliamentarians to carry out field missions to talk to people who have experienced sexual harassment and corruption in order to draw on their experiences while drafting legislation.

UNDP contributed to the establishment of a procurement unit and an internal audit service in the national assembly (despite the resistance of some members of parliament to having these oversight bodies), an action which strengthens credibility and contributes to transparency and accountability. UNDP also contributed to the establishment of a parliamentary radio station that broadcasts the sessions of the national assembly in real time, thus reinforcing the institution's communications and transparency. This dynamic was extended to the creation of the "Television Hemicycle" channel, which already broadcasts on social networks (notably Facebook) and will be extended to television.

Further support to the national assembly included:<sup>66</sup> (i) publishing and disseminating tools for monitoring government action; (ii) putting promulgated laws online on the national assembly website; (iii) improving the range and sound quality of Radio Hemicycle; (iv) training 60 journalists on monitoring government action; (v) strengthening the capacities of parliamentary officials on parliamentary management. These actions enabled the national assembly to better assume its role in legislative matters and in monitoring government action.

Concerning the institutions in charge of organizing elections in Benin, UNDP supported the Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA) in the organization of elections, without intervening directly in the process. Specifically, UNDP procured material for the organization of elections such as quality indelible inks, stamps, seals, etc. UNDP capacity-building for CENA also included supporting officials in the implementation of the new legal framework for elections in the Republic of Benin. This facilitated the successful organization of communal, legislative and presidential elections in 2019, 2020 and 2021.<sup>67</sup> Also thanks to UNDP support, CENA and the High Authority for Audio-visual and Communication (HAAC) have adopted a strategic development and modernization plan. The HAAC has been able to increase its skills in regulating the work of the media and managing the radio and television airwaves, especially during the election period, in order to ensure strict compliance with the ethics procedures in place. This work did encounter some challenges, however, notably due to the lack of a focal point within CENA responsible for interacting with UNDP.

One area in which there has been insufficient progress is in terms of the proportion of women candidates standing for election or in leadership positions, which remains low. In 2019, in the framework of the legislative elections, the registered candidacies included 16 women out of 166 titular candidates (9.63 percent) and

<sup>66</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Support for Capacity-Building of Parliament and Election Management Bodies Project, 2021', progress report, UNDP, Cotonou, 2021.

<sup>67</sup> ROAR 2021.

17 women out of 166 substitute candidates (10.24 percent). In communal elections in 2020, there were 720 women out of a total of 9,075 titular candidates (7.9 percent), and 989 women were substitutes out of a total of 9,075 substitute candidates (10.89).<sup>68</sup> These ratios are still extremely low compared to the planned target of 20 percent by 2023. The proportion of women in senior positions has halved from 22 percent in 2019 to 11 percent in 2021. This situation can be explained by social norms regarding the role of women in society. Considerable work remains to be done to address these issues and reach the planned target of 30 percent by 2023.

**Finding 9.** UNDP helped strengthen the justice sector by improving the legal and institutional framework and setting up institutions to protect human rights. However, the results in terms of access to justice for vulnerable people and the reduction of social inequalities, particularly those linked to gender, have not met expectations.

As part of the strengthening of the legal and institutional framework, UNDP contributed to the creation of the Beninese Human Rights Commission. This constitutes a considerable success, strengthening the protection of human rights in Benin and enabling the government to meet its international commitment to produce reports on the state of human rights in the country. To operationalize this new institution, UNDP made available qualified human resources, mainly composed of United Nations Volunteers (UNVs). UNDP achievements in promoting human rights also include capacity-building of institutions involved in the development of human rights-sensitive laws and regulations (14 institutions out of a planned 13 for 2021), the drafting of legal instruments strengthening the protection of human rights (11 out of a planned 2 for 2021), and the training of 131 actors (out of a planned 50 for 2021) on the protection of human rights.<sup>69</sup>

UNDP also supported the General Directorate of the Benin Prison Agency in (i) training of prison managers in prison security and (ii) the decongestion of prisons. The latter involved financial support and acceleration of the processing of prisoners in pre-trial detention, as well as capacity-building of former prisoners in order to promote their socio-professional reintegration. In this regard, more than 1,000 people<sup>70</sup> in detention were released in 2019 thanks to UNDP support. More than 350 prisoners were trained to make soap, bleach, beaded jewellery and other handicrafts in the weaving workshops set up.<sup>71</sup> Artisans passed their professional qualification certificates in prison and set up businesses after their release.<sup>72</sup>

In addition, UNDP supported the development and dissemination of several guides, including a guide to administrative and judicial services for the Ministry of Justice and Legislation, guides for prisoners and prison wardens, a draft guide on the implementation of international mutual legal assistance, and a guide to managing the registry and seals.

Despite these efforts, however, access to justice for vulnerable people did not improve over the programme period, with this indicator remaining stable compared to the baseline. This indicates that efforts should continue in this direction. Similarly, the evaluation was not able to establish any significant improvement in the reduction of social inequalities, particularly those related to gender, or in the effects of accountability mechanisms and the fight against corruption in the judiciary.

<sup>68</sup> UNDP internal monitoring system.

<sup>69</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Support for Improving Access to Justice and Accountability Project', progress report, UNDP, Cotonou, 2021.

<sup>70</sup> UNDP internal monitoring system.

<sup>71</sup> ROAR 2021.

<sup>72</sup> Support for Improving Access to Justice and Accountability Project, progress report, 2021.

**Finding 10.** UNDP helped facilitate the use of digital technologies and big data by public administrations and national institutions for the digitalization of public services and other government functions. However, there have been delays in putting in place certain digitalized public services.

Through the Support for the Reform and Modernization of Public Administration Project, UNDP and the Government of Benin focused on the digitalization of public services as a lever for improving the quality of public services and reducing corruption, allowing users to access public services of better quality more easily.<sup>73</sup> Additional projects under this thematic area included the Intelligent Administration Project and the Support for the Digitalization of Administrative Procedures Project.

The results obtained by these projects were beyond expectations. Many services that previously relied on manual inputs have been digitalized, which avoids direct contact between users of public services and state agents (important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic) and helps prevent corruption. For example, with the digitization of administrative documents, the processing of files related to retirement is now more efficient, allowing people to obtain their pension booklet within a month rather than in one to two years, as had been the case prior to the reform.

UNDP also contributed to the digitalization of administrative procedures at the level of the Ministry of Labour and the Civil Service, in particular through i) digitalization of 14 priority services of the public administration;<sup>74</sup> ii) implementation of a platform for monitoring attendance and punctuality at work; iii) implementation of an administrative formalities portal; iv) implementation of 15 communal public service centres; v) strengthening the functionalities of the administrative procedures portal and the Weche platform;<sup>75</sup> vi) wiring up the site of the Departmental Directorate of Labour and Public Service in the Atlantic/Littoral departments; vii) training focal points of the user relations department in the operation of service platforms.

On the user side, in general, the digitalization of services was well appreciated, especially by the communal authorities benefitting from the communal centres, who acknowledge that these centres facilitate access to public services in their localities. The technical quality of the equipment and facilities provided was also well appreciated.<sup>76</sup> In 2021, the satisfaction rate of users of the administration was 80.7 percent, compared to 68.3 percent in 2019.<sup>77</sup>

Weaknesses identified related to the non-availability of certain pieces of legislation requested on the platform. This situation is due, among other things, to the non-updating of the platform and the delay in publication of certain pieces of legislation. This is a real problem that affects the credibility of the system and generates dissatisfaction on the part of users.<sup>78</sup>

The UNDP contribution to the dematerialization of public services also made it possible to digitize career records via the integrated human resources management system (SIGRH), which includes the human resources departments of all ministries. Thanks to the SIGRH, the public administration's personnel management system is linked directly to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, with the goal of ensuring that a civil servant's promotion is immediately reflected in their salary (though exchanges with civil servants

<sup>73</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Public Administration Reform and Modernization Support Project', project document, UNDP, Cotonou, 2019.

<sup>74</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Support for the Dematerialization of Administrative Procedures Project', progress report, UNDP, Cotonou, 2021.

<sup>75</sup> Name of the platform, which means "my paper", in the local language, Fongbé.

<sup>76</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Support for the Dematerialization of Administrative Procedures, 2021 report', UNDP, Cotonou, 2021.

<sup>77</sup> ROAR 2021.

<sup>78</sup> United Nations Development Programme, programme monitoring visit report, August 2022.

suggested that at the time of the evaluation, this automatic mechanism was not yet operational). The ambition of the platform is to optimize digital access to career and pension files in order to be able to locate in real-time where a file is in the processing chain.

In total, with the support of UNDP, 13 platforms are operational,<sup>79</sup> 16 benefits are accessible online,<sup>80</sup> six career acts were developed on time,<sup>81</sup> two value restoration tools/mechanisms are operational<sup>82</sup> and one value restoration tool/mechanism is in progress.<sup>83,84</sup>

A challenge noted by the evaluation is that despite the communication efforts of the Ministry of Labour and Public Service, which is the main beneficiary of this support, many civil servants are not yet aware of the existence of these platforms. This situation can also be explained by the delay in putting certain services requested by users online.

**Finding 11.** UNDP supported the national and local public administration to take into account the SDGs and the Paris Agreement in development planning. However, results in this area will only be visible after the validation and rollout of the next generation of municipal development plans.

UNDP has initiated the second phase of the Support to the Operationalization of Development Strategies Project (PASD 2), 2019–2023, with the aim of supporting Benin in its efforts to improve governance and strengthen the planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation chain for sustainable development.

In this regard, UNDP supported the government in the preparation, development and design of its various planning and programming tools, in particular long- and medium-term planning documents. UNDP played a role in the design and development of the NDP, 2018–2021, the localization of the 2030 Agenda and the development of the PAG 2 (2021–2026). In addition to public administrations at the central level such as ministries and other institutions, UNDP worked with decentralized structures as well as institutions such as the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, Parliament and the Economic and Social Council, the University of Abomey-Calavi, civil society and the private sector. UNDP conducted advocacy work with these institutions to promote their ownership of the SDGs and their principles.

Benin, with the support of UNDP, has regularly prepared its Voluntary National Reviews and follow-up, highlighting progress, difficulties, lessons learned and prospects in relation to the 2030 Agenda.

In addition, UNDP has accompanied Benin in its budgeting processes, which is an aspect that had previously been neglected. Thanks to UNDP support, the West African Economic and Monetary Union's three directives on the Code of Transparency of Public Finance Management, Finance Laws and Budget Nomenclature of State within the West African Economic and Monetary Union were translated into concrete action. Since then, these laws have been generalized to all ministries and institutions in the country. Thanks to this support, there is no longer a programme budget in Benin, but results-based budgets indexed to the targets of the SDGs. This result was well appreciated by the government.

<sup>79</sup> PDA; SYGEC; SIRP-STAT; GUV; BD-RAI; dematerialization of reclassification acts; the hybrid gender system; e-candidature; follow-up of the disciplinary procedure, digitalization of the organic frameworks and training plans, HRMIS assistance platform, follow-up of the workforce, management of the regulatory rights of dismissed employees, follow-up of the processing of career and pension files and 04 SRU desks (Tour B, Departmental Directorate of Labour and Public Service Zou, Borgou and Atacora currently being set up).

<sup>80</sup> <http://sollicitation.hebergeappli.bj/e-services>

<sup>81</sup> Step advancement, reclassification, retirement.

<sup>82</sup> CSO support mechanism and mass media, communication plan.

<sup>83</sup> Draft charter implementation and monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

<sup>84</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Public Administration Reform and Modernization Support Project, 2021 report', UNDP, Cotonou, 2021.



UNDP has supported several directorates/structures of the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Development and Coordination of Government Actions. For example, support to the National Institute of Statistics and Demography included the provision of transportation for missions to the interior of the country for data collection, as well as UNVs to strengthen the institute's human resources capacity. From discussions with various stakeholders, it was clear that UNDP provided significant support to meet the challenges facing the statistical system in Benin, including advocating for a new law on the national statistics system to be passed in the National Assembly.

UNDP support to the General Directorate for Development Financing (DGFD) focused, on one hand, on setting up a 'financing for development' information management system, which acts as an information collection tool between technical and financial partners and the government. As its name indicates, all data and information relating to development financing should be found on this platform, making it possible to trace financing obtained by Benin as well as that of partners such as international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This platform has the advantage of improving practices for collecting information from technical and financial partners, facilitating the work of all actors involved and saving time and resources – although the evaluation notes that for its effectiveness and sustainability, it is necessary to put in place a permanent mechanism for regular updating of the platform's data. Also with the support of UNDP, the DGFD resumed the preparation of reports on cooperation for development (2018, 2019 and 2020), and carried out a diagnostic study of financing for development, accompanied by a draft integrated national financing framework. It is also in the process of finalizing national development financing strategy.

UNDP support to other directorates has involved the financing of various studies, particularly the updating of the methodological guide for the elaboration of sectoral strategies, the national evaluation policy for the period 2022–2030, analytical notes on the development programme, framework legislation on the national planning system, documents related to the Assessment and Perspective of the National Economy (2019 and 2020 editions), guides to the preparation of the multiannual expenditure programming document and the annual performance report, a diagnostic evaluation report on the decentralization of the chief authoring officer function, and the National Human Security Monitoring Report for Benin (2021 edition). Furthermore, work on the localization of the SDGs has been completed in the 77 communes.<sup>85</sup>

In short, the evaluation found that UNDP, within the framework of PASD 2, provided a great deal of support to Benin and its institutions. However, some targets were not achieved. These include communal development plans that integrate the SDGs and take into account global commitments and the preparation of communal budgets based on the SDGs, which UNDP plans to support during the development of the latest round of communal development plans.

**Finding 12.** UNDP has contributed to strengthening the peaceful management of conflicts and the prevention of violent extremism through the establishment of local committees for peace management as well as activities to improve social cohesion.

UNDP contributed to the establishment of a national coalition for peace in all of Benin's communes and in the chief towns of the country's former departments (six in total). The members of these coalitions remain attentive to the various security threats in the communes and in the country in general. Their mission consists of raising awareness among the population about peace and the harmful consequences of electoral or post-electoral conflicts. They play a decisive role in mediating between the government and the population, and their actions contributed to reducing tensions during the last communal, legislative and presidential elections.

<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Development and Planning, 'National Report on the Localization of the Priority Targets of the SDGs in Benin', Cotonou.

With regard to violent extremism, UNDP implemented the Conflict Prevention and Violent Extremism Project in five communes in the border areas of Burkina Faso, Benin and Togo. Data collected as part of the evaluation showed that several actions were carried out in the field, including (i) a functional study on perceptions around conflict and violent extremism in the border communes; (ii) support for children and vulnerable adults who are survivors of, or exposed to, human trafficking (105 people, including 93 girls and 12 boys); (iii) payment of school fees and provision of school supplies to help keep pupils in vulnerable situations in school; (iv) support to vocational training for out-of-school children through payment of apprenticeship fees and provision of materials and work tools; (v) equipping centres for social promotion. The project also set up secondary civil registry centres in the five communes of intervention and train staff for their operation.<sup>86</sup> UNDP worked to strengthen trust and collaboration between the population and the Defence and Security Forces through periodic recreational activities (football matches, tree planting, etc.), conferences and debates (live and via community radio stations, etc.) and the organization of open days for the Republican Police, where the population learns about the role of the police and the forces of order. Weaknesses noted in relation to this project related to delays in its implementation as well as the relatively limited scope of its results.

With regard to vertical social cohesion, the strategy consisted of strengthening the state's presence in vulnerable areas by building socio-community infrastructure including health centres and schools. In addition, UNDP provided considerable support for the development of the national strategy for the prevention of violent extremism. The recognition of UNDP leadership in this area by both the government and technical and financial partners led to the designation of UNDP as the lead agency for the sectoral group on the prevention of radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism within the United Nations Country Team.

More recently, UNDP has supported the government on the issue of 'sense of belonging'. Reflections are underway to identify the modus operandi of extremist groups and how they recruit individuals in order to define an appropriate strategy to combat them.

UNDP also provides considerable support to the Training Centre for Post-Conflict Actions for Demining and Depollution (CPADD) for the financing of the peacekeeping and peacebuilding support project. The mission of CPADD is to train personnel from African countries confronted with the problems of mines and explosive remnants of war. UNDP support aims to help the CPADD with the acquisition of new equipment for quality training of agents.

At first, technical and financial partners were reluctant to contribute to financing of a larger-scale project to counter violent extremism. Following repeated attacks by extremists, several donors expressed their interest in working with UNDP to support Benin in the formulation and implementation of a major project in the north of the country. Funding in this area may once again become scarce, however, due to the crisis in Ukraine; already, some donors have been unable to honour their commitments due to limited availability of funds.

**Finding 13.** UNDP has made efforts to equip target institutions and beneficiary groups with the knowledge and skills to continue the initiatives after project completion, and steps are being taken to facilitate national ownership of programme results. However, there are threats to the sustainability of achievements, including weak ownership by beneficiaries and local authorities.

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<sup>86</sup> Information gathered during the interviews.



A number of steps have been taken to ensure sustainability of results under this outcome. The projects and programmes of the governance outcome have been integrated into the strategic development plans and annual work plans of the institutions and structures supported by UNDP. According to key informant interviews, a service provider was recruited by the Ministry of Labour and Public Service to ensure the maintenance of the various digital platforms set up through the programme. Similarly, the Ministry of Labour and Public Service has allocated funds in its budget for the maintenance of equipment from 2023 onwards. In the communes, the mayors have taken security measures to ensure that equipment is not vandalized.

Nevertheless, there are threats to the sustainability of results. There is no rigorous monitoring of capacity-building actions or equipment related to digitalization. The proposed funding mechanisms have not yet resulted in formal commitments. While projects are implemented according to national procedures to facilitate ownership, the evaluation noted that it is the managers of the ministries based at national level who are responsible for the projects; once they are complete, managers may withdraw and return to their initial function, and the gains of the projects may not be followed up. This is often the case with other projects.<sup>87</sup> In the case of community platforms, local authorities had limited involvement in their implementation. Interest in the community centres may be short-lived, and there is no guarantee that the communes will budget resources for their maintenance.

## 2.3 Cross-cutting issues

**Finding 14.** The country programme is relevant to the national priorities as set out in the NDP, the PAG and the SDGs, as well as principles of the UNDP Strategic Plan. The CPD, 2019–2023 anticipated and took into account the issue of prevention of violent extremism, which proved to be a major concern during the cycle. UNDP Benin was able to adapt to the various shocks that occurred during the cycle, notably the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, by rapidly reorienting its priorities and intervention strategy.

The development of the CPD, 2019–2023 was subject to a process of consultation with national partners, consisting of the government and various stakeholders, and took into account the evaluation of the previous programme cycle as well as other available evidence. It is based on the principles of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the UNSDCF, 2019–2023, and is in line with the priorities of the Government of Benin as expressed in the PAG, 2016–2021, NDP, 2018–2025 and the Growth for Sustainable Development Programme (PC2D), 2018–2021. The document remains aligned with the government's priorities in the new PAG, 2021–2026. Specifically, Outcome 1 is aligned with Component 3 of the PAG, 2021–2026 on improving the living conditions of the population, while Outcome 2 is aligned with Component 1 on consolidating democracy, the rule of law and good governance.

UNDP has demonstrated a high degree of resilience to the various shocks that have occurred during the cycle, including COVID-19 and the rise of violent extremism. Indeed, the advent of these external shocks did not change the relevance of the programme, but rather reinforced the need to further support the government to address these emerging issues and other future events. The CPD in its design targeted vulnerable groups and populations with a view to prioritizing its actions towards them. In addition to women and youth, the programme prioritized rural populations, the vast majority of whom are affected by poverty, with a focus on the border regions to prevent the rise of violent extremism.

<sup>87</sup> However, the evaluation noted the initiatives of CePED which developed capacitation models for actors to ensure the sustainability of the achievements of the PCM-Bonou and PMSD projects.

UNDP worked closely with the government and other technical and financial partners to provide support to the COVID-19 response. For example, \$733,062 from TRAC was reallocated for COVID-19 response activities, and \$532,000 was mobilized from the Regional Bureau for Africa and Rapid Response Facility funds to contribute to response actions in 2020. In 2021, the programme mobilized \$1 million from the Regional Bureau for Africa to support sustainable income enhancement of youth and women entrepreneurs in the context of COVID-19 through the Sème City Development Agency and the Tony Elumelu Foundation.

Through its role as chair of the recovery working group set up by the United Nations Resident Coordinator's office, UNDP led a national study on the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, which provided the evidence base for the development of the national response plan. UNDP support in preparing the collective response of the United Nations Country Team in Benin to the COVID-19 pandemic also helped position the organization as a development partner of choice.

In a similar vein, UNDP supported the Government of Benin in conducting a strategic impact analysis of the conflict in Ukraine, which further highlighted the need to invest in food security and energy self-sufficiency.

**Finding 15.** UNDP has a clear and recognized comparative advantage in the areas of environment and climate, renewable energy, human rights, governance, peacebuilding and security, etc., as well as strong advocacy capacity with national partners, and its support has added value to ongoing development efforts in the country. However, there is a tendency for UNDP to spread its actions over a fairly wide scope, including in areas where it does not necessarily have a comparative advantage.

Over the years, UNDP has developed expertise in specific areas that have earned recognition among the various development actors in Benin and positioned it as a partner of choice in these different areas. In addition to those listed above, national partners recognize the agency's comparative advantage in areas such as: (i) institutional capacity-building and promoting national ownership; (ii) promoting South-South or triangular cooperation; (iii) development policy dialogue; (iv) neutrality and transparency with a global network of expertise and knowledge; (v) strong, credible and trusted relationships with governments; and (v) providing integrated solutions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda within the framework of United Nations reform.

UNDP also has strong advocacy capacity and convening power, which has contributed to increasing dialogue and mutual accountability between the government and technical and financial partners in the context of the review of the PAG, 2016–2021 and the PC2D. Indeed, its actions around public-private dialogue on the financing needs of small- and medium-sized enterprises in the West African Economic and Monetary Union as a whole are effectively based on its broad expertise in promoting access to finance, employment and entrepreneurship in Benin. The same is true for the support, tools and expertise to better integrate the objectives of the SDGs into national strategies. UNDP has also coordinated the support of United Nations agencies in the elaboration of the national strategy for statistics.

UNDP interventions have added value to the development efforts underway in Benin. Its efforts have promoted job creation and the creation of socio-communal infrastructures, and it has contributed to a better understanding of climate change issues, the development of local and national management tools and the development of the nationally determined contribution. The agency's added value can also be seen in the mobilization of sister United Nations agencies in the conduct of the COVID-19 socio-economic impact study and the development and implementation of an integrated national plan for the response to COVID-19. It should also be noted that UNDP is currently the only actor supporting the government on climate change adaptation and mitigation in the energy sector.

Despite these advantages and added value, stakeholders encountered by the evaluation suggested that UNDP interventions are dispersed over many sectors. Some reported that unlike many of its sister agencies, the organization does not have a clear thematic niche such as women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women), agriculture (International Fund for Agriculture Development), infrastructure (AfDB), children (United Nations Children's Fund) or food security (WFP). These observations, whether well-founded or not, call for stronger communication from UNDP to national partners and bilateral technical and financial partners on its activities.

**Finding 16.** Implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system is limited by the level of engagement of local authorities and civil society organizations, despite their expertise and proximity to grassroots populations. Furthermore, evaluation of the UNDP contribution was made difficult by weaknesses in the formulation of indicators and targets for outputs and outcomes.

The UNDP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system consists of the programme management support unit (with one M&E specialist) and M&E officers/focal points at project level. At the start of the programme's implementation in 2019, a workshop was held to exchange views and bring implementing partners up to speed on the revision of the programme, project management policy and the harmonized approach to cash transfers. At the project level, it was noted that some projects have M&E staff and budgets while others do not, which affects their monitoring. In some cases, it was noted that performance was insufficient and that some projects had been extended because of delays in implementation. To overcome these shortcomings, training in monitoring and evaluation was regularly organized for project teams from the start of the programme. Similarly, exchange and update sessions are often organized with all project teams.

The teams responsible for M&E in UNDP also participate in M&E training. With regard to learning and knowledge sharing, the mechanisms in place include programme and management team meetings, where project updates are made and good practices shared. Good practices are also shared at semi-annual programme reviews, where recommendations are made to improve the performance of projects and programmes.

With regard to programme monitoring activities, from 2019 to 2021, five field monitoring missions were carried out by UNDP staff. Project staff and M&E officers also carry out field missions to monitor the implementation of programmes and projects. However, some critical shortcomings were identified during the evaluation. First, at the level of the communes where interventions take place, the focal points often do not report to the communal authorities on the progress of the projects, which affects local ownership of the project. Second, the limited field presence of project staff, often based in Cotonou, leads to delays in addressing the difficulties and challenges faced by projects in the field. This is the case, for example, with multifunctional platforms, unmaintained plantations, defective equipment and technical problems with certain mini photovoltaic plants in the communes of Bantè and Djougou. Third, the involvement of communal authorities and local civil society organizations in monitoring project activities on the ground is also limited. Civil society in Benin has proven expertise in terms of citizen monitoring of projects at the grassroots level, due to its strong presence in the field and its proximity to the population. This asset should be tapped in the future to make project monitoring more effective, to contribute the perspectives of local communities on project implementation and to facilitate ownership of projects by local actors.

The programme M&E system also suffers from formulation problems at output and outcome levels. In some cases, the indicators formulated are beyond the control of the programme. For instance, the programme itself is unlikely to influence the overall national energy mix, considering the scale of its interventions. Linked to this is the lack of a system for collecting and reporting on indicators at the aggregate level, or on the extent to which project achievements contribute to higher-level outcomes. UNDP support to the

development of the national strategy for statistical development aims to help fill this gap, but without improvements to the monitoring system, it will be difficult for the country programme to effectively demonstrate its contributions to the country's development objectives.

The mid-term evaluation of the programme discussed at length the ability of the programme's output indicators to influence the programme's outcome and impact indicators. Indeed, it is noted that while some outputs have been achieved and/or significantly exceeded, macro-level outcome indicators have not progressed and in some cases have regressed. The large gap between indicators at the outcome level and those at the output level means that there is no direct link between the level of achievement of output indicators and the macro changes sought at the outcome level. This is primarily due to the system of formulating outcome-level indicators on the basis of alignment with the UNSDCF cooperation framework.

**Finding 17. UNDP has emphasized innovative approaches in its programme through technology transfer, South-South cooperation or co-creation with local innovation ecosystems.**

In its interventions, UNDP has emphasized innovation and technology transfer, and the programme is rich in innovations at different levels, from the design to the implementation of various projects.

A highlight in this regard was the establishment of the Accelerator Lab in October 2019. The laboratory's approach takes into account experimentation, exploration and solution-mapping in order to boost innovation in support of UNDP projects and programmes. After mapping the key actors in the national innovation ecosystem, in partnership with EtriLabs, the laboratory's work focused on securing the income of women market gardeners in Avrankou. In association with the Ministry of Agriculture and peer trainers of market gardeners from other communes, the laboratory experimented with endogenous solutions for using alum stone and citronella to fight parasites on market gardening sites, particularly in the commune of Avrankou.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Accelerator Lab worked on the design and use of innovative and interactive hand-washing stations, an interactive disinfection cabin and a mobile application for untracked distancing. In 2021, in collaboration with the Analysis and Investigation Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Benin, the laboratory carried out an exploration of the problems of tourism in three 'zones lacustres', with a focus on management of invasive plants (water hyacinth) and the development of a project initiation plan for upgrading the capacities of young people in crafts, tourism, the hotel industry and the development of the living environment in Benin.<sup>88</sup>

Innovations have also been brought into other aspects of the UNDP programme. For example, UNDP successfully introduced 'smart' farming practices for farmers, which led to the adoption of improved seeds, organic pesticides, out-of-season farming practices and post-harvest technologies that reduced losses. Another key innovation was the facilitation of institutional markets for producers through contracts with WFP under the school feeding programme. The programme also innovated in the provision of financial services to the poor, exploring partnerships with the local banking sector.

The use of renewable energy was another key innovation through the PANA energy, Biomass and PCM-Bonou projects. The introduction of gasifiers and other off-grid mechanisms has enabled rural communities to access the energy needed to stimulate social development and the local economy. These included smart transformers and smart grids in Benin's electricity generation, transmission and distribution networks to ensure a sustainable and continuous electricity supply even in the face of external climatic

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<sup>88</sup> KILs with UNDP Accelerator labs, progress reports.

shocks. Also in the field of energy, the programme worked on the promotion of clean and modern cooking technologies (improved stoves and pressure cookers) manufactured in Benin and operating on the basis of agricultural waste to provide energy similar to domestic gas. This is a clean technology to combat the energy insecurity of women in vulnerable communities. The development of ecological fuels (new generation biofuels) made from dry agricultural waste in pellets and briquettes was also noted, replacing the use of firewood and charcoal, which causes deforestation.

Digital platforms such as SIDOC, and the digitalization of the public service as discussed under Finding 10, also constitute important innovations in support of programme objectives.

Finally, South-South and triangular cooperation have also encouraged the use of innovative approaches. Examples include (i) the establishment of a relationship with the China National Bamboo Research Centre, which has enabled the training of Beninese on entrepreneurship opportunities in the bamboo sector, and (ii) the agreement with the Seme City Development Agency to support the work of the Accelerator Lab to strengthen innovative entrepreneurship and support the development and implementation of a 'smart and sustainable city' model. Other South-South collaborations with India, Brazil and South Africa have provided support to youth agribusiness start-ups.

**Finding 18.** UNDP has developed partnerships with various organizations for the financing and implementation of the country programme. However, there is no clear strategy for cooperation with local stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector. Despite some examples of synergies established with the programmes of other development partners and the existence of the joint UNSDCF work plan, agencies have not been able to pool their efforts to have a demonstrable effect in areas of convergence.

UNDP enjoys considerable respect and recognition among national and international actors operating in the country, and high levels of motivation are apparent among actors involved in the management of projects. The Government of Benin is strongly involved in the various activities of the UNDP country office. The national implementation modality ultimately allows for ownership and appreciation of programme performance. This is particularly true at the highest levels of government, where UNDP contributions are highly appreciated. All national respondents stated that collaboration with UNDP was very good and that they would continue to work with UNDP in the future. Those who are not currently collaborating also said that they would be happy to collaborate when opportunities arise. This spirit of collaboration is crucial for maintaining and continuing UNDP work in the country.

UNDP has demonstrated its willingness and readiness to work with other United Nations agencies such as WFP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as with government agencies and other technical and financial partners in complementary areas. UNDP has been at the forefront of the achievement of the SDGs in the country, working in synergy with the SDG working group composed of UNICEF, UNFPA, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and WFP. The collaborative initiative between WFP and UNDP-supported projects such as PDAB and PCM-Bonou on the national school feeding programme can also be highlighted. Agencies have also collaborated in the implementation of a household living conditions survey, the dissemination of a vulnerability and food health survey, and the finalization of work on poverty mapping in the country.

However, with regard to the convergence of actions between the agencies of the United Nations system, major weaknesses have been noted. Although there is a joint work plan of the UNSDCF that brings together the interventions of the entire United Nations Country Team, agencies have not been able to pool their efforts to make a demonstrable impact in these areas.

UNDP has strengthened its partnerships with bilateral actors such as the development cooperation agencies of Germany and Japan in order to take advantage of opportunities. This search for partnership has sometimes been undermined by a competitive environment that sees each donor to wanting to demonstrate its effectiveness by favouring standalone approaches. However, some examples of collaboration between donors have been noted. The collaboration among UNDP, the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the European Union,<sup>89</sup> although on an informal basis, encourages exchanges between economists. It is within this framework that the analytical aspects of the study on the impact of the COVID-19 were discussed, and which enabled the development of response strategies.

Various NGOs and CSOs are also engaged in the implementation of the UNDP country programme. For example, the Benin Agribusiness Development Project works with producer organizations<sup>90</sup> to support market access for the poor.<sup>91</sup> The PMSD project involved NGOs in the communes. Under the National Adaptation Plan project, other actors such as the National Association of Communes in Benin were involved, mainly as beneficiaries of training and information sessions on financing climate change adaptation. These sessions actively ensured the NGO perspective on climate change adaptation (e.g., the need to target the most vulnerable) was heard.<sup>92</sup> Overall, however, the engagement of civil society and NGOs remains weak, with limited mandates.

UNDP has also collaborated with universities. For example, in the elaboration of the National Human Development Report, eminent researchers and teachers from Benin's universities, deans and directors of faculties and schools of the University of Abomey-Calavi and scientific directors of research laboratories were involved. UNDP also collaborated with the department of training in renewable energy and energy systems of the University of Abomey-Calavi in the search for innovative solutions in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strengthening partnerships with the private sector is essential to achieving the CPD outcomes. As it does with civil society, the CPD recognizes the strategic role of the private sector at different levels in achieving its objectives. While there is no specific strategy on private sector engagement, the evaluation found that individual projects sought to involve private sector actors at different levels. The process for selecting different private sector actors is not clear, but the country and project teams appeared to rely primarily on their knowledge of the context.

At the strategic level, regular exchanges were organized by UNDP senior management with business leaders. This approach made it possible to engage companies such as Moov Africa Benin in the framework of the project on smart governance and renewable energy. UNDP has succeeded in negotiating memoranda of understanding with certain banks (e.g., agreements signed between UNDP and Ecobank) with a view to providing better support to small- and medium-sized enterprises and industries benefitting from the PDAB.

Private sector actors have also been involved in the development of the national adaptation plan on climate change. A mapping study on how the private sector could be included in climate change adaptation was carried out and resulted in awareness-raising sessions for the private sector. However, some major actors, such as the Council of Private Investors in Benin, were not involved in this initiative.

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<sup>89</sup> ROAR 2021.

<sup>90</sup> Federation of Producers' Unions of Benin (FUPRO), the Interprofession of the Rice Sector (IFRIZ), the Group of Farmers of Benin (GEA-Benin), NGOs (RéCAB, PNOPRA, PASCIB).

<sup>91</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Progress Report as of 31 December 2021 of the Benin Agribusiness Development Project', UNDP, Cotonou, 2022.

<sup>92</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Green Climate Fund Final Report', UNDP, Cotonou, 2021.



At the project level, apart from some private sector-supported financing initiatives under the PDAB, PMSD and PANA Energy projects, it was noted that youth entrepreneurship was not supported by local banks due to insufficient credit guarantees. This was also the case with the Biomass project, where the aim was to mobilize significant private sector investment to set up four pilot biomass gasification plants through the establishment and capitalization of a financial support facility.

Overall, the various projects in the portfolio show mixed levels of private sector engagement. Each project attempted to involve private sector actors in its own way. However, without a much stronger commitment from the private sector to support and expand the achievements and innovations developed through UNDP support, it is unlikely that the overall goals of inclusive and sustainable development will be achieved. It therefore seems crucial for the future CPD to develop a specific strategy for private sector engagement that involves working with trade unions and private sector associations such as the Council of Private Investors in Benin to identify the most effective channels.

**Finding 19.** Good linkages between the communications function and the resource mobilization strategy have enabled UNDP to communicate the results of the country programme, build new partnerships and retain existing ones. However, some donors pointed to weaknesses in communicating the long-term impact of projects, which could affect resource mobilization in future.

At the beginning of the programme, UNDP developed a communications strategy, which was operationalized each year through a communications plan summarizing all activities. Internally, the UNDP communications strategy integrated M&E and reporting on project progress. Activities were implemented jointly with programme units and operations. Specifically, the communications unit liaised with the media to ensure the visibility of UNDP actions, participated in field missions to prepare communications on UNDP action, and ensured the presence of UNDP on digital communication platforms. The gender dimension and human rights were also covered by UNDP communications.

Communications also plays a major role in the UNDP resource mobilization strategy. The agency played a proactive role with targeted donors by disseminating communications kits and leaflets presenting the UNDP programme and highlighting the organization's comparative advantages and achievements. For new partners, the unit uses visual aids such as documentaries to demonstrate the value of supporting UNDP.

Actions were also taken to increase the commitment of existing partners by making their interventions visible on the ground through various communications media. However, the evaluation noted that these actions may be insufficient, and that UNDP would benefit from further demonstrating the results of its interventions by initiating impact assessments of projects.

**Finding 20.** Despite a difficult national and international context characterized by the emergence of COVID-19, the decline in economic growth and the effects of the crisis in Ukraine, UNDP has been able to mobilize substantial resources for the implementation of its programme. However, given the strategic positioning of UNDP on emerging issues such as violent extremism and post-COVID-19 recovery, there is a need to mobilize more resources to finance UNDP actions in Benin.

Resource mobilization is a major challenge for UNDP, particularly in the current context in Benin, where the government has taken a strong lead in mobilizing its own resources from development partners and international financial institutions (IFIs). For example, in previous years, UNDP was able to mobilize large sums to support elections in Benin, whereas today, these resources are directly mobilized by the government. Government success in this area is commendable, but it does require UNDP to review its strategy in order to ensure that its programmes in support of the government are likewise supported.

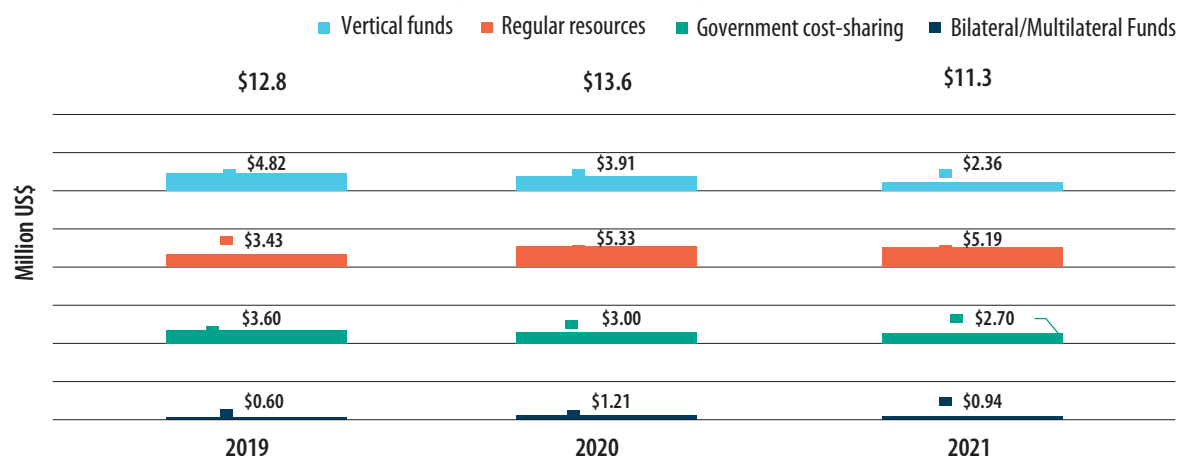
According to the country programme results and resource allocation framework, UNDP planned to mobilize \$50.1 million for the country programme, 2019–2023, including \$21.1 million in UNDP core resources. At the time of the evaluation, the country office had successfully mobilized \$43.5 million, or 86.8 percent of its objective. The government contributed 25 percent and worked with UNDP to mobilize resources from IFIs such as the World Bank. Other partners, such as the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund, also contributed to the programme, although UNDP recognizes that resource mobilization has not been optimal for green financing. Significant support was also received from Brazil, Germany, India, South Africa, the European Union and the Peacebuilding Fund, among others.

UNDP also received \$1 million in catalytic funds from the Regional Bureau for Africa to improve the income of youth and women entrepreneurs in the context of COVID-19 through the Sèmè City Development Agency and the TEF.

Resource mobilization has also been affected by the crisis in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, some donors cancelled the financial commitments made prior to these crises. Difficulties related to the mobilization of co-financing and the release of counterpart funds were noted in some projects, such as the Biomass project.

UNDP is aware that there is room for improvement in terms of mobilizing resources, and is actively working to cover gaps. It has obtained an agreement in principle from the World Bank to cover the 52 communes as yet unfunded under the project on smart administration, and a grant of \$5 million is being finalized with Belgium for agriculture and youth employment in at-risk border areas. A similar pledge is being finalized for \$4 million with the Netherlands. Emphasis is also being placed on South-South cooperation with India, China and Turkey, as well as with South Africa, which has already engaged in salt production in coastal areas. The private sector is also involved, such as the mobile phone networks Moov and MTN through their foundation.

**FIGURE 5. Total programme expenditure by source of funds and year**



Source: Atlas Project data, Power Bi, as of 17 January 2022

In terms of human resources, UNDP has qualified human resources to accomplish its missions. The various UNDP partners interviewed for this evaluation unanimously praised the skills and expertise of UNDP human resources. In addition, UNDP has made use of UNVs, with a total of 88 spread across various projects in



the two programme portfolios. However, UNVs reported various difficulties in carrying out their mission, including a lack of understanding of the concept of volunteerism by some agencies, discriminatory actions towards volunteers by some staff, lack of preparation and organization of the reception and integration of volunteers, and the absence of a reporting mechanism to highlight the contributions of volunteers to the work of receiving agencies.

**Finding 21.** UNDP has a gender equality strategy and has emphasized the inclusion of gender and human rights in all its interventions. However, the issue of women’s representation in decision-making bodies remains to be addressed (see Finding 8). The underlying causes of inequality related to the control and use of productive resources limit the programme’s ability to have a transformative impact on gender and human rights.

At the beginning of the programme, UNDP developed a gender strategy, the implementation of which is led by a gender specialist. The objective of the strategy is to contribute to the improvement of the political, institutional, legal and social environment for gender equity and equality in Benin. To ensure its implementation, the gender strategy has a budget of \$2,010,000, of which \$1,050,000 was to be financed by the country office and \$960,000 was to be mobilized from external sources.<sup>93</sup>

In view of the challenges at country level, UNDP action sought to (i) provide guidance and carry out gender-sensitive analyses to inform the development of all national policies and strategies; and (ii) encourage the integration of the gender dimension in the planning process at all stages of sectoral policies, including the diagnosis, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programmes, projects and budgets. UNDP also supported a rapid gender analysis in relation to the impact of COVID-19. Internally, UNDP is working to improve the capacities of its staff to work for the promotion of gender equality through all UNDP-supported projects in Benin.

In general, the programme was found to be gender-responsive, with actions designed to address the differential needs of men and women and the equitable distribution of benefits and resources. The majority of projects in the portfolio fall between gender markers 2 (outputs that have gender equality as a significant objective) and 3 (outputs that have gender equality as the main objective). In 2020, UNDP Benin was awarded the ‘silver medal’ globally for its gender promotion efforts in the country.

**FIGURE 6.** Distribution of gender markers by outcomes and amounts (2019–2021)



Source: Atlas Project data, Power Bi, as of 17 January 2022

<sup>93</sup> United Nations Development Programme, ‘Gender Strategy for UNDP Benin, 2019–2023’, UNDP, Cotonou, 2018.

In the area of inclusive and sustainable growth, UNDP interventions emphasized activities that targeted marginalized groups, giving priority to young people and women as well as people with disabilities, as discussed under Finding 1. Women benefitted from better access to production inputs and financial services, allowing them to increase their productivity and income.

In the area of governance, UNDP actions included supporting the government, Parliament and civil society to improve the programmatic, institutional and legal environment for gender-related issues. In this regard, UNDP supported the government, especially the ministries, to put in place gender-sensitive policies and to monitor the country's legal framework in relation to international legal instruments that Benin has ratified. UNDP also supported the promotion of women's rights through the fight against gender-based violence and contributed to strengthening women's participation in decision-making bodies. Through the Project to Support the Strengthening of Parliament and Electoral Management Bodies, UNDP built the capacities of members of parliament and members of the Network of Women Parliamentary Civil Servants of Benin on the promotion of gender equality, with modules covering the approach and importance of gender-sensitive budget programming and facilitation and advocacy techniques for the fight against gender-based violence. Several training sessions also made it possible to mobilize local authorities and equip 13 district heads, 39 religious leaders and eight heads of services of the Municipality of Cotonou on existing texts and laws in order to involve them more in the fight against gender-based violence. Despite these efforts, however, the presence of women in leadership positions is not progressing, as discussed under Finding 1.

The programme included regular monitoring and reporting of sex-disaggregated data. However, there was no gender-disaggregated analysis of the differential effects of the programme's actions on women, youth and people with disabilities. In addition, while access to productive resources for marginalized populations is beneficial, fundamental aspects of the underlying social norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate inequality and marginalization received less attention, limiting the programme's ability to bring about transformational change.

**Finding 22.** CPD implementation and the scaling up of its results were impacted by social, political, financial and environmental factors. These include insufficient ownership by beneficiaries and communes in certain cases, limited financial resources, the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of violent extremism in the country.

The evaluation found evidence of limited buy-in and ownership at different levels. This was the case, for example, with the Biomass project, where conflicts emerged between communities over land ownership in Binansi. This suggests insufficient conflict analysis and community engagement in the planning stage. Elsewhere, achievements were vandalized (for example, beehives installed as part of alternative income-generating beekeeping activities), which indicates insufficient community ownership. The evaluation also noted the lack of maintenance of replanted areas and the consequent loss of trees due to bush fires. In some communities where multifunctional platforms were put in place, beneficiaries were not willing to buy the basic equipment necessary for their activities, or were waiting for the project to ensure the repair and maintenance of equipment. In the PMSD project, for example, after receiving an initial supply of pesticides from the project, farmers were expected to buy it themselves using the income generated by their activities. However, it was found that some beneficiaries did not buy pesticides or maintain their crops, thus jeopardizing the efforts of neighbouring producers.

In some cases there was also insufficient ownership by local authorities, who did not provide budgetary allocations to continue the maintenance of equipment or infrastructure initiated with the programme's support. As noted in the mid-term evaluation of the programme, the involvement of local elected officials

was sometimes made difficult by their highly politicized profile. In the context of the PMSD project, the mid-term evaluation also identified the lack of commitment and ownership of the target communities and the limited commitment of local and national authorities in the implementation of activities. A stronger commitment is crucial for sustainability, with the ultimate goal of including projects in local development plans and ensuring funds are allocated going forward.

Another major challenge for the sustainability and impact of the programme is the difficulty of scaling up the programme's successful experiences and the resulting learning. Most projects were of a pilot nature, and therefore need to be scaled up in order to have an impact. While the evaluation encountered some limited examples of projects linking up with national structures to encourage scale-up, this was not generally found to be the case. Successful scale-up depends on government, the private sector and other development actors benefitting from the programme's results. The Biomass project, PANA Energy and the entrepreneurship programmes are key examples. For the Biomass project, the financial viability of gasification projects and the lack of private sector buy-in mean that this initiative is unlikely to be sustainable. For the sustainability of multifunctional platforms, efforts to develop a financial sustainability model through a private company and shareholding system are promising, but still need to be tested. Again, local authorities have an important role to play in the sustainability of their platforms in cases where the private sector/shareholding approach does not prove viable. One solution could be to focus more on capacity development and exit strategy for the municipal civil service technicians who operate under the authority of mayors.

Resource mobilization is also a concern. Benin's graduation to middle-income status could put additional pressure on the ability of UNDP to mobilize poverty reduction funding. On the other hand, it could also open up more opportunities for private sector investment that align with the country's development objectives. As already mentioned, the contribution of the private sector to the achievement of the programme's objectives has been rather limited and, as a result, the implementation of activities has so far depended solely on donor funds and government resources, which are often insufficient or not available.

The programme's achievements also remain exposed to different types of environmental risks. It is clear that climate change will continue to have an impact on the country, resulting in floods, droughts, bushfires and variable rainfall and production schedules for years to come. The implementation of the country's revised NDCs could help Benin to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change. The early warning systems developed should help build resilience and reduce the impact of floods on the socio-economic development of the country. With regard to the exposure of replanted areas to bushfires, stronger community ownership and guidance is needed to ensure the implementation of fire protection measures, among other protective measures.

The main implementation challenge faced by the programme was the COVID-19 pandemic, which struck in the second year of the cycle. The pandemic initially slowed interventions due to mobility restrictions and other safeguards. However, the programme was eventually able to adjust and resume a pace of implementation compatible with the pursuit of its objectives.

Given the traditional position of the UNDP in the national development cooperation landscape, the absence of a resident representative for a significant period of time (2.5 years) may also have been a difficulty for the office. The rise of violent extremism and the global food crisis exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine also have the potential to affect the sustainability of programme achievements. On the one hand, they reinforce the relevance of the national programme and could therefore contribute to increased resource mobilization for scaling up successful pilot projects. On the other hand, they have an impact on the government's ability

to contribute to projects due to reduced economic activity, lower tax collection and increased import expenditure and foreign exchange losses. A deterioration in the general business environment would also have a negative impact on the programme.

## 2.4 Country programme performance rating

The following table provides an overview of the performance of the country programme, using the five internationally-agreed evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability and a set of parameters for each criterion (annex 7 provides detailed information for each outcome). A four-point rating scale is used, with 4 being the highest and 1 the lowest.<sup>94</sup> This scoring table should be read bearing in mind the findings presented in the previous sections, which provide a more detailed justification for the scores.

**TABLE 1. ICPE Benin rating**

Criteria and sub-criteria	Rating	Remarks/Justification
<b>1. RELEVANCE</b>	4	
1.A. Adherence to national development priorities	4	The strategic orientations of the UNDP country programme are in line with those of the Government of Benin. The CPD is also anchored in the UNSDCF Benin, 2019–2023 and in the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021.
1.B. Alignment with UN/UNDP goals	4	
1.C. Relevance of programme priorities	4	
		The implementation of the UNDP programme has added value to the Government of Benin's efforts to reach the marginalized (youth, women and people with disabilities) in terms of job creation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, access to justice, modernization of public services, etc.
		The CPD was implemented in a difficult context marked by the COVID-19 health crisis, the conflict in Ukraine and the rise of violent extremism. Despite the advent of these exogenous shocks, UNDP demonstrated flexibility in adapting to the context and reorienting its resources to meet the needs of the Government of Benin while remaining coherent and relevant in its intervention strategy.

<sup>94</sup> 4 = Fully achieved/Exceeds expectations: A rating of this level means that programme outputs and outcomes have been fully achieved (or are likely to be achieved), or even exceed expectations. This score indicates high performance. 3 = Mostly achieved: A rating of this level is used when the overall assessment is substantially positive, and problems are small relative to the positive findings. There are some limitations in the contribution of UNDP programmes that have prevented the achievement of stated outputs and outcomes, but no major shortfalls. Many of the planned programme outputs/outcomes have been delivered. This score indicates moderate, but good, performance. 2 = Partially achieved: A rating of this level is used when significant shortfalls are identified. The intended outputs and outcomes have only been partially achieved. Overall, the assessment is moderate, but less positive. 1 = Not achieved: A rating of this level means that the contribution of the UNDP programme faced severe constraints and the negative assessment outweigh any positive achievements. There has been limited or no achievement of planned programme outputs/outcomes. This score indicates poor performance.

◀ Table 1 (suite)

2. COHERENCE	3	Synergies between different programme areas, within and between outcomes were limited. There is also a disconnect between output and outcome indicators.
2.A. Internal programme coherence	2	
2.B. External programme coherence	3	In implementing the CPD, UNDP mobilized resources, relied on its strategic positioning and developed partnerships with development actors in Benin. However, UNDP does not have a specific strategy for engaging civil society and the private sector in the implementation of its programme.
3. EFFICIENCY	3	Despite some delays in programme delivery, mainly due to external factors including the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP was able to mobilize around 87% of the planned resources for the current cycle and recorded an execution rate of 86.7% for the programme during the period 2019–2021. UNDP made efficient use of its human resources and mobilized UNVs to support the programme. However, there were difficulties in mobilizing national counterparts, and cases of low budgeting for projects that did not allow for their completion.
3.A. Timeliness	3	
3.B. Management and operational efficiency	3	At the level of monitoring and evaluation, the system is fairly robust but there are weaknesses in the identification and formulation of indicators, with difficulties in measuring the UNDP contribution to macro-level outcomes.

◀ Table 1 (suite)

<b>4. EFFECTIVENESS</b>	<b>3</b>	
4.A. Achievement/eventual achievement of stated outputs and outcomes	3	<p>UNDP has been effective in implementing the CPD. At mid-term, the programme had met and, in some cases, exceeded the targets of the output indicators. However, the connection to outcomes and impact remains very limited. Outcome indicators have not progressed and in some cases have regressed over the period. Despite this weakness, the results achieved by UNDP (outputs) have contributed significantly to the development process in Benin, to advancing the SDGs and addressing the gender dimension through improving the conditions of disadvantaged groups. All UNDP interventions have prioritized youth, women and people with disabilities as targets. Geographically, priority has been given to rural areas. This gender focus has not only guided UNDP work throughout the implementation of the CPD, but has also been promoted by UNDP to its partners. However, the underlying causes of inequality related to the control and use of productive resources have limited the programme's ability to have a transformative impact on gender. UNDP also favoured innovation and brought into its programme innovative approaches which helped to strengthen results.</p>
4.B. Programme inclusiveness (especially those at risk of being left behind)	3	
4.C. Prioritization of gender equality and women's empowerment	3	
4.D. Prioritization of development innovation	3	
<b>5. SUSTAINABILITY</b>	<b>3</b>	
5.A. Sustainable capacity	3	<p>UNDP has placed great emphasis on strengthening the technical and institutional capacities of the various stakeholders of its programme. However, on a more operational level, weaknesses were noted in the management of the assets created and in the ownership of the projects by the local authorities and the final beneficiaries. UNDP has taken measures to facilitate scaling up and financing for development but results at the time of this evaluation are still limited.</p>
5.B. Financing for development	3	

# CHAPTER 3

## CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



This chapter presents the evaluation conclusions on UNDP performance and contributions to development results in Benin, as well as the recommendations and management response.

## 3.1 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1.** UNDP interventions in the areas of inclusive and sustainable growth have achieved tangible results. However, the pathways to macro-level impact are unclear given the highly localized nature of interventions. Significant efforts were made in terms of strategic capacity development, policy development and advocacy, but the results are not well captured in the current results framework.

UNDP interventions responded to Benin's needs and major development challenges, and tangible results were achieved in several areas, such as employment creation, access to climate-resilient agricultural technologies, energy, disaster risk management, etc. As of mid-term, the programme had reached and in some cases exceeded targets. However, the causal link between the outputs and desired outcomes remains very limited. Progress against outcome indicators has not evolved and in some cases has even regressed over the evaluated period. Several factors may explain this situation, including: (i) the macro-level and national nature of the outcome indicators, which can only be influenced by a concerted effort of all development actors; (ii) the nature of UNDP interventions, which are in their majority pilot interventions at the local level that have yet to be scaled up; and (iii) the adverse effects of exogenous shocks such as COVID-19 and the crisis in Ukraine.

Another factor affecting measurement of results is that indicators and means of verification are heavily focused on quantitative data. While quantitative measures are highly relevant, relying on them exclusively means that more qualitative changes in institutional/technical capacities sought are not measured or documented.

**Conclusion 2.** UNDP interventions achieved appreciable results in terms of the functioning of government institutions, compliance with international commitments, digitalization and the fight against corruption, leading to strengthened e-governance and increased efficiency of administrative structures. UNDP interventions have helped, inter alia, to increase transparency in Parliament, to equip the institutions responsible for organizing elections in Benin, and to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. However, the work related to improving access to justice and accountability has room for improvement.

The UNDP country programme has contributed to the improvement of public governance in Benin through its support to the government, the National Assembly and the institutions in charge of organizing elections. The programme contributed to the digitalization of several public services in order to improve their quality, reduce corruption and promote access to public services of marginalized groups (women, young people and people with disabilities). UNDP contributed to strengthening the technical and institutional capacity of the National Assembly for effective voting on laws and parliamentary control of government action, and the institutions in charge of elections were supported in the supply of critical equipment for the holding of elections as well as in strategic planning and capacity-building.

UNDP interventions targeting the justice sector enjoyed slightly less success. These interventions focused on improving access to justice for the population, particularly vulnerable people, and improving prison conditions in Benin. This support, however, has not achieved the expected objectives in terms of access to justice for vulnerable people.



**Conclusion 3.** UNDP Benin has added significant value to national development efforts. It is highly appreciated and respected as a partner of choice of the government and stakeholders on issues of inclusive and sustainable growth and governance. In implementing the CPD, 2019–2023, UNDP has demonstrated adaptability and agility in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the effects of climate change and the rise of violent extremism. However, partners perceive that it is spread thinly across a wide range of thematic areas, risking damage to its credibility and reputation.

UNDP Benin is highly respected and appreciated by all development partners. Its technical expertise on a wide range of development issues, coupled with its ability to respond to emerging needs, make it a privileged partner of the government. Stakeholders value its innovative and catalytic contributions to the achievement of the NDP, PAG, the SDGs and other international commitments on climate change. For example, UNDP is the only partner contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation in the energy sector, through its PANA and Biomass projects.

UNDP is also respected and valued for its responsiveness to emerging issues of national concern. It has demonstrated this by supporting (i) national recovery efforts after the 2019 floods, (ii) post-COVID-19 recovery activities and (iii) initiatives to counter the rise of violent extremism in the country. In all of these areas, UNDP is leading the national thematic working groups, demonstrating its convening role.

However, UNDP needs to clarify and communicate clearly its strategic positioning so that it is not perceived as ‘doing everything in development’. There is a perception that UNDP is spreading itself too thinly rather than focusing on a limited number of themes where it can have an impact. The often pilot, catalytic and short-term nature of the projects in the portfolio requires scaling up to achieve impact at the national level. UNDP credibility could suffer if the agency cannot demonstrate impact or appears to be scattered in its efforts.

**Conclusion 4.** UNDP has established and maintained a wide range of key partnerships with government, other United Nations agencies and external stakeholders in the implementation of its country programme. It is on track to meet its financial resource mobilization targets despite having faced various external shocks. The main challenge remains the mobilization and availability of government co-financing, access to private sector finance and budget management across the portfolio.

UNDP has demonstrated a strong capacity to mobilize government partnerships in the implementation of its programme. The majority of projects have been implemented under the national implementation modality. Government stakeholders greatly appreciate this approach, which strengthens national capacities and ownership of initiatives. The Government of Benin has also contributed 25 percent of the country programme budget for the period 2019–2023. However, it is important to note that the impact of COVID-19 on economic growth has limited the government’s ability to meet some of its co-financing obligations. In addition, weaknesses were identified in the budgeting of projects, where costs were underestimated leading to the non-implementation of project activities, as was the case, for example, with the Biomass project.

The programme collaborated with other United Nations agencies such as UNICEF, UNV and WFP to achieve its objectives, but this collaboration was limited to ad hoc initiatives. UNDP has not been successful in developing and implementing joint projects and achieving convergence objectives.

UNDP has been successful in mobilizing contributions from bilateral donors, but informal relationships with IFIs have not yielded financial results, while the private sector has so far been reluctant to fully support UNDP initiatives. Overall, private sector support is made more difficult by the lack of a comprehensive private sector engagement strategy for UNDP at country level.

With regard to the role of civil society, CSOs are consulted and associated by UNDP within the limits of their competence on the various projects initiated through the country programme. However, the potential of civil society, given its proximity to the grassroots population and its expertise in the monitoring of public policies, is still under-exploited by UNDP in the context of the design and monitoring of its projects.

**Conclusion 5.** UNDP has put in place an M&E system to support the implementation of its country programme. However, it has limited engagement with local authorities and civil society on the ground, which does not promote ownership and sustainability of results. The lack of an operational system for systematically collecting and reporting data on the contribution of portfolio achievements to outcome-level objectives limits the programme's ability to report on progress towards outcomes.

The M&E system put in place by UNDP for the 2019–2023 CPD is overseen by a programme management support unit with an M&E officer, who conducts field missions to assess progress and learning in the field. At project level, staffing has been variable, with some having dedicated M&E staff and budgets while others do not. Target populations and local authorities have an important role to play, but the findings indicate a disconnect between centrally-led monitoring and evaluation and the realities on the ground. Non-functional platforms, premature deterioration of equipment and maintenance issues were not effectively reported to central level, nor, in some cases, even to local authorities. In addition, shortcomings in the monitoring of subsidies granted to young entrepreneurs created a risk of mismanagement and non-achievement of objectives.

Recommendations of the mid-term evaluation of the programme have largely been implemented. However, the programme failed to revise and update the results framework to address observed weaknesses in the design and formulation of indicators. As noted earlier, the lack of a robust outcome monitoring system limits the ability of UNDP to effectively demonstrate its contributions to the country's development objectives.

**Conclusion 6.** The sustainability of the programme's achievements is affected by financial, socio-political and institutional risks. The national implementation modality has strengthened ownership at the central government level, but much more needs to be done to strengthen ownership at local level, and additional resource mobilization is necessary to ensure follow-up of initiatives started with UNDP support.

It is likely that the skills, knowledge and tools developed by the programme can continue to be used by target populations and officials beyond the initial project period, and there is evidence that the gains achieved by some projects have been adopted and scaled up. This is the case, for example, with the certification of agricultural products and the contracts signed to supply food items to WFP. Post-harvest technologies developed under the Accelerator Lab have been adopted under the PDAB project and disseminated to target populations by the National Institute of Agricultural Research and the Territorial Agricultural Development Agency, while the national youth employment framework developed under the PPEEJ and ASDC projects has been used to secure longer-term funding from the World Bank.

However, inadequate and intermittent financial support, weak community ownership and limited commitment from local authorities represent socio-political and institutional risks to sustainability. Private sector inertia and a perception of dispersion of UNDP efforts also limit the likelihood that projects can be brought to scale in order to have a more palpable impact at the national level. Documenting and communicating the outcomes of UNDP actions more systematically to donors and potential financial and technical partners could help mitigate financial risks. The development of the integrated national financing framework provides additional tools for the government to mobilize financial resources in line with the sustainable development agenda. More needs to be done to leverage vertical funds to increase or consolidate the portfolio.

**Conclusion 7.** The UNDP Benin programme is gender-responsive but not transformative, given its limited focus on the underlying drivers of inequality in Beninese society in terms of access to productive resources, resource use, and ownership of earnings from productive activities by women and youth.

The gender dimension was taken into account at all stages of the 2019–2023 country programme cycle, from design to implementation. UNDP developed and implemented a gender action plan and continues to strive to reach 100 percent of projects classified as GEN 2 or GEN 3 at the end of the cycle. Most of the programme’s beneficiaries are women, whether in terms of access to financial services, employment or access to energy. While this is commendable, much more needs to be done to address the underlying factors of inequality in Beninese society, including power relations and social attitudes and behaviours relating to access, use and control of productive resources. For example, the work done to secure property rights to land has not resulted in titles for women. While women are benefitting from increased production, productivity and income, much more needs to be done in terms of effectively monitoring the financial outcomes of their activities. Such efforts could advance the achievements of the programme and enable it to become gender-transformative.

The programme has also made progress at the national level in creating an enabling policy environment for promoting gender equality. Examples include work on the gender seal and gender mainstreaming in institutional frameworks such as the NDC, the national climate adaptation plan, gender action plans in energy and justice, and the introduction of gender desks in ministries. UNDP has also provided training to staff on a wide range of issues, including gender mainstreaming and gender-based violence, among others.

## 3.2 Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** UNDP Benin should continue to position itself in its role to offer integrated solutions. It should focus on a limited number of themes such as environment and climate, renewable energies, human rights, governance and consolidation of peace and security, where its comparative advantage is recognized, as well as in geographic areas where it can demonstrate added value. This strategy should be based on an analysis of the factors hindering performance of the current programme as well as on an analysis of risks, including on the issue of violent extremism.

The CPD, 2019–2023 project portfolio is diverse and geographically spread across the country. This reflects the desire of UNDP to respond to the multiple needs and challenges facing the country. However, it results in the perception among stakeholders that UNDP efforts are dispersed. UNDP Benin needs to review its strategic choices and refocus on a limited number of themes such as environment and climate, renewable energies, human rights, governance and consolidation of peace and security, targeting its efforts in geographical areas where it can continue to respond with agility based on its privileged position, comparative advantage, experience and expertise. In doing so, as it prepares for the next cycle, it is important for UNDP to take into account the factors hindering performance of the current programme. For example, UNDP could commission a diagnostic study to better understand the root causes that hinder access to justice in order to review its intervention logic in this area. Furthermore, it is important that UNDP is informed of the risks and sensitivities of potential conflicts in future. UNDP should carry out a risk analysis of conflict dynamics in the country, including on the issue of violent extremism, and ensure that the results are integrated into the design of the next country programme. Emphasis should also be placed on better communicating the outcomes of the programme, including how they are mutually reinforcing and how they contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth and better governance in the country.

A key part of this reflection process will be to align with the priorities of the PAG, 2021–2026, the NDP and other country policies/strategies and identify opportunities to collaborate with other United Nations agencies and development partners in the country to strengthen the potential for convergence and synergy.

**Recommendation 2.** UNDP, while developing its theory of change for the next programming cycle, should demonstrate more clearly how its projects collectively contribute to the programme theory of change. This should be accompanied by a system to demonstrate the effects of the programme at macro level. UNDP should also strengthen dialogue with partners and the private sector to raise the level of resources mobilized and facilitate scaling-up of projects to promote the achievement of outcome at national level.

Articulating a theory of change will enable UNDP to provide greater clarity to partners and stakeholders on what the programme is seeking to achieve and how it intends to achieve it in relation to underlying assumptions and risks. For example, the localized nature of current UNDP projects requires that they are scaled up to increase the chance of having significant impact or contributing to transformational change. The design of the 2019–2023 programme had weaknesses in terms of formulating key indicators, and the mix of projects was uneven in relation to outputs. UNDP should ensure that targets and indicators are formulated at the right levels and that there is a budgeted and staffed system to supervise and monitor the contribution of programme efforts to the SDG indicators and targets at the country level. This system could draw on the expertise of the National Institute of Statistics. The systematic evidence generated by this system would improve the way UNDP communicates its achievements and, therefore, help strengthen its resource mobilization efforts by better demonstrating impact to the government, bilateral donors and IFIs.

The development of a coherent strategy for private sector engagement, as well as specific private sector support projects, could enhance private sector participation and improve the scaling up of successful pilot initiatives. Similarly, engagement with vertical funds, bilateral donors and IFIs, and the implementation of the integrated national financing framework, could support the mobilization of resources needed to sustain and scale up the programme.

**Recommendation 3.** UNDP should strengthen its engagement with the beneficiaries, civil society and local authorities in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects and programmes to enhance ownership and sustainability of results.

One of the challenges highlighted by this evaluation is the limited ownership of local communities, civil society organizations and local authorities in some cases. This lack of ownership is not conducive to the sustainability of the portfolio's achievements. UNDP should consider improving the participation of these stakeholders in the design and monitoring of projects at the local level. This could be done by engaging them in monitoring through participation in portfolio reviews, field monitoring missions and other project governance bodies. Such an approach would encourage local authorities to integrate project activities, equipment maintenance and repairs as well as the scaling up of projects into their communal development plans, thus ensuring their sustainability. Examples of the integration of the SDGs and disaster risk reduction plans into communal development plans and budgets illustrate the benefits of such efforts.

UNDP has demonstrated that it is a partner of choice for the government and various development actors. UNDP should therefore strengthen and facilitate more opportunities for advocacy and outreach to sector ministries, local governments and the development community to showcase its achievements and advocate for their scaling up or adoption. To this end, UNDP should also continue to work with the government to mobilize additional resources for longer-term projects. The adoption of mini power plants for energy production by the government shows that this is feasible.

**Recommendation 4.** UNDP should strengthen its contributions to gender equality and empowerment of women by addressing the structural and cultural barriers that prevent women’s effective participation in the political, economic and social life of the country. It should improve its strategy and strengthen its efforts to address the underlying drivers of inequality – the social norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate this situation – in partnership with other United Nations agencies. UNDP should also provide greater support to strengthen the capacities of women and youth as agents of development and change.

UNDP has demonstrated its commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women, youth and people with disabilities through its project portfolio. The programme should continue and strengthen this focus, while seeking to achieve transformational change. UNDP should continue to work towards women’s participation in governance and peacebuilding mechanisms, social cohesion and the protection of women’s rights. UNDP should also strengthen collaboration with civil society partners, especially women’s organizations. This could enable it to better promote the gender approach in its programme, in order to go beyond the targeting of women in projects to providing effective solutions to the structural and cultural barriers that prevent the effective participation of women in the political, economic and social life of the country and in senior levels of the public administration. In general, UNDP should focus not only on raising awareness of women, youth and people with disabilities, but also on addressing entrenched social norms, attitudes and cultural behaviours that limit or perpetuate inequalities in access to, use of and control over productive resources, as well as participation in decision-making processes that affect them. This should be done in collaboration with other United Nations agencies.

### 3.3 Management response

#### RECOMMENDATION 1.



UNDP Benin should continue to position itself in its role to offer integrated solutions. It should focus on a limited number of themes such as environment and climate, renewable energies, human rights, governance and consolidation of peace and security, where its comparative advantage is recognized, as well as in geographic areas where it can demonstrate added value. This strategy should be based on an analysis of the factors hindering performance of the current programme as well as on an analysis of risks, including on the issue of violent extremism.

**Management response:** The office fully accepts this recommendation.



This recommendation is already being implemented. Indeed, as part of the development of its new country programme, the country office organized a workshop to develop the theory of change of the of the country programme with the participation of national partners, which made it possible to identify the main development challenges of the country, from which the office is finalizing its offer based on its comparative advantages. This offer mainly covers the themes of entrepreneurship, environment and climate, renewable energies, resilience, administrative, judicial and economic governance, social cohesion and the prevention of conflicts and violent extremism, and social accountability.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 N/A				

## RECOMMENDATION 2.



UNDP, while developing its theory of change for the next programming cycle, should demonstrate more clearly how its projects collectively contribute to the programme theory of change. This should be accompanied by a system to demonstrate the effects of the programme at macro level. UNDP should also strengthen dialogue with partners and the private sector to raise the level of resources mobilized and facilitate scaling-up of projects to promote the achievement of outcome at national level.

**Management response:** The office fully accepts this recommendation.



The new CPD being developed has further refined the development objectives to which it will contribute. Not only is the alignment of current and future projects with the office's offerings effective, but also the projects will contribute to the country's development results in a synergistic approach developed based on their contribution to UNDP signature solutions (poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy, gender and equality) that align with all identified programmatic priorities.

Dialogue with partners has been strengthened since 2022 and should continue. This has made it possible to record significant results in terms of resource mobilization.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Pursue dialogue with technical and financial partners and the private sector to further raise the level of resource mobilization	December 2026	Management		In progress

## RECOMMENDATION 3.



**UNDP should strengthen its engagement with the beneficiaries, civil society and local authorities in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects and programmes to enhance ownership and sustainability of results.**

**Management response:** The office fully accepts this recommendation



Representatives of beneficiaries, civil society and local authorities were already involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects. However, they will be more involved through their participation in local project review committees, portfolio and programme reviews, and field monitoring missions.



◀ Recommendation 3 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Better involve project beneficiaries, civil society and local authorities in local project review committees	December 2026	Units (Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth, Governance, Policies and Strategies Department)		In progress
3.2 Better involve project beneficiaries, civil society and local authorities in portfolio and programme reviews	December 2026	Programme Management Support Unit		Not started
3.3 Better involve project beneficiaries, civil society and local authorities in Local Project Review Committees and field monitoring missions	December 2026	Units (Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth, Governance, Policies and Strategies Department) and Programme Management Support Unit		In progress

#### RECOMMENDATION 4.



**UNDP should strengthen its contributions to gender equality and empowerment of women by addressing the structural and cultural barriers that prevent women's effective participation in the political, economic and social life of the country. It should improve its strategy and strengthen its efforts to address the underlying drivers of inequality – the social norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate this situation – in partnership with other United Nations agencies. UNDP should also provide greater support to strengthen the capacities of women and youth as agents of development and change.**

**Management response: The office fully accepts this recommendation**



To effectively implement this recommendation, the office will further support the government and civil society, particularly the Ministry of Social Affairs and civil society organizations involved in the advancement of women. Furthermore, the CPD being prepared integrates women and youth in all of its offers.



◀ Recommendation 4 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Support the government through the Institute for the Advancement of Women and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance to monitor the effective application of legal texts (the revised constitution, law No 2021-11 dated October 20, 2021 on special provisions for the repression of offences committed because of the sex of the persons and the protection of women in the Republic of Benin	December 2023	Governance/ Programme Manager-Gender/ Gender Focal Team / Management	This activity is in preparation	Not initiated
4.2 Support the government through the Institute for the Advancement of Women and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance to monitor the operation of the compendium of women's skills in Benin	December 2023	Governance/ Programme Manager-Gender/ Gender Focal Team / Management	This activity is in preparation	Not initiated

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

# ANNEXES



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/22473>

**Annex 1.** Evaluation terms of reference

**Annex 2.** Evaluation framework

**Annex 3.** People consulted

**Annex 4.** Documents consulted

**Annex 5.** List of projects for review and mapping

**Annex 6.** Status of country programme document (CPD) outcome & output indicators matrix

**Annex 7.** Country programme performance ratings

**Annex 8.** Country at a glance







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