



Independent
Evaluation
Office

United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION
**REPUBLIC OF
EQUATORIAL GUINEA**



INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPUBLIC OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA

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INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION: Equatorial Guinea

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would like to thank all who contributed to this evaluation.

IEO TEAM

Directorate: Oscar A. Garcia (Director) and Alan Fox (Deputy Director)

ICPE section chief: Fumika Ouchi

Lead evaluator: Eduardo Gomez Rivero

Research associate: Rim Benhima

Evaluation advisory panel: Apollo Nkwake, Nombeko Patience Mbava

Evaluation consultants: Alberto Nuñez Sabarís, Juan Luis Larrabure

Publishing and outreach: Flora Jimenez, Iben Hjorth, Kate Pond

Administrative support: Georgiy Geyler

The IEO could not have completed the evaluation without the support of the following:

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

UNDP Equatorial Guinea staff: Elsie Laurence-Chounoune (Resident Representative), Chisa Mikami (Deputy Resident Representative), Tsiry Tahianarinoro (M&E Officer) and all staff of the country office in The Republic of Equatorial Guinea who contributed their time to conduct this evaluation.

Other stakeholders and partners: The Government of The Republic of Equatorial Guinea, representatives of the United Nations agencies, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and bilateral and multilateral development partners.

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in The Republic of Equatorial Guinea. This is the second country-level evaluation conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office in Equatorial Guinea, and covers UNDP programme interventions implemented between 2019 and 2022.

Equatorial Guinea faces significant challenges in terms of poverty reduction, economic and gender inequalities, and access to health, justice and basic public services. Remote areas remain without access to electricity and the country is progressively losing its forest area and rich biodiversity. At the same time, Equatorial Guinea is trying to diversify its economy, provide opportunities for young people, and improve governance effectiveness.

The evaluation found that UNDP Equatorial Guinea adapted its programme significantly to the country's emerging priorities during the present cycle. It managed to mobilize its own resources, allowing it to respond effectively to emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the explosions of 7 March 2021 in the city of Bata. UNDP support has enabled the Government of Equatorial Guinea to explore economic diversification in green and blue economy areas, promote entrepreneurship, and integrate the SDGs into the National Development Plan. UNDP has also supported the national health programme against HIV and the socio-economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The evaluation also found that UNDP's programmatic performance and results were affected by the lack of committed national funds as well as synergies among its projects. UNDP's ability to expand the scope and scale up its initiatives in the areas of employment, inclusive governance, access to justice or access to renewable energy was limited, affecting their outreach and the sustainability of results. Without a strategic framework, its ability to achieve transformative results in the promotion of gender equality, women and girls' empowerment, and 'leaving no one behind' was also found to be limited.

Moving forward, UNDP Equatorial Guinea should develop a more realistic country programme, positioning itself as a strategic development partner, focusing its support on inclusive economic diversification – particularly among women and youth – and leveraging its demonstrated added value in providing e-governance solutions, fighting against HIV, and strengthening the national health system. UNDP should be proactive in promoting joint initiatives in the areas of environmental protection and resource mobilization to provide sustainable energy access across the country. Gender equality efforts and the 'leaving no one behind' approach should be strategic and guide all programme interventions. The office should seek to maximize its full potential to achieve programmatic results and ensure an appropriate working environment.

I would like to thank the Government of The Republic of Equatorial Guinea and all national stakeholders and colleagues at the UNDP Equatorial Guinea country office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa who gave time, information and support throughout this evaluation. I have every confidence that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will help to strengthen the formulation of the next country programme strategy to achieve a more inclusive and sustainable development pathway for the people of Equatorial Guinea.



Oscar A. Garcia
Director
Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
AfDB	African Development Bank
ARV	Antiretroviral
BADEA	Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CEMAC	Central African Economic Monetary Community
CLAD	Latin American Centre for Development Administration
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil society organization
DIM	Direct implementation modality
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEWE	Gender equity and women's empowerment
GRES	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
HDI	Human Development Index
HMIS	Health management information system
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INAP	National Institute of Public Administration
INDEFOR-AP	National Institute of Forestry Development and Management of Protected Areas System
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
INEGE	National Institute of Statistics of Equatorial Guinea
LNOB	'Leave no one behind'
LPAC	Local Project Appraisal Committee
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MALFE	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and the Environment

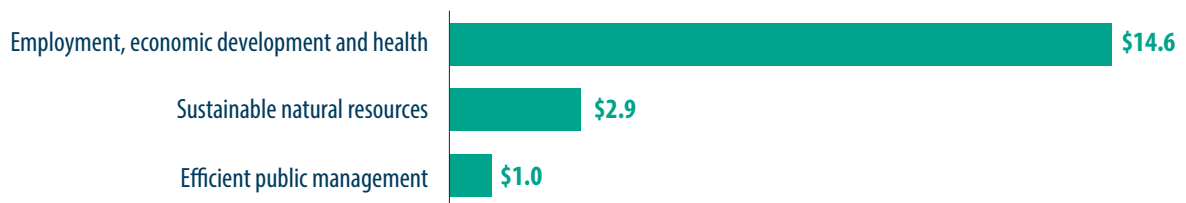
MPFAR	Ministry of Public Function and Administrative Reform
MSME	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
NDC	Nationally determined contribution
NHDP	National Health Development Plan
NIM	National implementation modality
NSPA	National System of Protected Areas
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PNDES	National Economic and Social Development Plan
PWD	People with disabilities
RBA	Regional Bureau for Africa
RBLAC	Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation Plus
RFF	Rapid Financing Facility
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report
RRF	Rapid Response Facility
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SE4ALL	Sustainable Energy for All
SIGOB	Information and Management System for Democratic Governance
TIP	Trafficking in persons
ToC	Theory of change
TRAC	Target for resource assignment from the core
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Evaluation Brief: Equatorial Guinea

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is a country within the medium human development category, with an upper middle-income economy, having graduated from the Least Developed Country category in 2017. Despite its economic status, Equatorial Guinea still faces significant challenges in terms of reducing poverty and inequality. Progress has been made in the areas of health and education, but the country still has very low mean years of schooling and life expectancy. There is also a significant gap in the level of human development between the capital, on Bioko Island, and the regions on the mainland. The country has a remarkable concentration of globally important biodiversity, but faces significant challenges in terms of ecosystem protection and the sustainable use of natural resources.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Programme Document (CPD) for Equatorial Guinea 2019-2023 was designed to provide targeted, flexible and coordinated responses to the national development priorities set out in the National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES), and to contribute to the strategic priorities of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2019-2023. Its implementation has been articulated around three areas of intervention: i) Employment, economic development and health; ii) Sustainable natural resources; and iii) Efficient public management.

Programme expenditure by thematic area, 2019-2022 (US\$ million)



Country programme funding sources, 2019-2022



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation found that UNDP Equatorial Guinea has been operating in a very complex context, where the lack of committed national funds has limited its ability to deliver results. Most of the development goals and challenges envisaged in the CPD remained valid. UNDP's adaptability and dynamism made it possible to mobilize core funds from the organization, enabling the country office to raise its profile as a partner of choice for development. UNDP has contributed to inclusive development, promoting the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), economic diversification and youth economic empowerment, and supporting the fight against HIV. However, most of the resulting outputs have had limited outreach and sustainability.

While UNDP is considered a key player in promoting sustainable development in the country, UNDP's work on renewable energy and the transition towards green and blue economies achieved little progress during this programme cycle. UNDP contributed to a more efficient and transparent public administration through its commitment to digitalization, and it has leveraged its partnerships and provided capacity development to fight human trafficking and promote human rights. However, the lack of government funding has limited UNDP's ability to advance its goal of achieving effective and inclusive governance by contributing to local development, women's empowerment, or access to justice.

UNDP has promoted gender equality and women's empowerment at the office and programme levels, but results were limited due to the lack of resources and a strategy that prioritizes long-term transformative results. UNDP's programme performance and working environment have been affected by a lack of clarity in the country office's organizational structure, poor coordination within the programme, as well as weaknesses in the programme's results framework, monitoring and project management.

Recommendations

To strengthen UNDP's work in Equatorial Guinea in support of national development priorities, the Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) made five recommendations:

Recommendation 1. In the next programme cycle, UNDP should be realistic, build on the progress made and consolidate its position as a strategic development partner in the country by scaling up the initiatives piloted in this cycle, and by deepening its relationship with non-governmental actors.

Recommendation 2. In alignment with the goals of the 2022-2025 UNDP Strategic Plan, UNDP should structure its next programme with the triple objective of: i) generating changes at the level of structural transformation, ii) building resilience, and iii) 'leaving no one behind'. The focus of interventions should be on those areas where UNDP can best demonstrate its strengths and added value, such as sustainable socio-economic development, health and governance.

Recommendation 3. UNDP needs to be proactive in seeking funding and promoting joint initiatives for the promotion of environmental protection and access to sustainable energy across the country.

Recommendation 4. UNDP should have a gender strategy and a 'leaving no one behind' strategy, which should guide all programme interventions in a cross-cutting manner, enabling the establishment of potentially transformative objectives for the target population.

Recommendation 5. The UNDP Equatorial Guinea country office needs to make internal changes to maximize the programme's potential for results and to improve internal communication and the working environment.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. The purpose of an ICPE is twofold: to strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders and to the UNDP Executive Board; and to promote evidence-based learning. ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.¹

This is the second country-level evaluation conducted by UNDP in The Republic of Equatorial Guinea (hereafter referred to in its short form, Equatorial Guinea).² This ICPE covers UNDP work implemented under the umbrella of the 2019-2023 Country Programme Document (CPD), up to July 2022. The scope of the ICPE includes the UNDP programme in its entirety, from all funding sources, including UNDP regular resources, donors and the Government. The ICPE also considered interventions that started in the previous programme cycle and continued into the current one, as per the evaluation terms of reference (Annex 1).

The ICPE is guided by four main evaluation questions (see Box 1). In addition to other areas of focus, the ICPE paid close attention to how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the implementation of the planned country programme, and the extent to which the UNDP response to the pandemic contributed to the Government's relief and recovery efforts. The ICPE presents findings, conclusions and recommendations and it will serve as input into the development of the next UNDP CPD for Equatorial Guinea.

The primary audiences for the evaluation are the UNDP Equatorial Guinea country office, the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA), the UNDP Executive Board, and the Government of Equatorial Guinea. The evaluation is also expected to be used as input by other United Nations agencies and development stakeholders in the country.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The ICPE was conducted according to the approved IEO process and methodology (see full evaluation framework in Annex 2) and adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.³ At the start of the evaluation, the team (together with the UNDP country office) identified and validated the list of all the projects within the programme cycle which would form the basis for the analysis (see the complete project list in Annex 3). This was followed by a desk review of reference material, including country

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, eventually, the sustainability of results?
-

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

² IEO conducted an Assessment of Development Results in 2016.

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

programme strategies, project and programme documents, monitoring reports, audits and evaluations (see Annex 5 for the full list), and a stakeholder analysis. The evaluation sought balanced representation of the different types of actors involved in the programme, including government officials, project implementing partners, beneficiary groups, United Nations agencies, and other development partners from donor organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia.

The evaluation employed a rating system to assess the performance of the country programme, using the five internationally agreed evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability (OECD-DAC, 2020).⁴ The relevance and coherence of the UNDP country programme were assessed in relation to key national development policies and strategies, changes in the national context and the interventions of other international actors in the country. UNDP's capacity to adapt to the changing context and respond to national development needs and priorities was also considered. The effectiveness of the programme was analysed through an assessment of progress towards expected outputs, and the extent to which these outputs contributed to the intended CPD outcomes. To better understand UNDP performance and the efficiency and sustainability of results in the country, the ICPE examined the specific factors that have influenced the programme, both positively and negatively.

The evaluation relied on information collected from different sources, triangulated before the final analysis. These included:

- A review of UNDP documentation on projects and programmes in Equatorial Guinea, audit reports, decentralized evaluations, research papers and other available country-related publications.⁵
- An in-depth evaluation questionnaire to collect evidence on reported results, completed by the UNDP country office prior to the field mission and further discussed and validated during interviews.
- An analysis of the programme outcomes and the underlying theories of change, and a mapping of implemented projects against the goals set in the CPD.
- A total of 66 stakeholders of the programme were interviewed (see Annex 4 for a complete list). Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and two focus groups with beneficiaries were conducted to collect data, assess perceptions on the scope and effectiveness of programme interventions, determine factors affecting performance, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. During this process, IEO ensured that the evaluation team and stakeholders were not in any way endangered by the pandemic.

In line with the UNDP gender mainstreaming strategy, the evaluation examined the level of gender mainstreaming across the country programme and operations, using gender markers and the IEO Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES).⁶ Where available, sex-disaggregated data were collected and assessed against programme outcomes. Twenty-one women were interviewed, representing 32 percent of the stakeholders approached.

⁴ UNDP IEO's rating system is available at : <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/ratingsystem.shtml>.

⁵ Two decentralized evaluations were conducted in the period under review. The quality assessment of one report was moderately satisfactory, and the other one was pending assessment. Evaluation reports are available at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/plans/detail/1516>.

⁶ The gender marker is a corporate monitoring tool used to assign a rating score to project outputs during their design phase and to track planned expenditure towards outputs that contributed to achieving GEWE. It does not reflect the actual expenditure assigned to advancing GEWE. As the gender marker is assigned by project output and not project ID, a project might have several outputs with different gender markers. The GRES classifies gender results into five categories: gender negative, gender blind, gender targeted, gender responsive and gender transformative.

The draft ICPE report was quality-assured through internal and external review processes before being submitted to the country office and the RBA for comments and the identification of any possible factual errors. The revised report was then shared with the Government and other national partners for comment. A final stakeholder debriefing was held via video conference, bringing together representatives of major programme stakeholders. The event offered an additional opportunity to discuss the results of the evaluation and ways forward in the next cycle, including the management response presented by the UNDP country office.

Evaluation limitations

Field data collection was affected by a number of factors, both external and internal to the evaluation team, which challenged the ability of the ICPE to gain fuller insights from actors with in-depth information about UNDP programmes. Among the external causes that limited the ability to carry out the data collection work as planned were: the logistical difficulties that prevented access to the country's mainland; the unexpectedly high number of national stakeholders and UNDP staff members who were taking their summer holiday; the timing of the CPD mid-term evaluation data collection exercise commissioned by the country office; and the overlapping of the mission with the transition of the country office management team. The main internal factor was that one of the team's evaluators was not able to travel to the country as planned, which affected his data collection and ability to conduct interviews and carry out site visits to the projects.

The evaluation team tried to mitigate these elements by implementing different measures to facilitate the collection of information. IEO expanded the scope and depth of secondary information gathering, with an emphasis on the use of photographic and audio-visual material for monitoring UNDP interventions in the mainland. IEO also expanded the stakeholder mapping exercise to identify and interview available key informants in the country at the time of the mission. Finally, the evaluation team changed the mission modality to a mixed approach, involving both face-to-face and virtual interaction in the field. This required additional effort and team coordination to overcome time and technology constraints. The media modality was expanded to include interviews via telephone, and videoconferencing technology. To offset some of the challenges of carrying out remote evaluations, the evaluation team extended the timeframe for both data collection and the analysis process.

1.3 Country context

Equatorial Guinea is an upper middle-income country with a population of 1.4 million.⁷ It gained independence from Spain in 1968, establishing itself as a republic, and has had two presidents in that time. Equatorial Guinea is one of the smallest countries on the African continent. Its territory is comprised of two parts: the mainland (Rio Muni) and the islands,⁸ one of which, Bioko, hosts a quarter of the population and the capital, Malabo. In the mid-1990s, Equatorial Guinea discovered large oil reserves. Since then, it has been undergoing a major transformation, becoming one of sub-Saharan Africa's largest oil exporters and until 2014 the richest African country in terms of GDP per capita. Yet the country has had unequal levels of development, mainly evident in the gap between the capital and its continental territory.

Since the drop in oil prices in 2014, the country's macroeconomic and fiscal situation has deteriorated, and it has faced large deficits and a rapid loss of international reserves. It was among the worst-hit countries of the Central African Economic Monetary Community (CEMAC) as a result of its dependence on oil exports,

⁷ As of 2020. Data source: UNDESA. World Population Prospects.

⁸ The main islands are: Bioko, Annobón, Corisco, Elobey Grande, and Elobey Chico.

lack of sufficient buffers, and weak public financial management procedures. GDP per capita (current US\$) dropped from US\$16,805 in 2014 to \$6,328 in 2020.⁹ Nevertheless, in 2017, Equatorial Guinea graduated from the least-developed country (LDC) category on the basis of the income-only criterion. Also in that year it became a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and in 2018 it entered an International Monetary Fund (IMF) Staff Monitored Programme to restore fiscal imbalances and promote non-oil growth.

Although the country's economy has been defined by the oil market, it is rich in other natural resources, and due to its geography has great potential for opportunities derived from the green¹⁰ and blue¹¹ economies. In addition, the country has a young population (measured as the percentage of the population under the age of 25), of more than 55 percent of the population – giving it an important demographic dividend. However, the youth unemployment rate is currently above 20 percent.¹² Internet access in the country is still at a very low level, at 26 percent, compared to a world average of 62 percent,¹³ which also limits the possibilities for economic empowerment of young people and women.

Multidimensional poverty eradication is a key development goal for the country, which has been highlighted in the National Sustainable Development Strategy, 'Agenda Guinea Equatorial 2035'.¹⁴ Only 65 percent of the population has access to clean drinking water,¹⁵ and around 1 in 12 children dies before the age of five.¹⁶ The situation in rural areas is significantly worse and continues on a downward trend. Access to electricity in rural areas has gone down from 10 percent to 2 percent over the past decade.¹⁷ An event that had far-reaching effects on the country's development was the explosion of ammunition from a nearby military base on March 7th 2021, in the country's most populous city, Bata. Livelihoods and housing were badly affected, if not destroyed, and 107 people lost their lives.

Equatorial Guinea's medium human development category of countries, ranking index (HDI) value for 2021 was 0.596, which placed it in the medium human development category, ranking 145 out of 191 countries.¹⁸ Staying almost unchanged over the past 10 years, the rate of decline in GDP per capita since 2015 has been compensated in the HDI by progress in health and education. However, among comparable countries, Equatorial Guinea still has very low mean years of life expectancy and schooling. A significant gap in the level of human development can still be seen between Malabo, the country's capital, and the regions in the mainland (see Figure 1). Due to the scarcity of statistical data on poverty and inequality, the country cannot make full use of indicators such as the inequality-adjusted HDI, the Gender Development Index, and the Gender Inequality Index, which would help to better identify development gaps within the population.¹⁹ Weaknesses in the production and availability of national statistical data are a barrier to evidence-based decision-making in the country and thus to development.

⁹ Source: The World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/>.

¹⁰ An inclusive green economy is one that improves human well-being and builds social equity while reducing environmental risks and scarcities. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/green-economy/about-green-economy>.

¹¹ A blue economy is a long-term strategy aimed at supporting sustainable economic growth through ocean-related sectors and activities, while improving human well-being and social equity and preserving the environment. UN DESA. <https://www.un.org/en/desa/exploring-potential-blue-economy>.

¹² ILO-modelled estimate, (total % of labour force ages 15-24), 2020.

¹³ Kemp, Simon, 'Digital 2022: Equatorial Guinea' <https://datareportal.com/>.

¹⁴ Source: Ministry of Finance <https://minhacienda-gob.com/2035-2/>.

¹⁵ WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene. Wash Data: Equatorial Guinea. <https://washdata.org/data/household#!gng>.

¹⁶ UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation. Equatorial Guinea: under-five mortality rate – total.

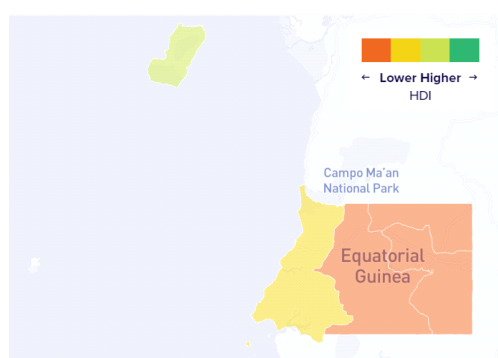
¹⁷ The World Bank Global Electrification Database. Access to electricity (% of rural population).

¹⁸ UNDP Human Development Report 2021: Equatorial Guinea. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/GNQ>

¹⁹ Information gaps identified in The UNDP Human Development Report 2020.

Equatorial Guinea's governance performance indicators²⁰ progressed in very few areas in the decade 2010-2019. The state of democracy in the country scored below the Africa and Central Africa averages.²¹ Performance has significantly improved in the area of infrastructure, by 13 percentage points (pp.) and in health, by 8 pp. However, in other areas, such as gender and the sustainable environment, performance has decreased by 14 pp. and 7 pp. respectively. Despite government efforts to modernize the administration, persistent weaknesses at the central and local levels contribute to governance deficits, including limited access to public services, weak planning systems, lack of budgetary discipline, and weak law enforcement and contracting mechanisms. In 2021, the country ranked 172 out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index.²² Institutional efforts to promote human rights date back to the 1990s, with the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission (1990) and the Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy (1998). However, the country is still facing multiple challenges, such as human trafficking, arbitrary detention, the sexual exploitation of minors, gender-based violence, and illegal immigration.

FIGURE 1: SUBNATIONAL HDI



Source: UNDP Data Futures Platform

In terms of gender inequality, the level of women's participation in all branches of government is extremely low. As of 2020, women represented 23.9 percent of the executive branch, 19.7 percent of the legislative branch, and 15.4 percent of the judicial branch. At the local level, women represented 27 percent of city councillors in municipalities.²³ In terms of gender-based violence, 57 percent of women²⁴ reported physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence during their lifetime.

²⁰ Mo Ibrahim Foundation. Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG). <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/iiag> .

²¹ International IDEA. Global State of Democracy. <https://www.idea.int/our-work/what-we-do/global-state-democracy>.

²² Transparency International. 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index – Equatorial Guinea. <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/equatorial-guinea>.

²³ National Institute of Statistics of Equatorial Guinea (INEGE) (2021) Anuario estadístico de Guinea Ecuatorial 2021 [Equatorial Guinea Statistics Yearbook]. <https://inege.gq/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Anuario-Estadistico-de-Guinea-Ecuatorial-2021.pdf>.

²⁴ Proportion of ever-partnered women aged 15-49 years experiencing intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. Source: UNWOMEN.

In 2020, the country approved its National Health Development Plan (NHDP) 2021-2025. The NHDP highlighted major problems in the health system, such as weak governance and planning, poor quality of health infrastructure and medical equipment, irregular supply of electricity, a poor logistics management system for drugs, and poor health financing. The NHDP aimed to reduce HIV prevalence from 6.2 percent to 4 percent, to increase the number of patients receiving antiretroviral (ARV) treatment, and to implement the mechanism for documenting complaints about discrimination and stigmatization of people living with HIV.²⁵ In recent years, HIV has been the leading cause of death in the country, accounting for 18.5 percent of total deaths in 2020.²⁶

Equatorial Guinea began to experience cases of COVID-19 in March 2020. The World Health Organization (WHO) classified the country at the second-lowest level in its list on the preparedness and response status of countries.²⁷ The authorities took several containment measures in response to the pandemic, including the closure of borders and schools and the introduction of curfews, which exacerbated and exposed the fragility of Equatorial Guinea's economy. The pandemic peaked in late July 2020, with about 2,500 active cases, after which the number of cases started to decline. As of 15 March 2022, there have been 15,898 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 183 deaths reported to WHO. A total of 455,655 vaccine doses have been administered, with almost 18 percent of the population receiving at least one dose.²⁸

In terms of the environment, Equatorial Guinea has a remarkable concentration of globally significant biodiversity areas. It conjoins the botanically rich forests of the Congo Basin, a freshwater basin rich in species and endemics, the biologically rich coastal/marine ecosystems of the Gulf of Guinea, and the high floral and faunal endemism of the Gulf of Guinea islands. Its National System of Protected Areas (NSPA) was established in 2000²⁹ and currently includes 16 protected areas.³⁰ These cover almost 20 percent of the total land area, but less than 1 percent of the total marine and coastal area. The NSPA has faced challenges³¹ related to its scope and the inclusion of critical ecological corridors, the protection of ecological connectivity between ecosystems (especially between terrestrial and coastal/marine ecosystems), and the protection of globally important species. In terms of management and institutional capacity, the country faces the challenges of inadequate financing and needs to strengthen management and reinforce staff resources and capacity.

Equatorial Guinea has demonstrated its willingness to contribute to the fight against climate change and to protect the environment by signing the Paris Agreement (in April 2016) and ratifying it in October 2018. The country has been experiencing more frequent storms, floods, drought, and higher temperatures. The insular area is especially at risk of sea-level rise.³² The Government submitted its first and only Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) in 2015, aiming to reduce its emissions by 20 percent by 2030,³³ and its first national communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2019.

²⁵ Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. (2020), The National Health Development Plan, 2021-2025.

²⁶ National Institute of Statistics of Equatorial Guinea (INEGE) (2021) Anuario estadístico de Guinea Ecuatorial 2021 [Equatorial Guinea Statistics Yearbook]. <https://inege.gq/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Anuario-Estadistico-de-Guinea-Ecuatorial-2021.pdf>.

²⁷ WHO. Country Preparedness and Response Status for COVID-19 as of 16 March 2020.

²⁸ WHO. <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/gq>.

²⁹ By Law 4/2000 'Protected Areas in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea'.

³⁰ Among them, three national parks and three wetlands of international importance: [https://rsis Ramsar.org/ris-search/?f\[0\]=regionCountry_en_ss%3AEquatorial+Guinea](https://rsis Ramsar.org/ris-search/?f[0]=regionCountry_en_ss%3AEquatorial+Guinea).

³¹ As stated in the final evaluation of the project 'Strengthening of the national system of protected areas in Equatorial Guinea for the effective conservation of representative ecosystems and globally significant biodiversity'.

³² Green Climate Fund. 'Republic of Equatorial Guinea country program 2019'. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/equatorial-guinea-country-programme>.

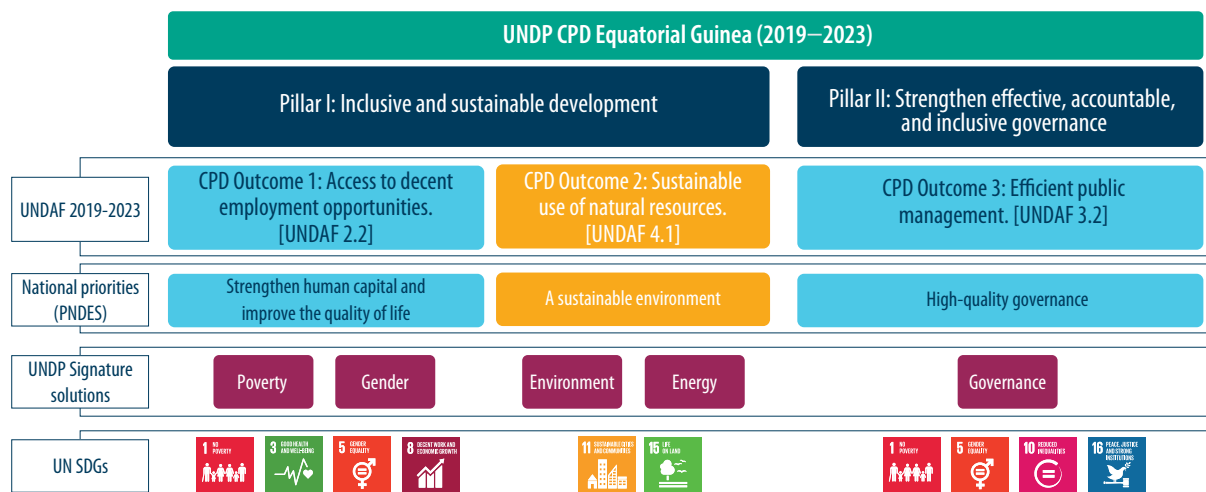
³³ Ministry of Fisheries and Environment. Contribuciones previstas y determinadas a nivel nacional (CPDN) 2015. [Anticipated contributions determined at the national level].

1.4 UNDP programme under review

UNDP has been working in Equatorial Guinea since 1976. In previous country programmes, UNDP focused its efforts on supporting the country to improve its governance, reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. In designing the current country programme (2019-2023), UNDP Equatorial Guinea took into account the recommendations of the previous IEO's Assessment of Development Results, conducted in 2016. In response to the call for a more integrated approach, UNDP used a two-pillar portfolio, focusing on: i) inclusive sustainable development, and ii) the strengthening of governance and accountability.

In line with the two pillars, the CPD has been designed to provide targeted, flexible and coordinated responses to the national development priorities set out in the National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES),³⁴ and to contribute to the three strategic priorities of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2019-2023 for Equatorial Guinea.³⁵ The UNDP strategic objective for the country was to contribute to structural transformation, poverty eradication, effective governance, gender equality, and a sustainable environment. In terms of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, the CPD planned to contribute to SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 15 and 16. The alignment of the thematic areas of intervention is illustrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: STRUCTURE AND SOURCES OF ALIGNMENT OF THE UNDP CPD FOR EQUATORIAL GUINEA 2019–2023



Source: IEO

³⁴ Reoriented in 2021 by the new 'Agenda Equatorial Guinea 2035' <https://minhacienda-gob.com/2035-2/>.

³⁵ https://guineaequatorial.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/Ecuatorial%20Guinea_%20UNDAF%202019-2023_2019.pdf.

In the area of **inclusive and sustainable development** (Pillar 1), UNDP planned to support the Government in delivering integrated policy solutions and services that promote economic diversification and accelerate inclusive growth, decent employment, and gender and income equality. It aimed to develop productive capacity-building, and to create decent jobs and improve livelihoods for the most vulnerable people, especially youth and women. The CPD highlighted interventions promoting green jobs and emphasized the relevance of a blue economy.

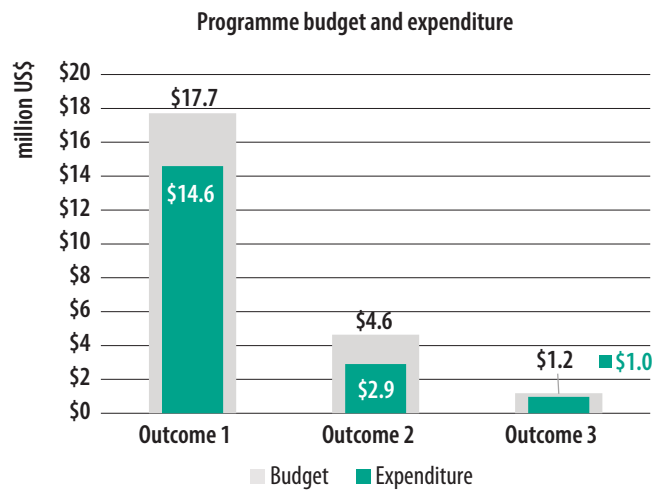
In collaboration with other United Nations agencies, UNDP planned to develop and roll out the national social protection system to address exclusion and build resilience to crises. The social protection system was expected to provide cash transfers and support services for the full life cycle of the most vulnerable people. In terms of health, UNDP planned to fight against HIV/AIDS, using its international alliances and procurement capacity.

UNDP expected to contribute to the sustainable use of natural resources (marine, forest and water resources) by leveraging its long-standing role as an implementing agency for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its corporate experience with the Green Climate Fund (GCF), as well as the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation Plus (REDD+) initiative. The CPD sought to strengthen institutional capacity and find sustainable financing strategies for the governance of biodiversity and ecosystems conservation, promote the integration of biodiversity concerns into policies and plans, and support the sustainable management of forest areas outside protected areas. The approach aimed to scale up biodiversity conservation investments based on community livelihood priorities and strengthen the awareness and resilience of local communities to environmental degradation and climate change.

UNDP planned to **strengthen effective, accountable, and inclusive governance** (Pillar 2), to enhance the capacity of state institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies and laws on human rights, the rule of law, local development and inclusive growth. It aimed to implement regulatory frameworks at national and local levels to deliver high-quality public services and promote effective gender equality. The CPD proposed to support the country in following up on international human rights commitments and reporting obligations under other treaties. It also called for strengthening the capacity of civil society to engage in policy dialogue and advocacy and accountability in the use of public resources at the national and local government level. The CPD aimed to improve inclusive community services by supporting the decentralization policy and capacity-building of local authorities. Women's political participation and their role in the parliamentary and judiciary systems were expected to be enhanced through institutional capacity-building to accelerate the ratification, enforcement and dissemination of national legislation.

The CPD results framework set out three outcomes and eight specific outputs. The total funding estimated for the period 2019-2023 was \$52.55 million. Due to the country's upper middle-income status, most of the resources foreseen for the CPD have to be mobilized, with only 3 percent of regular resources estimated to be available for its implementation. By December 2022, UNDP had mobilized \$23.54 million as budget resources, and spent \$18.46 million, mostly in support of Outcome 1, which represents 80 percent of the total programme expenditure, and comes largely from national resources to fight HIV/AIDS (see Figure 3).

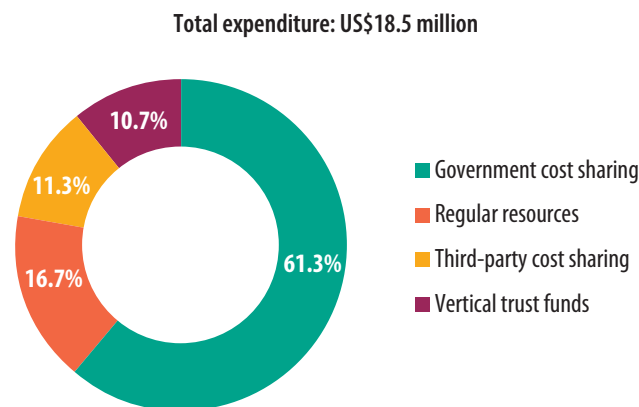
FIGURE 3: BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE BY OUTCOME



Source: UNDP PowerBI/ATLAS. Data as of January 2023

During the evaluation period, UNDP implemented 12 projects: eight for inclusive and sustainable development (Outcome 1); two for the sustainable use of natural resources (Outcome 2); and two for strengthening governance and human rights (Outcome 3).³⁶ Half of the projects used the direct implementation modality (DIM), although they only represented 22 percent of expenditure. The other half had a national implementation modality (NIM) supported by UNDP, reaching expenditure of \$14.3 million. Approximately 61 percent of the UNDP programme implemented in Equatorial Guinea has been funded by government cost-sharing funds, representing \$11.3 million of expenditure. Almost 26 percent of the programme was funded with regular UNDP resources, with expenditure of \$3.1 million from 2019 to 2022 (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: EXPENDITURE BY FUND CATEGORY FOR OVERALL CPD PROGRAMME (2019-2022)



Source: UNDP PowerBI/ATLAS. Data as of January 2023

³⁶ See Annex 3 for the complete list of projects.

CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS



2.1 Outcome 1: Access to decent employment

CPD Outcome 1: By 2023, young people, women and persons with disabilities have better and equitable access to decent employment opportunities.

Related outputs:

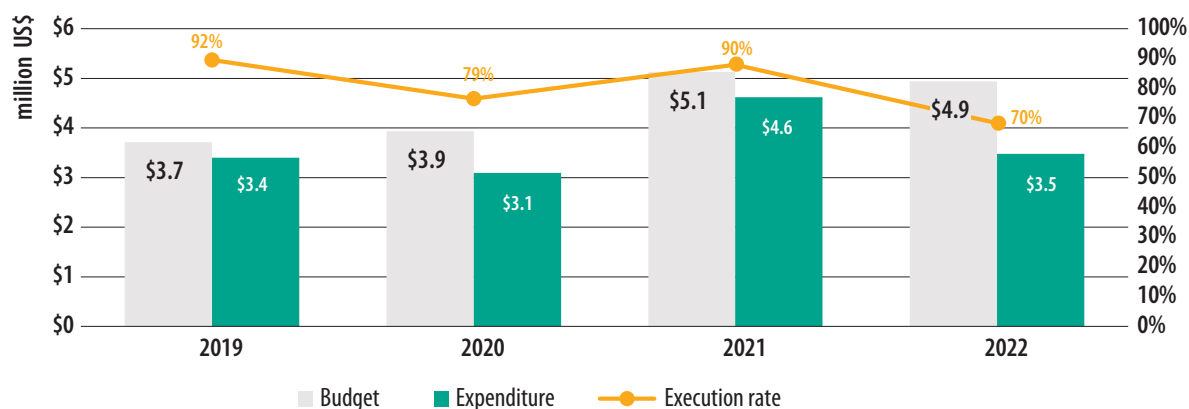
OUTPUT 1.1: The Ministry of Finance, Economy and Planning and other central government ministries have the capacity to develop and implement evidence-based policies that promote inclusive, diversified and sustainable economic development.

OUTPUT 1.2: Women and youth have improved technical and financial capacity for entrepreneurship and to match labour market needs.

OUTPUT 1.3: Government institutions have improved technical capacity to establish an inclusive social protection system.

During this programme cycle, UNDP implemented eight projects under this outcome, with a budget of \$17.7 million (against an estimate of \$29.2 million at the beginning of the cycle), and expenditure of US\$14.6 million (80 percent of UNDP total country programme expenditure).³⁷ Outcome 1 involves products related mainly to economic development, health and social inclusion. Although the outputs present aspects of public policy related to each other, no clear strategic linkage or integration in the design and implementation of the interventions was found. The increase in budget associated with this outcome was due to the country office mobilization to access target for resource assignment from the core (TRAC-2) resources and to respond to emergencies in the country. The Government has been the main source of funding for this outcome (\$11.3 million, constituting 78 percent of total expenditure) via the HIV projects, followed by UNDP (12 percent) with resources mobilized in response to COVID-19 and the Bata explosion, and TRAC-2 resources.

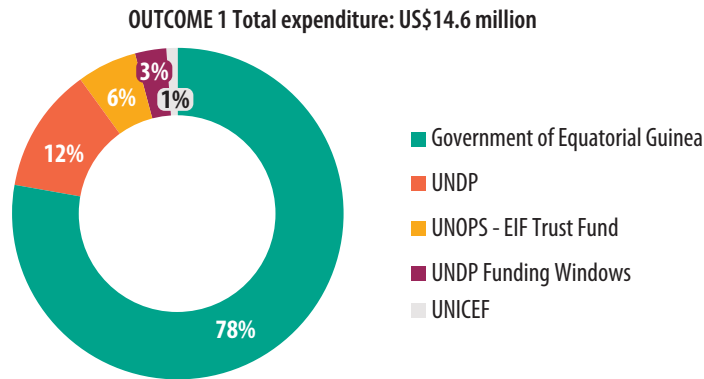
FIGURE 5: EVOLUTION OF BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE: OUTCOME 1



Source: UNDP PowerBI/ATLAS

³⁷ UNDP financial data extracted from the corporate system on 17 January 2023.

FIGURE 6: SOURCE OF EXPENDITURE BY DONOR: OUTCOME 1



Source: UNDP PowerBI/ATLAS

Finding 1 – Economic planning and development. UNDP has contributed to the design of the national development strategy by supporting its alignment with the SDGs and by generating technical proposals for a more diversified economy and integration into international trade frameworks. However, UNDP has not been able to contribute to the development of national capacity to ensure the production and availability of statistics for evidence-based policymaking. The main constraint has been the difficulty in mobilizing national resources.

Given the context of economic recession which has affected Equatorial Guinea due to the continuous fall in oil prices over the last decade, UNDP contributions to the economic development of the country have been relevant, both for the development of the National Development Plan and for its alignment with the SDGs. UNDP supported the holding of the third National Economic Conference in 2019, which was a key step in the development and approval of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, 'Equatorial Guinea Agenda 2035'.³⁸ The new strategy replaced the National Development Plan 2008-2020.³⁹

In support of the country's economic diversification drive and to reduce its dependence on oil, UNDP has responded to specific national demands by generating studies and concept notes, and providing opportunities for collaboration. Among the studies carried out by UNDP, the Economic Diversification Report based on the Economic Complexity Index (2020) stands out. Thanks to this report, a line of dialogue has been initiated with the Government to orient part of the development strategy towards the blue economy, generating the Blue Economy Report (2021). UNDP-Government dialogue in this area has revealed the need to broaden the focus towards a more diversified economy. This is why an Action Plan for economic diversification in Equatorial Guinea (2022) was generated. This document was not accepted in its entirety by the Government because it was not considered to be offering an adequate level of quality and many economic sectors were not reflected in the report. Yet it was used as a baseline by the Government to deepen its development. At the request of the Government, at the time of this evaluation, a report is being prepared to mobilize resources for financing the Action Plan to set objectives for attracting investment to the country.

³⁸ Decree 69/202129, April 2021.

³⁹ National Economic and Social Development Plan 'Equatorial Guinea Horizon 2020', in force from 2008 to 2020. See <https://www.kdevelopedia.org/Resources/view/--04201210090122013.do>.

Similarly, UNDP supported the country in its efforts to promote trade, both at the level of integration in multilateral forums, as well as in technical assistance and capacity development for normative work and policy development. In 2016, Equatorial Guinea applied for membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) programme. Funded by the EIF programme, the UNDP project to support trade promotion in Equatorial Guinea has offered technical and financial assistance for accession to the WTO and the Free Trade Agreement. Several training workshops were conducted with the Ministry of Trade and the World Bank (in the case of the WTO). In addition, a diagnostic study on trade integration was carried out. However, for the project to achieve maximum effectiveness and sustainability of results, UNDP must continue to encourage the commitment of national counterparts to implement changes. Although an inter-ministerial committee, with the participation of the private sector, was established in 2019 and remains active, some initiatives are pending final national approval. For example, this is the case with the draft Trade Law under preparation, which is being studied by the Presidential Cabinet to be submitted for approval. Similarly, the initial objective was to draw up three sectoral Master Plans, but only one of these, the Master Plan for the Agricultural Sector, has been completed.

While UNDP support in the above areas of intervention was relevant, one of the key areas of work of the CPD was not achieved: that of ensuring the production and availability of statistics to support evidence-based policy and the assessment of SDG indicators. UNDP developed a project for Strengthening Statistical Capacity for the SDGs, which has been approved but which has not received the budgeted funds.⁴⁰ This project expected to deliver products aimed at ensuring the production and availability of social, environmental, and economic statistics, as well as to promote statistical literacy and thus strengthen the capacity of the National Institute of Statistics of Equatorial Guinea (INEGE). The lack of government funds was only minimally mitigated by limited United Nations Country Team (UNCT) funds in 2021 for the implementation of the Voluntary National Review and 'leave no one behind' (LNOB) studies. UNDP took the technical lead in this work, but national data gaps were evidenced by the fact that the Voluntary National Review approach was mainly qualitative and only 13 percent of the SDGs could be reported, even with data from the United Nations and other international agencies.

Finding 2 – Employment and livelihoods. UNDP boosted youth entrepreneurship by using digitalization as an enabler, although the contribution to the outcome and the scale of job creation has been small and limited, both geographically and in relation to gender. UNDP has been a key partner in supporting livelihoods in its response to the crisis generated by the Bata explosion, facilitating temporary employment opportunities in the affected area through cash-for-work and cash-for-training initiatives.

Given the described characteristics of the country context, the design of the CPD placed special emphasis on the promotion of employment and youth work as key elements for the promotion of development in the country. In its implementation, UNDP has been focused on youth economic empowerment to foster inclusive sustainable development. In this line of work, UNDP has managed to mobilize funds to contribute to CPD Outcome 1 through two different projects: one promoting youth empowerment, and the other supporting digitalization in the country, as well as encouraging a level of synergy between them.

The materialization of the Youth Support Project was made possible thanks to the mobilization of corporate TRAC-2 resources by the country office at the beginning of the programme cycle. Its objectives were highly relevant for the country, given its demographic profile that shows a large youth population. The project sought to contribute to three areas: the creation of a youth centre, support for the creation of the National Youth Institute, and the promotion of internet access through a 'Wi-Fi for all' project. The effectiveness

⁴⁰ \$1.972.654 total funds budgeted for this project.

of the project was affected by the spread of COVID-19 to Equatorial Guinea, which generated a change of priorities in the use of the funds available to the country office, and also by changes in the management of the project during its implementation.⁴¹ Of the three initial goals, the youth centre was the only goal that was met, and in October 2020 it was inaugurated in Malabo.

From its opening until the time of this evaluation, UNDP reported that 508 young⁴² people (404 boys and 104 girls) were enrolled in the youth centre, allowing them to access quality online education to gain the skills required in the labour market. Workshops on different topics were offered to develop skills and competences.⁴³ However, no training certificates are being issued as it is not an official institution, and no mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the impact or benefits generated by its activities has been established. The gender gap among users has been identified by management, and strategies have been implemented to reduce it. While the youth centre is positively valued by stakeholders as an innovative approach compared to other institutions working with young people in the country, it has limited geographical coverage, and there are uncertainties regarding its sustainability without the support of UNDP funds.

Synergy was achieved with the youth centre by the Digitalization Support Project in some of its activities implemented from 2021 onwards. This project, implemented thanks to the mobilization of funds from UNDP's response to COVID-19 (RRF and RFF), had a relevant component of boosting youth and women's entrepreneurship. The project generated tangible results that contributed to this outcome. In collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications, UNDP launched the 'GUINEA-ON' innovation challenge, through which young graduates interested in entrepreneurship in new technologies and innovation were trained in business management and developing business plans. Forty young people from Bata and Malabo benefited from this initiative, resulting in 10 start-up businesses. It showed the potential of this type of initiative to support young people in job searches, creating their own employment or becoming entrepreneurs. However, the impact and sustainability of the intervention was limited by the absence of half of the budgeted funds. The Government had committed an additional \$1.5 million to this project, but this was never received. Against this backdrop, it was remarkable that UNDP was able to use digitalization as an enabler for boosting entrepreneurship and promoting inclusive sustainable development, showing alignment with UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-25.

In addition, UNDP Equatorial Guinea was faced with the need to respond to an emergency in this cycle and provide livelihood and employment opportunities for people in the affected area. In the aftermath of the Bata explosion crisis in March 2021, UNDP contributed to the rapid response through the deployment of a SURGE⁴⁴ mission and the implementation of cash-for-work schemes, linked to the clearance and removal of debris from destroyed businesses and homes. With a total budget of \$150,000 and almost fully implemented, 100 temporary jobs (64 for women and 34 for men) were created under this initiative, according to the country office. The beneficiaries were selected by the Bata City Council and the Ministry of Social Affairs, although the evaluation team has not been able to access the final list of beneficiaries. Recovery grants benefited 29 initiatives (20 led by women and 9 by men) and eight micro-enterprises (four led by women and four by men) in the framework of the UNDP response to the crisis. In parallel, UNDP also

⁴¹ Due to COVID-19, some funds for this project were relocated to procure robots (See finding 9 for more detail).

⁴² Young people between the ages of 16 and 35 years.

⁴³ For example, Microsoft digital skills, entrepreneurship and work motivation, basic accounting, chess and drawing.

⁴⁴ UNDP rapid-deployment SURGE capacity includes staff and roster deployments, catalytic funding, and technical accompaniment.

developed a cash-for-training initiative, which consisted of training 20 students from the San José Obrero vocational school in innovative techniques to facilitate the assessment of damage to buildings, including almost 1,800 homes, according to UNDP reports, and better reconstruction of the affected areas.

Although these initiatives were appreciated by the various beneficiaries and actors involved, the scale of the results was limited relative to the need for decent employment in Equatorial Guinea and the creation of job opportunities for youth, women and people with disabilities (PWD) as proposed in Outcome 1. Both the scale and sustainability of the initiatives were affected by the limited availability of resources, and the absence of government cost-sharing funds. UNDP has been the driving force behind the mobilization of funds.⁴⁵ For example, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) approved a project proposal in 2020 entitled 'Support to Private Sector Development,' which was developed by UNDP with the objective of promoting youth and women's entrepreneurship. However, the Government has yet to approve the loans, and as a result, the implementation of the project is on hold.

Finding 3 – HIV and social protection. UNDP has contributed to the fight against HIV through an effective international procurement mechanism for ARVs that ensures quality and choice of suppliers. It has promoted awareness campaigns that continue to be highly relevant for the country. Although an objective of the CPD was to support the development of a social protection system, there is no evidence of increased access to social protection schemes for women, men and youth.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has had a significant impact Equatorial Guinea and UNDP has continued to support the country to increase the ARV treatment coverage rate, which in 2017 stood at around 30 percent for adults and 6 percent for children.⁴⁶ In this context, the main contribution made by UNDP to promote health has been the purchase and delivery of drugs and supplies for the fight against HIV. Despite disruptions to the global supply chain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the project KPI, it managed to deliver anti-retroviral drugs and drugs for other opportunistic diseases (syphilis and tuberculosis), rapid tests and reagents on time. The use of the Global Supply and Logistics Hub in Copenhagen has been a differentiating factor in good management. Out of the estimated 65,000 people living with HIV, the country office reported that 22,865 patients in 2019 (of which 73 percent were women), 25,011 in 2020 (of which 74 percent (18,424) were women) and 25,493 in 2021 (of which 74 percent (18,749) were women) had access to free, quality antiretroviral testing and treatment (ART).⁴⁷ This was an increase of 2 percent since 2019. However, the lack of follow-up data limits the ability to analyse the real impact in terms of morbidity and mortality.

According to key informants, documentation reviewed and direct observation, some challenges persist in the management of ARVs, such as (i) the unavailability of national funds for the planned total, which generates partial purchases and higher associated transport costs; (ii) the deficient conditions of warehouse facilities, which puts the conservation of medicines and supplies at risk; and (iii) the deficient system of stock control and monitoring of ARVs. These are all potential risks that can affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme and, subsequently, the credibility of UNDP. At the time of this evaluation there is only one mitigation initiative on record. Regarding the warehouse situation, a response has been articulated through the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) with UNDP participation, to provide the country with new infrastructure to address this situation.

⁴⁵ \$18.4 million.

⁴⁶ Project Document: *Support to the National Programme to Combat HIV*. 2018.

⁴⁷ Data reported by UNDP Equatorial Guinea Country Office in their Results-Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs).

On the other hand, UNDP has contributed to fighting the social stigma of the disease in the country and promoting scientific practices, by sensitizing 340 religious leaders and traditional healers on HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. This intervention is highly relevant due to the identification of cultural root causes that manifest in the form of social stigma and non-scientific alternative treatment practices. Due to the restriction of movement caused by COVID-19 and other restrictions related to measures to prevent and mitigate the effects of COVID-19, sensitization training related to the stigmatization of and discrimination against people living with HIV was targeted at a very specific group: health professionals in the mainland region. A total of 219 people participated in behaviour-change awareness-raising activities, 52 percent of whom were women.⁴⁸ UNDP contributed to the provision of evidence for policy formulation with a study on the identification of the causes of ART abandonment. In addition, radio and television spots on HIV prevention were produced and broadcast in collaboration with local singer, Névida Karr.

The main evidence of the recognition that the Government gives to UNDP work in this area is the fact that UNDP support in the fight against HIV has been the only project that has received government cost-sharing funding in this programme cycle. However, this recognition has not made possible the disbursement of funds to other areas of intervention included in the CPD that have a high potential for positive impact in the country, such as the development of a social protection system. The inclusion of this objective in the design of the CPD was very ambitious and was done without funding guarantees being established. Without national contributions, no project could have been implemented to address this goal, and there is no evidence of significant contributions to increasing access to social protection schemes for women, men and youth, as intended.

2.2 Outcome 2: Sustainable natural resources

CPD Outcome 2: By 2023, the population of Equatorial Guinea uses its natural resources (marine, forest and water resources) in a sustainable manner.

Related outputs:

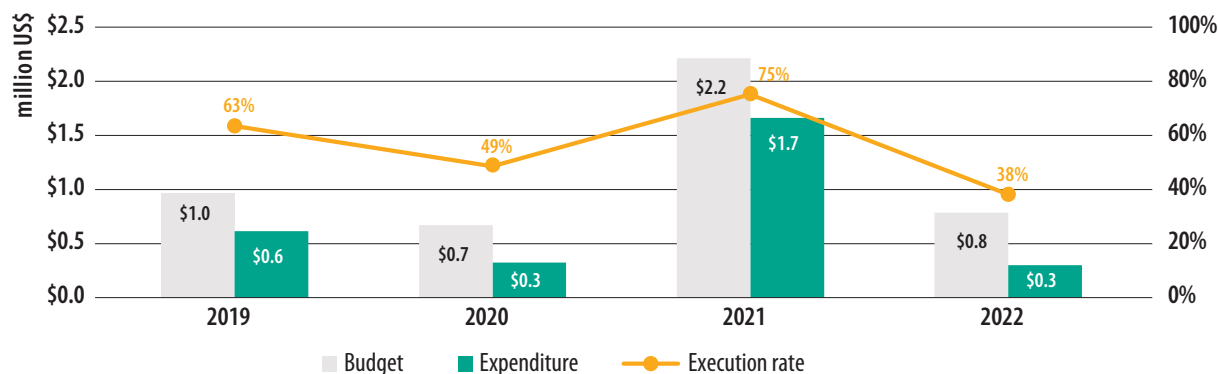
OUTPUT 2.1: The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and the Environment has strengthened capacity for the effective and sustainable protection of biodiversity and the management of protected areas.

OUTPUT 2.2: Local communities, and particularly women and the youth, adopt sustainable practices for the management of natural resources and adaptation to climate change.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

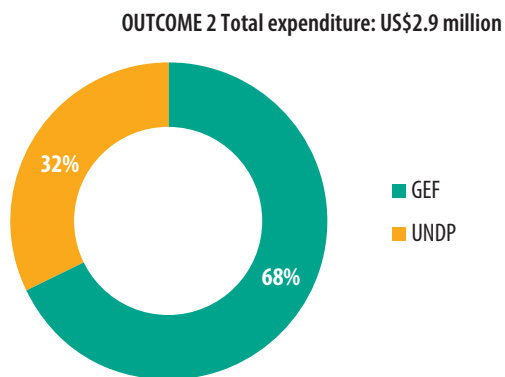
Two projects have been implemented under this outcome during this CPD cycle, with a budget of \$4.6 million from 2019 to 2022 and expenditure of US\$2.9 million over the same period.⁴⁹ The execution level of the outcome has been weak, with an average of 63 percent during the first four years of the country programme (see Figure 7). GEF is the primary funding source of this outcome with approximately 68 percent of expenditure (\$1.9 million), followed by UNDP with 32 percent of expenditure (\$0.9 million) (see Figure 8).

FIGURE 7: EVOLUTION OF BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE: OUTCOME 2



Source: UNDP Atlas/PowerBi

FIGURE 8: SOURCE OF EXPENDITURE BY DONOR: OUTCOME 2



Source: UNDP Atlas/PowerBi

⁴⁹ UNDP financial data extracted from the corporate system on 17 January 2023.

Finding 4 – Environment and sustainable development. The link between the activities and products developed in the field of the environment and sustainable development and the outcome pursued by the CPD was very weak, with narrow results limited to the field of green jobs creation and the promotion of the blue economy.

The relevance of proposed UNDP interventions in the field of the environment and sustainable development interventions at the time of the formulation of its CPD was well supported by its country context diagnosis, and by the recommendation of the previous Assessment of Development Results (ADR) on the need to strengthen the link between the environment and poverty reduction interventions. On this basis, UNDP set out a very ambitious programme on the environment, which sought to: i) invest in strengthening institutional capacity for the governance of biodiversity and the national protected areas system; ii) promote the integration of biodiversity concerns into national, subnational, and sector development policies and plans; iii) promote sustainable management of forest areas outside protected areas, with a focus on logging concessions; and iv) working with key ministries, invest in identifying and implementing sustainable financing strategies for biodiversity and ecosystems conservation.

The capacity of UNDP to contribute to all these goals has been very weak, if not non-existent, for multiple reasons. The lack of funding for initiatives in these environmental areas was the main reason. In recent years, the National Institute of Forestry Development and Management of Protected Areas System (INDEFOR-AP) has had its budget reduced within the Ministry of Agriculture. The small number of donors in the country and their progressive disengagement due to its upper middle-income status, limited the availability of other sources of funding, currently reduced to GEF contributions and the GCF readiness fund. The capacity of the private sector is confined to the oil industry, which has its own social responsibility programmes. The ability of UNDP to mobilize additional resources was limited to the achievement of obtaining corporate TRAC-2 resources for the promotion of the green and blue economies in the country.

From an environmental perspective, the main country priorities described above have not changed. Key informants interviewed in this assessment have confirmed that they continue to be linked to three highly interrelated themes: climate change, deforestation and biodiversity conservation. However, UNDP contributions in these areas have been modest and limited to the final phase of a regional GEF-funded project,⁵⁰ aiming to make the protected area system more effective in protecting species- and ecosystem-level biodiversity. However, as the Final Evaluation Report of this project stated: “The NSPA [National System of Protected Areas managed by the National Forestry Institute INDEFOR] is not currently functional.” The reasons are related to weaknesses in terms of management, funding, infrastructure, equipment and staff resources. Despite this evidence, during the current programme period, UNDP did not find partners willing to provide financing for national projects in these areas. Issues such as the growing rate of deforestation experienced by the country in recent years, significant discrepancies between raw log production reports, raw log export reports, and raw log import reports by third countries,⁵¹ were not addressed. Similarly, changes in rainfall patterns and loss of habitat due to climate change have been reported, but, unfortunately, are hard to measure because of the lack of basic data as the country does not have a proper meteorological office or a network of meteorological stations.

⁵⁰ Project ID 60590: ‘Strengthening of the national system of protected areas in Equatorial Guinea for the effective conservation of representative ecosystems and globally significant biodiversity.’

⁵¹ Inconsistencies are reported with national data, data from the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) and data from ITTO-MIS bimonthly bulletin.

Responding to the spirit of the CPD pillar of action and seeking to contribute both from an environmental and socio-economic point of view, UNDP in Equatorial Guinea, together with the International Labour Organization (ILO), developed a project to “support the promotion of the green and blue economy,” with regular resource inputs from both agencies. The project was implemented in 2021 and is an example of coherence among United Nations agencies in the country to boost the diversification of the economy by promoting entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, in both green and blue enterprises. This initiative was considered very relevant by several stakeholders and could be key to the future development of the country.

However, the results of the project have been modest and mostly focused on one of its planned outputs. Rather than establishing a knowledge and data management system for natural capital, as intended, the project has managed to deliver a baseline report, data collection tools for monitoring, and a database on monitoring parameters for a blue and green economy. The evaluation has not managed to find evidence on how these elements will evolve into a proper management system that is fully integrated into a ministerial structure to guarantee its use and sustainability.

The most significant result of the project was the creation of 25 jobs thanks to the direct economic support given to nine micro-small-and-medium enterprises (MSMEs) and 94 temporary jobs linked to fish market rehabilitation, reforestation, and cleaning activities in coastal areas. On a competitive basis, the project selected 10 MSMEs to receive grants of up to \$40,000 each.⁵² Nine of these enterprises invested the funds in accordance with their business plans and are currently operational, having created the reported jobs (10 for women and 15 for men). Some beneficiaries of the grants highlighted the importance of the financial support and the technical assistance provided by UNDP for consolidating their business model in areas such as ecotourism, ecological craftsmanship, solar panels or sustainable agricultural production. The main recommendation for improvement for future similar interventions, highlighted by the focus group, was the need to have more flexible timeframes for the execution of allocated funds so that they are better aligned with the business plan.

The scale of the intervention and its results place this project in a category equivalent to that of a pilot project, an initiative that needs to be scaled up by ministerial agencies to achieve significant impacts at the country level. However, replicability and sustainability are limited by the low efficiency of the intervention, with an average cost per job created at above \$10,000. The third output of the project was intended to create a financial support mechanism, which could have helped to achieve a greater impact. However, the evaluation team have not found evidence of such mechanisms.

Finding 5 – Renewable energy. UNDP has supported the development of planning and institutional capacity- building initiatives to promote the use of renewable energy in the country. However, the lack of committed funding has prevented the expected global environmental benefits of CO2 emission reductions from being achieved in the quantity envisaged, nor has it been possible to provide energy to isolated target communities, such as those on the Island of Annobon, within the agreed timeframe.

As part of the global initiative Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL), UNDP in Equatorial Guinea has implemented a GEF-funded project by the same name, aiming to promote small-scale hydroelectricity on Bioko Island and other clean energy solutions for remote islands. The relevance of the initiative was twofold. First, at the national level, it aimed to create a market for decentralized renewable energy solutions in small islands and remote territories by addressing the weakness of the country’s policy, institutional, market and

⁵² One of the awarded companies made unauthorized use of the allocated funds. This was identified by UNDP staff who disassociated from the company from the project and proceeded with the process of recovering the funds through legal channels.

technology supply frameworks and tackling the root causes of the barriers to renewable energy utilization in the country. Second, at the global level, it aimed to contribute towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7) – access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030 – in line with the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The project was signed in 2016 by the Ministry of Fisheries and the Environment and UNDP. It was budgeted as a \$43.5-million project. Of this figure, the Government was to contribute \$34.3 million in cash as cost sharing and an additional \$5,2 million equivalent, as an ‘in kind’ contribution. The GEF, for its part, was expected to provide \$3.5 million and UNDP would contribute \$0.5 million.⁵³ While the sum of the GEF and UNDP contributions (\$4.0 million) was to support mainly technical cooperation activities, government funds were expected⁵⁴ to be used for ensuring: i) the rehabilitation of existing hydropower plants in Bioko island (at Riaba, Musola I & II) and one in the mainland (at Bicomu) (7.6 megawatt); and ii) the feasibility and construction of a solar-diesel hybrid system on Annobon Island (5 megawatt). These results were expected to yield global benefits in directly avoided greenhouse gas emissions of almost 1,780 kilotons of CO₂, because of the switch from fossil fuels being used for power generation to small hydro, solar photovoltaic and wind power (over the lifetime of 20 years), and an estimated 7,121 ktCO₂ as an indirect impact for emission reduction.

The potential effectiveness in terms of results and the expected global benefits has been seriously undermined by the fact that no government contributions have been made to this project. However, GEF funds received have allowed the implementation of technical cooperation activities, which have generated multiple results in line with the four components of the project. In terms of planning and public policy support, a strategy and action plan for the promotion of renewable energy was developed. UNDP also contributed to the revision of the electricity law and its regulatory framework. The results and sustainability of these efforts are linked to the legislative process for its approval and this is still pending. In terms of capacity-building, the project held several workshops on sustainable energy, addressing themes such as resource mobilization and project management. Also, a set of procedures has been provided to evaluate renewable energy proposals. However, the development of components of clean energy demonstration projects has been limited: several pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, engineering details, and environmental impact studies have been carried out in Belebu and Ilachi; a 10-kilowatt mini-hydroelectric plant has been completed at Abog Nsu; and, at the time of this evaluation, 10 solar mini-hydroelectric plants with power ranging from 5 to 15 kilowatt are being finalized. However, these demonstration projects are far from achieving the CO₂ reduction targets that the project envisaged in its design. Nor have they been delivered on schedule. The project, which was scheduled for completion in March 2021, was extended to December 2022 due to delays in obtaining GEF funds.

The weakness of the design of this intervention, and in particular the lack of detail on governmental contributions, has not helped for following up and receiving the committed funds. The Project Document includes the signature of the governmental commitment on its cover page and its budget and supports it with a letter of commitment in its annex. However, there is no concrete reference to the source of the funds, nor is there a detailed breakdown of the estimated cost of the components of each target intervention, nor is there a disbursement or implementation schedule. All this reflects the shortcomings of the project design.

⁵³ See page 29 of the Project Document: Sustainable Energy for All: Promoting small-scale hydropower in Bioko and other clean energy solutions for remote islands. 2016.

⁵⁴ As per annex D of the Project Document: Sustainable Energy for All: Promoting small-scale hydropower in Bioko and other clean energy solutions for remote islands. 2016.

The evaluation identifies that this has given rise to misinterpretations among stakeholders about the results that can be attributed to this project. While the Government mobilized \$34 million for energy projects, these funds were fully and independently managed by the Government. They were used for the rehabilitation of Bicombo through a contract awarded to a foreign firm by the Government. A similar process was followed on Annobon Island. Work on the project started but the implementation of the project was stopped and it was not completed. The refurbishment of the Riaba and Musola I and II hydro plants was not undertaken due to a lack of funding. The funding was never released to UNDP as part of the committed cash contribution, it was never managed by UNDP financial rules and controls, and UNDP was not involved in the design or selection of tenders and their evaluation, nor the monitoring of implementation of those interventions. This makes it impossible for these activities and their results (or lack of them) to be linked to the current programme.

2.3 Outcome 3: Efficient public management

CPD Outcome 3: By 2023, the State Institutions have an efficient Public Management, which is based on standards, procedures, programmes, and reliable data on Public and Economic Policies based on evidence, which strengthens the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the process of strengthening and effective functioning of the State Institutions.

Related outputs:

OUTPUT 3.1: Enhanced institutional capacity for access to high-quality basic services at local levels in mainland and insular regions.

OUTPUT 3.2: The Ministry of Justice and national human rights institutions have strengthened technical capacity to expand access to justice and combat discrimination, with a focus on women and other marginalized groups.

OUTPUT 3.3: The Parliament and the Executive have enhanced technical capacity to lead measures that advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

UNDP implemented three projects⁵⁵ under this outcome, with a budget of \$1.2 million (against an estimate of \$12.3 at the beginning of the cycle), and expenditure of \$0.97 million.⁵⁶ Outcome 3 aimed to develop national priorities in relation to gender, justice, human rights and governance – mainly at the local level. The budget associated with this outcome has been very limited, and the activities conducted and results achieved have been possible mainly due to the internal mobilization of COVID-19 response funds and other TRAC-2 resources. UNDP has been the main source of funding for this outcome, with an expenditure of \$0.45 million of regular resources and \$0.14 million of UNDP Funding Windows.⁵⁷ The other source of

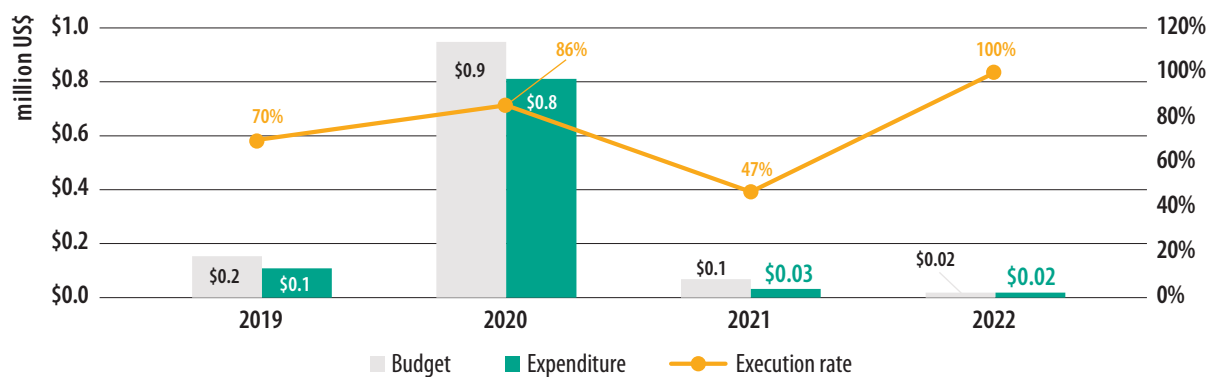
⁵⁵ One of the projects was the Response to COVID-19 (Project ID 127449), whose outputs were split between Outcomes 1 and 3.

⁵⁶ UNDP financial data were extracted from the corporate system on 17 January 2023.

⁵⁷ UNDP Funding Windows are multi-donor, flexible funding mechanisms that provide a strategic opportunity for partners to contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

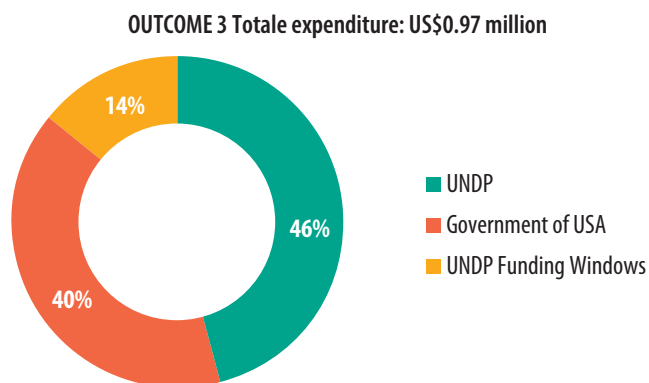
funding for this outcome has been the Government of the United States of America, one of the few bilateral donors that UNDP has managed to mobilize funds from, with \$0.39 million of total expenditure focused on the promotion of human rights in the country, during this programme cycle.

FIGURE 9: EVOLUTION OF BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE: OUTCOME 3



Source: UNDP ATLAS/ PowerBI

FIGURE 10: SOURCE OF EXPENDITURE BY DONOR: OUTCOME 3



Source: UNDP ATLAS/ PowerBI

Finding 6 – Access to public services. UNDP has strengthened the institutional capacity of public administration by generating greater efficiency and transparency through the implementation of online services for civil servants. However, there are still significant barriers for the population to access basic public services, which have not been overcome during this period. Such barriers include the digital divide and the lack of local development plans.

According to Equatorial Guinea’s UNDAF 2019-2023, governance challenges in the country include weak technical and institutional capacity in the public sector, low participation of women and youth in decision-making processes, insufficient application of the principles of accountability and transparency, and insufficient anti-corruption mechanisms. Of these four challenges, UNDP Equatorial Guinea has managed to contribute to the strengthening of public administration by the rationalization and digitalization of administrative processes at the national level, which has indirectly contributed to facilitating transparency and provided potential for strengthening the fight against corruption. In terms of results at the local level, however, there was no progress in the provision of high-quality basic services, nor in the approval of local development plans.

The CPD envisaged local development plans in the country to be in place by 2020, but this has not yet been achieved. Noting that achieving this goal will not be possible if the current centralized legal framework persists, UNDP changed its approach. At the time of this evaluation UNDP was working with the Ministry of Public Function and Administrative Reform (MPFAR) to secure technical support for the elaboration of a broad reform of the legislative framework through south-south cooperation. A community-based development proposal was formulated in 2019 and submitted to the Government for approval but it has not yet been approved. Funds earmarked for the project implementation have been redirected for the Joint Programme to support COVID-19 vaccine deployment in Equatorial Guinea. Therefore, additional resource mobilization will be needed for the implementation of this type of initiative.

Among the results achieved at the national level, UNDP has contributed to offering online services to bring the administration closer to public officials from any part of the country through the Information and Management System for Democratic Governance (SIGOB).⁵⁸ Four processes⁵⁹ were streamlined and digitalized in the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reform, which provides services to over 16,000 civil servants from all ministries. More than 65 staff were trained to change the processing system towards integrated digital management. Zero-paper and digitalization policies were incorporated, and this has resulted in reduced inputs and costs and is contributing to a more sustainable management structure. In addition, UNDP has contributed equipment, including the supply and commissioning of all hardware equipment necessary for the operation of IT systems.⁶⁰ Designs and proposals have been initiated in other sectors: for example, four online services were being implemented with the Ministry of Tourism, and the Ombudsman’s Office was in the process of implementing a Strategic Plan and a Communication Action Plan. Despite these efforts, thus far no significant progress has been made in processes offering targeted public services to the general population, which is essential if the digital divide is to be bridged. In this respect, the implementation of Online Citizen Services (SOL) in public administration has significant development potential for achieving better accessibility for citizens. The implementation of the SOL Platform, which was put into service by UNDP for the first digitalized procedures of civil servants, will allow other institutions to join it through the same digital processing system. This is a significant step forward in the fight to bridge the

⁵⁸ The objective of SIGOB is to strengthen the management capacities of the State’s top management to generate and/or maintain the conditions for democratic governance. SIGOB provides management methodologies and IT tools to organizations in the executive, legislative and judicial branches, at central, subnational and local levels.

⁵⁹ (i) Recognition of Triennia, (ii) Civil Servants’ Card, (iii) Scale Promotion, and (iv) Level Promotion.

⁶⁰ Included among others: 70 PCs (workstations), 10 printers/multifunction scanners, 1 database server, 1 web server, and 75 software licences.

digital divide, expanding the supply of quality and more decentralized public services that are accessible to the entire population. At the time of this evaluation, two institutions are already working to incorporate their services onto the SOL Platform (licences for the tourism and hospitality sector and registration and authorization of associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)), and others have applied to join to make their services accessible to citizens.

While it is too early to measure the impact of these interventions on citizens and institutions, and particularly on how they contribute to accountability and the reduction of corruption, digitalized public services have significantly improved efficiency by allowing civil servants to make online requests for critical services. This has dramatically reduced processing times, while minimizing the margin for human error and the space for corruption to take place. According to the project's monitoring data, efficiency has been demonstrated by a reduction of more than 70 percent in response times in those digitalized services already in operation, compared to those that provide face-to-face services.

Likewise, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP supported the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reform in the formulation of its business continuity plan. UNDP reinforced the capacity of 28 senior officials and managers (22 men and 6 women) in relation to Equatorial Guinea's E-Governance strategy. These interventions have proven to be relevant as appropriate responses to the pandemic and offer examples of resilience building.

The sustainability of these interventions can be reinforced by there being a double motivation for them: the strengthening of the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP), and the establishment of internal partnerships. First, in 2022 UNDP launched a new project to strengthen democratic governance in Equatorial Guinea by supporting INAP to train 4,000 civil servants still to be allocated posts. UNDP is a recognized international organization for its work in this area, and its portfolio of services in the country has the capacity to expand widely (see Box 2). Second, UNDP Equatorial Guinea has contributed to establishing relations with prestigious international organizations such as the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD) and INAP, with the potential to bring experience and knowledge already proven in contexts with similar administrative traditions. Some of the results of the UNDP contribution have been noted, such as the fact that Equatorial Guinea has just been accepted as a member of CLAD and has participated for the first time in the CLAD Conference in Argentina (VIII Ibero-American Meeting of Schools and Institutes of Public Administration).

BOX 2: BRIEF ANALYSIS OF UNDP'S PORTFOLIO OF SERVICES FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE⁶¹

Democratic Governance pillars	Areas of work planned in the current CPD	Additional areas of work (not contemplated in the current CPD)
Citizenship, law, and rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationhood and citizenship: contribution within the scope of the human trafficking project. • The rule of law and access to justice: planned in the CPD but not implemented. • Economic and social rights: in the framework of Human Rights to Work, young people have improved their knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship with UNDP support, increasing their livelihood opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil and political rights: not implemented, nor planned in the CPD. However, the UNDAF 2019-2023 highlights the low level of participation of women and youth in decision-making processes.
Representative and accountable government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective and responsive government: contribution to the digitalization of administrative processes. • The democratic effectiveness of parliament: interventions with parliament regarding gender equality and women empowerment were planned in the CPD, but not implemented. • Civilian control of the military and police: not planned in the CPD. However, some contribution found within the scope of the human trafficking interventions. • Integrity in public life: Training of new public servants in a new approach by INAP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free and fair elections: electoral support was not implemented, nor planned in the CPD. • The democratic role of political parties: interventions with political parties were not implemented, nor planned in the CPD.

⁶¹ To develop this governance normative framework, two main reports have been consulted, among other thematic bibliographies: Assessing the Quality of Democracy of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (2008) See <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/chapters/assessing-the-quality-of-democracy/assessing-the-quality-of-democracy-an-overview-of-the-international-idea-framework.pdf> and the UNDP Democratic Governance Reader (2009) See https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/DG_reader-2009.pdf.

Democratic Governance pillars	Areas of work planned in the current CPD	Additional areas of work (not contemplated in the current CPD)
Civil society and popular participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The media in a democratic society: training journalists (environment and climate change: ‘The role of communication, climate change and environmental preservation’) • Political participation: planned in the CPD, but no evidence of key contribution to full citizen participation in public life. • Decentralization: enhanced institutional capacity for access to high-quality basic services at local level was planned in the CPD, but not fully implemented. Some progress towards the provision of high-quality public services at the local level can be recorded, through the implementation of the SOL Platform at the MPFAR. 	NA
Democratic governance beyond the state	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External influences on the country’s democracy: not implemented, nor planned in the CPD. In 2011 Equatorial Guinea signed the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, but has not yet ratified it. The same applies to the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (signed but not ratified). • The country’s democratic impact abroad: not implemented, nor planned in the CPD.

Source: IEO

Finding 7 – Justice and human rights. UNDP has contributed to the fight against human trafficking through awareness-raising and training interventions that have succeeded in adapting procedures and improving the understanding of key public stakeholders and the general population about the rights of the most vulnerable people affected. However, no progress has been made in achieving better access to justice as foreseen in the CPD, due to a lack of projects.

UNDP has continuity in its programme to promote justice and human rights in Equatorial Guinea from previous cycles. It has been an interlocutor and a source of technical support for the main national institutions responsible for human rights promotion, monitoring and awareness-raising, such as the National Human Rights Commission, the Human Rights Department, the Human Rights Promotion Centre and the Ombudsman’s Office. The relevance of activities in these areas has not been reflected in the availability of national funds committed to projects, greatly affecting their ability to deliver results.

Despite limited budget availability due to the lack of government funds for the Human Rights project, UNDP has made contributions in the fight against trafficking in persons (TIP) by improving case detection procedures and increasing awareness and knowledge of the issue. The project managed to make progress in the current cycle thanks to the contribution of the US Government, which decided to provide additional funds in 2020. In terms of capacity-building, 624 government representatives were sensitized, and their capacity strengthened in techniques to identify victims of TIP. In addition, a national awareness-raising campaign was conducted for the population. Two radio spots, two television spots and a documentary were produced and broadcast.

According to the Trafficking in Persons Report prepared by the US Department of State, the Government achieved some progress during the reporting period, and was upgraded to the Tier 2 Watch List from the sanctions-bearing Tier 3 Watch List. Achievements included: i) investigating and, for the first time since 2010, prosecuting a possible trafficking case; ii) developing and implementing formal screening procedures to identify victims within vulnerable populations; iii) proactively identifying a possible trafficking victim; iv) training officials and members of civil society; v) expanding its awareness-raising campaign to reach all seven districts of the country; and vi) providing funding for its 2019-2021 National Action Plan. Despite these achievements, the Government has never convicted a trafficker under its 2004 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act. Therefore, it should be mentioned that according to the latest available report (2022), Equatorial Guinea is at Tier 2 under observation for the third year. If it does not implement the new regulations, the sustainability of the results achieved may be compromised and the country may be downgraded back to Tier 3.⁶²

In parallel, UNDP has supported the Directorate General of Human Rights in the follow-up of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations,⁶³ as well as in the elaboration of related publications, thus overcoming a lack of national capacity of cadres for the elaboration of specialized reports. Following the third cycle of UPR,⁶⁴ Equatorial Guinea received 221 recommendations, of which 202 were accepted at the adoption of the UPR by the 42nd Human Rights Council in September 2019. However, at this stage there are no data available to assess the level of achievement of the implementation of the recommendations received and accepted. Also, to promote respect for human rights, in 2022 UNDP agreed with the MPFAR

⁶² https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/22-00757-TIP-REPORT_072822-inaccessible.pdf.

⁶³ The Universal Periodic Review is a mechanism of the United Nations Human Rights Council, in operation since 2005. Established by the General Assembly, the UPR periodically reviews the human rights situation in all 193 UN member states. See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/upr-main>.

⁶⁴ Equatorial Guinea was reviewed by the UPR Working Group during the 33rd session in May 2019.

and its INAP to include a compulsory training module on Human Rights, Ethics and Accountability to complete the training of 4,000 new civil servants. For the first time in the country, the theoretical and practical knowledge of human rights has been extended and made mandatory for the civil service.

UNDP managed to support the National Committee to combat torture and arbitrary detention by conducting a workshop in Bata to ensure the application of procedures in detention, but the evaluation team has not managed to find evidence of any changes. Despite its relevance and attempts to work directly with the Ministry of Justice, UNDP has not been able to develop any project on improving access to justice through the formal or the informal judicial system that is focused on women, as was planned in the CPD. Nor has it managed to work directly on the issue of corruption under this country programme.

Finding 8 – Women empowerment. UNDP has not contributed to any transformative change towards gender equality and women’s empowerment. No progress towards women’s leadership indicators in the public and non-profit sectors was identified; nor were legal, institutional and policy reforms adopted to remove structural barriers to women’s empowerment, especially sexual and gender-based violence.

Despite its emphasis in the CPD, and the explicit presence of products linked to women’s empowerment in the country, no project has been implemented and no resources have been made available. Therefore, there are only very few tangible results in this area of intervention. A project on gender equality and women’s empowerment was developed and approved at the beginning of this country programme, yet government funding has not been secured.

The relevance of this lack of activities and results is high, given that it is one of the UNDP’s signature solutions in its strategic plan to move towards the SDGs. In addition, the absence of UNWOMEN in the country places an extra responsibility on UNDP and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to lead on these issues in the national agenda. However, collaboration has been very limited. The country continues to have a weak legal framework for the protection of women’s rights in general, in particular for protection against gender-based violence and other areas of women’s and girls’ economic and social life. This challenge is compounded by the low representation of women in the different decision-making bodies at the political, administrative and civil society levels (13 percent of women in the Government, 10 percent in the Senate and 25 percent in Parliament). There is also low technical capacity of national human resources on gender issues to carry out quality implementation of gender equality programmes, projects and initiatives, and a lack of specific awareness-raising and advocacy programmes for the promotion of women and gender equality in society.⁶⁵

Despite this situation, some results from other initiatives can be highlighted. Some recommendations on promoting women’s active participation in business are available and have been communicated to the Government, which could use these recommendations for legal and institutional reforms to remove structural barriers to women’s economic empowerment. The country office supported the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality in the organization of the Regional Conference on Gender-Based Violence,⁶⁶ together with UNFPA. A total of 116 participants (75 percent women and 25 percent men) from Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and Gabon participated. The working groups during the conference issued 13 recommendations to end violence against women in the region, and the three participating countries signed a joint declaration on the call to action. However, while this was a significant achievement, there is no evidence of UNDP follow-up or advocacy of the adopted joint agenda.

⁶⁵ Final evaluation report of the National Multisectoral Plan of Action for the Promotion of Women and Gender Equity, 2019. See <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/Equatorial%20Guinea.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Held from 25 to 27 November 2020.

2.4 Cross-cutting areas of intervention

Finding 9 – COVID-19. UNDP has been an important partner in Equatorial Guinea’s socio-economic response to the COVID-19 crisis, mobilizing and showing flexibility in redirecting funds. It supported data collection for decision-making, the provision of relief for basic needs in vulnerable groups, public health and e-government solutions, and it has been instrumental in planning the vaccination campaign, although its implementation has stalled, and the sustainability of some interventions is low.

The country’s capacity to respond to COVID-19 was extremely limited at the time of the pandemic. According to WHO’s preliminary country categorization list, Equatorial Guinea was classified among the least prepared countries, having only one testing laboratory with a capacity of 20 tests per day and two medical institutes to observe and follow up on infected patients. Access to basic services, including food, for key and vulnerable populations was limited in part due to the impact of COVID-19 on the informal sector. Access to piped water for handwashing was a challenge in some communities, which posed a high risk of contamination.

Aligned to the Country Contingency and Prevention Emergency Plan and the Joint Response Plan, different stakeholders have pointed out how UNDP offered a rapid response and supported the country at different levels. In terms of data to support evidence-based policy decision-making within the scope of the socio-economic impact response in the country, the UNDP made available the report, ‘Rapid macroeconomic assessment of the effects of COVID-19 in Equatorial Guinea’.⁶⁷ This report provided an appreciation of the factors that determine large economic and fiscal balances, the impact of COVID-19 on those balances, the short-term government measures taken through public policies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, and related recommendations. The country profile that was generated and the COVID-19 response timeline are both available online.⁶⁸ In addition, several sectoral studies (education, health, tourism, agriculture, and ICT) were also made available and a vulnerability assessment of those most at risk of being left behind (LNOB) was conducted. These studies managed to provide valuable data during a difficult time for data collection due to COVID-19 restrictions, and they have been a reference for outlining the response of both the country’s authorities and the different United Nations agencies.

In terms of the provision of direct support to those at risk of being left behind due to the initial shock of the pandemic in the country, UNDP provided support to vulnerable and marginalized groups (older people, PWD, single mothers, people living with HIV, sex workers and lepers) through multi-sectoral engagement with national and local authorities, CSOs, and private-sector and bilateral donors. During the period of confinement from April to June 2020, a total of 3,000 people⁶⁹ from those vulnerable groups benefited from the distribution of supermarket vouchers for essential goods to cover their needs at this time. The vouchers were worth XAF 25,000 (\$40) and their distribution was initially agreed with the Red Cross. The Government’s priority to reach the remote areas of the country, especially Annobon and the rest of the islands, made it necessary to reformulate the distribution and mostly implement it via the Constancia Mangue Nsue Okomo Foundation,⁷⁰ as this was the only NGO in the country with authorization for logistical air travel to the islands.

⁶⁷ See <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/africa/UNDP-Equatorial-Guinea-Macro-Economic-Assessment-EN.pdf>.

⁶⁸ See <https://datapopalliance.org/covid19/c19globalsouthobservatory/equatorial-guinea/>.

⁶⁹ Of which 56.7 percent (1,701 beneficiaries) were women.

⁷⁰ Equatorial Guinea First Lady’s Foundation.

The country office managed to redirect some of its project funds to support some of the most urgent interventions. As part of the support to trade, 95 micro-enterprises avoided closing their businesses thanks to the financial support received.⁷¹ Considering the size of the enterprises, the country office estimates that at least 95 people saved their jobs during the pandemic in 2020, of which 77 were women.

In terms of public health, an estimated 10,000 people had access to the 572 handwashing stations set up to prevent the spread of COVID-19.⁷² With support from the US Embassy in Equatorial Guinea, 462 tippy taps were placed in strategic and busy locations, such as public markets, as well as in remote locations where access to water was a challenge. UNDP also contributed to COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures, supporting innovative solutions such as Anti-epidemic Smart Robots acquired by the Ministry of Health. Six⁷³ robots were provided for the monitoring of COVID-19 compatible symptoms in enclosed public spaces. UNDP supported the creation of a new start-up specializing in new technologies and artificial intelligence owned by four young people (two women and two men). In addition, 12 students (seven women and five men) from the University of Equatorial Guinea were trained in the use and maintenance of artificial intelligence devices such as those robots. However, some stakeholders interviewed raised doubts about the utility of those robots and its sustainability.

The role of UNDP as a partner and its positioning in the field of public administration modernization was enhanced by the relevant response of UNDP in supporting the continuity of government activities. Ministers and senior government officials received a total of 90 modems to ensure continuity of government operations during the pandemic, highly relevant when working from home was required. In addition, all ministries received a total of 100 Zoom licences and capacity-building in the use of the software. During 2021, UNDP supported the drafting of the e-Government Strategy of the Government of Equatorial Guinea, as well as the SOL Platform of the Ministry of Public Administration, in which a total of 12 officials (40 percent women) have been trained. To date, around 150 applications have been processed through this system and more than 3,500 requests for services to public officials have been processed.⁷⁴ Of all the response initiatives, this is the one that best supports the resilience of national structures, thereby strengthening preparedness for future emergencies.

Finally, as part of United Nations efforts to respond to COVID-19, UNDP is actively contributing to the Joint Programme for the Acceleration of COVID Vaccination and Health System Strengthening. It has established a partnership with Oslo University, Norway (which also provided \$30,000 of additional funds to the initiative) to develop the digitalization of the vaccination registration system and the vaccination database. Servers were ready and configured, and trainers were trained. UNDP provided 100 tablets, 2 laptops, 10 PCs and 2 printers/scanners, to complete the managing infrastructure of the DHIS2⁷⁵ Vaccination COVID Module, both at the record level and for the agreed data information. Despite these efforts and planning, the COVID-19 vaccination campaign in the country had been suspended by the Government at the time of this evaluation.

⁷¹ XAF 1 million (+/- \$1,500) each for 55 enterprises and XAF 500,000 each for the remaining 40 enterprises.

⁷² Data reported by the country office.

⁷³ A total of six robots were acquired: two are located at the Presidency of the Republic, two at Malabo International Airport, one at the Sampaka Hospital, one at the Baney Hospital, and one at the Malabo International Airport.

⁷⁴ Numbers reported by the UNDP country office.

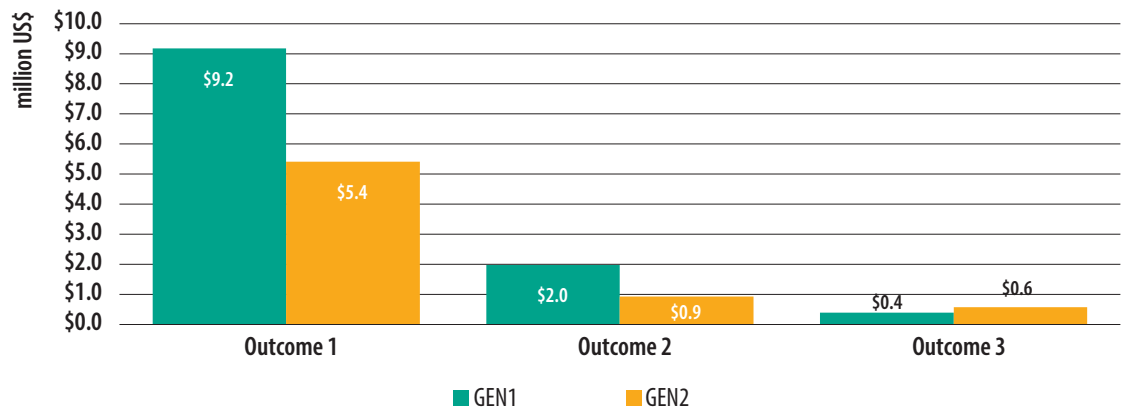
⁷⁵ DHIS2 is an open-source, web-based platform commonly used as a health management information system (HMIS). See <https://dhis2.org/about/>.

Finding 10 – Gender equality and LNOB. UNDP has promoted the inclusion of women, youth, and people with disabilities in the design and implementation of its programme, but its results have been limited and linked to emergency response. There has been a lack of a strategy and joint initiatives that prioritize results with transformative and long-term potential in terms of gender and leave no one behind.

UNDP Equatorial Guinea designed a CPD with a high visibility of the programme’s intended focus on advancing gender equality and the work with youth and with PWD. However, its implementation was severely constrained by both the cross-cutting programme difficulties of lack of resources and shifting priorities, as well as internal weaknesses, including the lack of a gender strategy, and a shortage of dedicated staff.

When analysing the profile of the projects and their gender markers, the bulk of project implementation expenditure during this cycle has been GEN1 with 63 percent of total expenditure. This has been strongly marked by Outcome 1 (see Figure 11) and the design of the previous Infectious Disease Unit Support Project dating back to 2014. The new HIV project of 2021 has already incorporated gender issues in its design and has become GEN2. This progressive evolution towards GEN2 in the programme through increased sensitivity of the office in project design can be seen in Figure 12. The office has not, however, been able to initiate the implementation of any GEN3 projects with the potential to achieve transformative gender outcomes. In terms of the GRES, results have been mainly gender targeted.⁷⁶

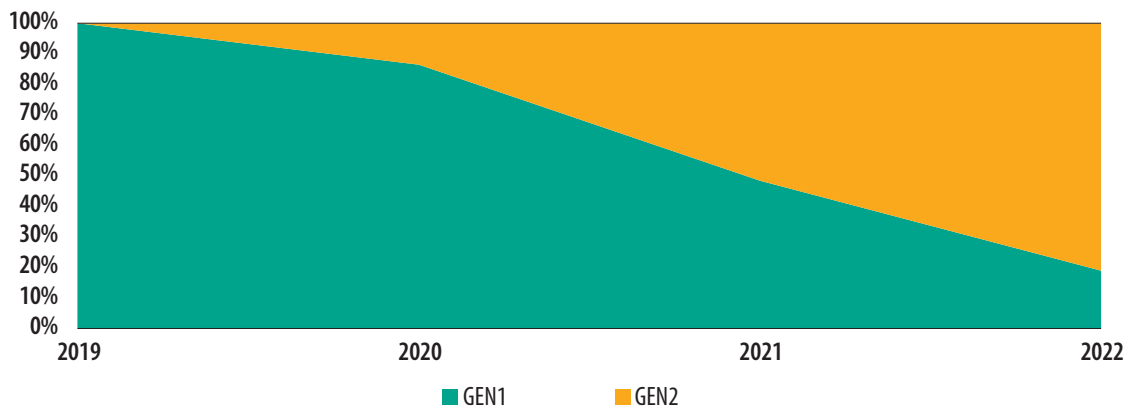
FIGURE 11: EXPENDITURE BY GENDER MARKER AND OUTCOME (2019-2022)



Source: UNDP ATLAS/ PowerBI

⁷⁶ IEO’s Gender Results Effectiveness Framework (GRES). See http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/gender/GRES_English.pdf.

FIGURE 12: EVOLUTION OF EXPENDITURE BY GENDER MARKER (2019–2022)



Source: UNDP ATLAS/ PowerBI

The UNDP office in Equatorial Guinea has an opportunity for the new cycle, with the Gender Equality Seal exercise that started in this cycle. A gender focal team has been formed, and an action plan has been developed. These are important steps for going forward, compared to the previous situation in which the office only had one gender focal point with very limited time to promote this agenda, given their parallel responsibilities. There has been clear support from management to push forward this certification process. Despite the limited results directly impacting gender equality, the IEO survey conducted for this evaluation found that all respondents, regardless of their affiliation as UNDP staff, government partners, private sector or others, agreed or strongly agreed that UNDP was sensitive to gender equality and had put in place processes to promote it.

The approach of inclusion of those groups most at risk of falling behind, considering the United Nations LNOB approach, was clearly shown in the promotion of employment for youth and in the socio-economic response to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Collaboration with local NGOs and authorities was sought to identify vulnerable beneficiaries, although the final list of beneficiaries was defined by authorities without a clear criterion. Stakeholders interviewed emphasized the active participation and alliance with associations of PWD to understand their needs and the prioritization of remote and difficult to access areas, such as Annobon, to provide an emergency health care response.

2.5 Overall programme implementation

Finding 11 – Strategic positioning. From a weakened position following the delinking process of the UN Resident Coordinator role, UNDP has gained visibility and recognition thanks to its work in promoting economic diversification and its capacity to respond to emergencies. Despite this, it is still largely identified as a donor rather than a strategic development partner, although its work in certain sectors is enabling change among national counterparts.

UNDP in Equatorial Guinea started this programme cycle from a weak positioning. UNDP in Equatorial Guinea started this programme cycle from a weak positioning. The last ADR in 2016 concluded that it was a recognized actor representing United Nations values in the country with a positive relationship with the Government. However, key informants in this evaluation noted that the beginning of this cycle, which was marked by a confusing delinking process in the country, fundamentally weakened the positioning of UNDP, and the United Nations country team as a whole – particularly in relation to government counterparts.

The delinking process and consolidation of the new Resident Coordinator Office has taken almost three years, with long periods of interim or absence of a designated resident coordinator, and UNDP has had to rebuild its positioning in parallel.

The UNDP management team in Equatorial Guinea during this cycle has been recognized by various actors as being very active, with a high capacity to adapt in order to raise the profile of UNDP in the country. UNDP technical and financial support to national strategic issues such as the Third National Economic Conference, has allowed for a key positioning in the promotion of national economic diversification, reinforced by the recruitment of a national economist. The dynamism and capacity to adapt to unexpected circumstances, such as the COVID-19 crisis or the deployment of a SURGE mission after the explosion in Bata, have been positively highlighted by national counterparts as elements that have led to a progressive rapprochement and recognition by government authorities. The country office's communication drive, boosted by the recruitment of a communications associate, has given UNDP greater visibility and allowed it to end the programme cycle from a more strategic positioning than at the beginning of the cycle.

However, both UNDP and the United Nations country team as a whole have not been able to fully overcome an outdated view of their role as international agencies in an upper middle-income country. The continued demand for funds is evidence that some national actors continue to see UNDP as a donor rather than as a strategic partner for development. They only seek funding from UNDP and do not see the kind of added value that UNDP can bring to joint development initiatives. This reflects a lack of appreciation of the value of the organization's diverse assets, such as the credibility and transparency of its operations, its global network of thematic experts and procurement capabilities, and its capacity to be a knowledge broker or to leverage development funding.

The non-delivery of government funding commitments has been a constant constraint in the achievement of country programme results. This has weakened positioning in areas such as social protection, energy, environmental conservation, and justice, and with it the potential for UNDP to demonstrate its added value. There are exceptions and some national counterparts have recognized the contribution of UNDP as a partner in implementing policies and programmes that benefit from UNDP strengths. Contributions in terms of programme management and policy development support have been recognized in the WTO accession trade promotion initiatives. Similarly, interventions to strengthen the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reform and INAP exemplify the benefits derived from an implementation with UNDP as a strategic partner, with its ability to provide strategic inputs, such as the use of SIGOB, and international positioning, such as with the integration of Equatorial Guinea within CLAD. In the latter cases, UNDP alignment with its own strategic plan on the use of digitalization as an enabler for development is evident.

Data gathered through different surveys⁷⁷ showed that while UNDP contributions in the areas of governance and environment were appreciated (more than 85 percent positive), interventions aiming at enhancing resilience and eradicating poverty did not meet partners' expectations (71 percent and 43 percent negative, respectively). Environmental protection and access to healthcare and education are among the country's top priorities. Government respondents were critical of UNDP's ability to upscale and/or institutionalize its interventions, which is key for sustainability. None of the respondents agreed that "UNDP provides innovative solutions," and when asked about the best way UNDP could contribute to achieving the SDGs, the top two answers were financing and the development of national statistical capacity.

⁷⁷ UNDP, 2020 Partnership Survey, UNDP IEO, ICPE Stakeholder Survey for Equatorial Guinea, August 2022 and UN75 one-minute survey results collected via UNDP, [Data Futures Platform](#), 2020.

Finding 12 – Partnerships. UNDP has strengthened its institutional partnerships at the national level, but there is still a lack of work being done with CSOs and NGOs and very limited articulated work with other United Nations agencies and international organizations.

UNDP capacity to articulate new partnerships has been limited despite the efforts made. The particularities of the country context, the limited presence of other multilateral agencies, the absence of international NGOs in the field, the limited capacity in overall project management and activity implementation of local NGOs, and the limited interest of international or bilateral donors, are all factors that have hindered the generation of partnerships.

UNDP has strengthened institutional partnerships at the national level. In this sense, it has been able to take advantage of its own mobilized resources to strengthen relations both with the Presidency, on issues of economic diversification and promotion of the blue economy, and with multiple ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Civil Service. At the local level, however, only the collaboration with Bata City Council, in response to the 7M disaster, is noteworthy. A positive factor highlighted by institutional actors that has favoured joint work has been overcoming the language barrier. In the past, the lack of proficiency in Spanish was problematic for UNDP international officials in the country.

Partnerships and joint work with CSOs and groups representing beneficiaries have continued to be a shortcoming of the programme, as identified in the 2016 ADR, except for the COVID-19 response interventions, where a significant number of local NGOs were involved. Different partners interviewed have highlighted how there is a need to empower civil society in the country, to strengthen CSOs to act in areas where the state does not reach, and how UNDP could play a relevant role because of its broad mandate, neutrality, and resources. UNDP did not make use of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) for capacity transfer to counterparts during project implementation. This was due to the risks and shortcomings identified by counterparts according to the country office, despite the recommendation in UNDP internal audit reports.⁷⁸

Bilaterally, UNDP has managed to implement interventions with the United States Embassy for the promotion of human rights. Also, UNDP has managed to mobilize funds from the Japan International Cooperation Agency for the first time in the country, to continue with the recovery of Bata. However, its interaction with other relevant bilateral actors has been limited, and took place only during the final stage of the programme cycle. This was conducted in collaboration with the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation (AECID), INAP, and the French Embassy, whose involvement was sought to give sustainability to the youth centre, but this has not yet materialized.

Work with financial institutions was marked by the alliance with Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, which had the support of the regional office, but whose contribution failed to materialize after changes at the ministerial level. Despite having similar interests, such as the promotion of INEGE, there is no evidence of collaboration with the World Bank to enhance the achievement of development results. No relevant alliances with the private sector have been identified.

At the United Nations country team level, joint initiatives have been rare. UNDP leads the Economics and Climate Working Group. With ILO, joint work has been done on the Green and Blue Economies Project, but the implementation of the project has been carried out separately with different project managers for each agency. There is no evidence of synergy with other agencies that also work on shared goals, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

⁷⁸ UNDP internal audit reports can be found here: <https://audit-public-disclosure.undp.org/>.

Finding 13 – Resource mobilization and finance. The UNDP country office in Equatorial Guinea has been able to mobilize its own regular and COVID-19 response funds that have made it possible to adapt the implementation of the country programme. While the Government is the main donor to the country programme, its funds have been earmarked for the fight against HIV and the non-delivery of the remaining planned funds has compromised the results of the programme.

The context of an upper middle-income country economy in economic crisis since 2014 has been the biggest challenge for mobilizing resources effectively. Furthermore, there has been a lack of institutional guarantees for the fulfilment of multiannual planning at the national level. This context has meant that the lack of funding from the Government has been the main negative factor affecting the implementation of the country programme, despite being, paradoxically, the main donor to the country programme itself (see Figure 14).

This has affected not only UNDP, but the United Nations country team as a whole, as the Government has not disbursed the funds committed to UNDAF. UNDAF had planned resources of \$160 million for this programme cycle, of which UNDP accounted for \$52 million. In the end, UNDAF has had only \$21 million available, of which UNDP has been the main recipient compared to the other United Nations agencies, due to the funds earmarked for the fight against HIV. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that in 2020 UNDP received the government contribution to local office costs of \$0.52 million for the first time as a Net Contributing Country, followed by a second contribution (\$0.65 million) in 2021. But since most of the funds foreseen by the Government have not been disbursed, the country office has only been able to implement a restricted number of projects that have had a limited impact on CPD outputs and outcomes.

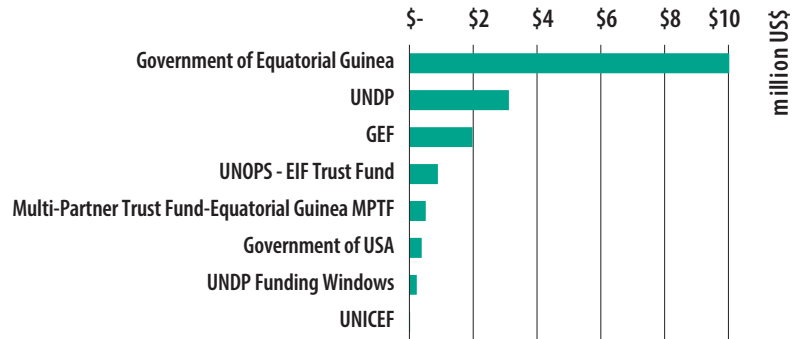
However, the country office has successfully mobilized TRAC-2 resources for three consecutive years (2020, 2021 and 2022), leveraging funding for youth (initially \$815,000, of which \$149,000 was reprogrammed for the COVID-19 response); employment (\$1 million, of which \$50,000 was reprogrammed for the 7M response in Bata); and democratic governance (\$0.7 million). In parallel, the country office was also successful in mobilizing UNDP own funds to support the country's response to unexpected emergencies during this cycle. An additional \$267,500 was mobilized from the Rapid Response Facility (RRF) in 2020 and \$1.5 million of UNDP Rapid Financing Facility (RFF) funds were successfully mobilized in 2021 to support digitalization in the framework of the COVID-19 response. Also, to support recovery after the explosions in Bata, UNDP mobilized \$100,000 of TRAC3 funds and succeeded in bringing, for the first time, funds from Japan to support the reconstruction of the recycling and waste management plant, a milestone according to some national stakeholders interviewed.

Another milestone in terms of funding has been the formulation of the Joint Programme to support the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Equatorial Guinea, which has been approved with a total budget of \$20.9 million. WHO, the UNICEF and UNDP contributed up to \$0.93 million and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Equatorial Guinea up to \$18.98 million. However, so far, less than \$1 million has been made available for its use and the vaccine distribution campaign has been suspended by the Government.

Effective resource mobilization in emergencies does not guarantee the future financial sustainability of the country office. Potential areas of work have been opened up, such as those related to digitalization in terms of governance (e-governance) and in terms of health (Health Information Systems). For the first time, in 2021, the profile of programme spending between HIV and the rest of the programme (see Figure 15) appeared to be more balanced. But some relevant areas, such as energy and the environment, have not managed to expand their source of funding, which has been limited to GEF. Some opportunities that

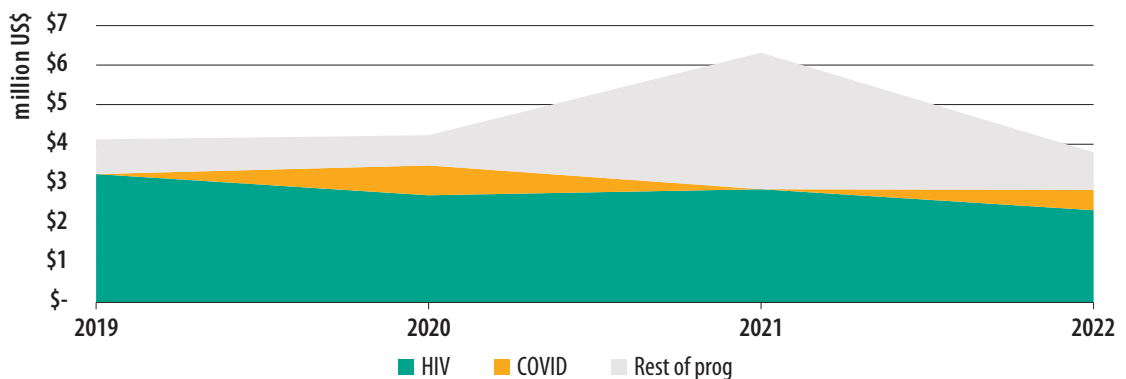
would have supported the sustainability of the office been missed. For example, the GCF had two relevant project proposals in its pipeline,⁷⁹ pre-assigned to UNDP for its development and submission, which were not developed by UNDP during this cycle.

FIGURE 13: UNDP TOTAL EXPENDITURE BY DONOR (2019–22)



Source: UNDP PowerBI/ATLAS

FIGURE 14: BREAKDOWN OF PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE (2019–22)



Source: UNDP PowerBI/ATLAS

⁷⁹ See GCF Government of Equatorial Guinea country Multi-Partner Trust Fund programme dated October 2019, pgs. 28 & 33, the projects related to ‘Promoting urban and interurban public transport with natural gas buses in Equatorial Guinea’ (\$64.8 million) and ‘Renewable energy development in Equatorial Guinea (phase II)’ (\$ 29.6 million). See <https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/equatorial-guinea-country-programme>.

Finding 14 – Organizational structure and performance. The expansion of the programme has resulted in an enlarged organizational structure with shortcomings. There are weaknesses and a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities between programme and operational areas, affecting effectiveness and efficiency as well as the working environment.

The response to emergencies and changing priorities during this programme cycle has been reflected in substantial changes in the structure of the country office. The office only receives funding for a very simple staff structure (currently with just one programme analyst), and most initiatives have been accompanied by the recruitment of dedicated staff. New positions were opened to implement TRAC-2-funded projects, for COVID-19 response initiatives (both at the levels of project management and economic analysis reinforcement), to maintain a presence in Bata post the 7M disaster, and internally, to strengthen procurement (recommended by the last audit) and communications. However, the integration of new staff to support internal programme coherence and the search for synergy in the organizational structure have been weak.

The country office already had organizational difficulties, as highlighted by the 2018 audit, which pointed out weaknesses in the organizational structure and its control environment, and these re-emerged at the end of the cycle. At the time of this evaluation, internal reporting lines and internal processes were not clear, with some staff and project managers reporting interchangeably to different levels. In addition, communication and cooperation between programme and operations management teams have been difficult, and there have been complaints about performance and interference. Different actors interviewed have confirmed these internal weaknesses as a cause of delays that negatively impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the country office. The 2020 UNDP Partnership survey showed that only 38 percent of respondents had a favourable image of UNDP in the country.

Office staff have noted the lack of a sense of teamwork, and poor internal communication. Staff meetings have not been a standard practice and interdepartmental communication is a challenge. However, the office has implemented initiatives to improve the working environment. One of these is the welfare committee, which has recently been singled out as a success because of certain activities put in place, such as the provision of informal spaces for interacting, celebrations, and fostering teamwork and solidarity among colleagues.

Support from the regional office is appreciated by the country office. However, the language barrier is identified as the main factor limiting the input provided and the receptiveness of the country office. Having Spanish as the national language is unique in Africa, thus presenting a challenge for the RBA, which tends to refer to the country as French-speaking. The Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC) has been approached to support the country office, and there is evidence that this has been positively received (for example, support from RBLAC was sought for providing Quantum training in Spanish). However, there is no clear framework for this type of internal interregional cooperation, which would be of great benefit to the country office. Language skills within the office are very uneven. Spanish has not been the mother tongue of senior officials, and the level of English and French as second languages within the office is not homogeneous. Despite the request, language training for staff has not been conducted in the last two years.

Regarding the services UNDP provides within the United Nations country team, there are shortcomings in the efficiency and effectiveness with which Operations provides services to other agencies. UNDP manages common services and the maintenance of the building, which stakeholders have described as deficient and

negatively affecting staff wellbeing. Despite its being United Nations-owned, the building is not maintained accordingly and is not air-conditioned. Among the services requiring improvement are the quality of the internet connection and response times to requests for assistance.

Finding 15 – Planning, monitoring and evaluation. The country office lacks a robust planning, monitoring and evaluation system, which has been reflected in the weaknesses of the country programme results framework and its implementation. There is a need to reinforce project management capacity to strengthen project monitoring and to support the emerging programme knowledge management function.

In terms of planning and design, weaknesses have been found at both programme and project level. The CPD has design shortcomings in terms of its results framework. Its alignment with the UNDAF is clear in that it directly incorporates some of its effects at the outcome level. But it also introduces them at product level, as is the case with CPD Output 1.4, which is similar to UNDAF Effect 1.2. This creates an incongruence between levels that breaks the causal links between outputs and outcomes. This can be seen, for example, in Outcome 1, where the outcomes are limited to achieving opportunities for access to decent employment (UNDAF Effect 2.2) but the outputs include a product of much greater scope, namely the establishment of a social protection system. Under the UNDAF, this was placed under a different effect (1.2). This shows a disconnection between the theories of change designed in the UNDAF and the results framework established in the CPD.

At the project level, the 2018 audit identified shortcomings in terms of project design and quality standards. Among those impacting the design phase is the lack of the Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC). This situation, which was ongoing in the 2020 audit follow-up, has remained unchanged throughout the whole programme cycle. The country office team state that time constraints restrict their ability to convene the LPAC stakeholders due to the bureaucracy in the country context. However, this not only undermines project quality, but it can also be seen as a weakness in UNDP's positioning and convening capacity in the country.

Problems at the project design stage are linked to weaknesses in the monitoring of projects and their contribution at programme level. The last audit had already highlighted a problem with respect to weak project monitoring and risk management, and the need to ensure quality assessment, results-based field visits, and annual work plan and progress reports with results-based information. The quality of project monitoring has remained low, and the existence, regularity and quality of reports generated is uneven across projects. The profile of project managers is more technical than managerial, which is reflected in indicators that are not very useful for monitoring implementation, decision-making or subsequent evaluation. The problem identified by the audit that indicators do not meet SMART⁸⁰ criteria is still valid. Many indicators had no baseline and are therefore undermined. However, it is true that the country office faces a great challenge by working in a country context in which there is little or no data, or the available data are sometimes of unknown origin.

In terms of evaluation, the country office has found it difficult to implement its decentralized evaluation plan because of the difficulty of finding good evaluation consultants at the national level, due to lack of capacity, and at the international level, as a result of the language barrier. As part of the evaluation plan in this cycle, only two decentralized evaluations were conducted. The quality assessment of the reports was that one was moderately satisfactory, and one was pending assessment.⁸¹

⁸⁰ The SMART framework is a useful way to identify quality indicators. It stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

⁸¹ Evaluation reports are available at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/plans/detail/1516>.

The monitoring and evaluation function and its reflection in knowledge management at programme level has clearly benefited from the appointment of a permanent staff member. However, due to budgetary constraints, this person is not fully dedicated to monitoring and evaluation and must also allocate time to project implementation. Monitoring and knowledge management have recently received a boost due to good cooperation with the communications department as the country office aims to promote communication for development. The generation of an audio-visual database has been initiated, and the first joint mission between M&E and Communications has taken place in the field to capture evidence of results achieved and impacts on beneficiaries. This strategic use of communications is in its inception but was tested in support of the Digitalization Project. The office has the challenge of moving from a classic model of events media coverage to a model of active communication that supports implementation by collecting and communicating information relevant to project goals.

2.6 Country programme performance ratings

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. A four-point rating scale is used, with 4 being the highest and 1 the lowest.⁸² This rating table should be read while keeping in mind the findings presented in the previous sections, which provide more detailed justification for the ratings.

Finding 16 – Ratings. Overall, UNDP programme results demonstrated moderately satisfactory relevance in responding to changing national priorities, and they demonstrated timeliness and efficiency in responding to national needs in the aftermath of crises and emergencies. However, overall programme coherence was unsatisfactory, and the challenges of the national context have profoundly undermined the achievement of the outputs envisaged in the CPD, as well as the sustainability of results.

TABLE 1. Country programme performance ratings

Key criteria and parameters	Overall rating	Remarks/ justification
1. Relevance	3	The CPD was designed in line with the existing national development plan at the time. Significant changes in context made the CPD less relevant, but UNDP was able to adapt. It mobilized funds accordingly and sought implementation in the national interest. The health and socio-economic response to COVID-19 and the response to the 7M Bata explosion raised UNDP visibility in the country and its status as a development partner. Gender and LNOB were considered in these responses, but without a long-term strategy. Youth and economic diversification connect with national priorities and UNDAF. HIV programme support has been very relevant, given the epidemiological profile of the country.
1.A. Adherence to national development priorities	2	
1.B. Alignment with United Nations/ UNDP goals	3	
1.C. Relevance of programme logic	3	

⁸² 4 = Fully achieved/ Exceeds expectations, 3 = Mostly achieved, 2 = Partially achieved, 1= Not achieved.

Key criteria and parameters	Overall rating	Remarks/ justification
2. Coherence	1	Internal coherence was not achieved, as most of the resulting outputs lacked integration and responded to project demands rather than offering a coherent approach to programmatic changes. Only a few examples of synergy have been achieved, notably around digitalization initiatives. Efforts for economic diversification and environmental sustainability were disconnected despite the common emphasis on promoting the green and blue economies. Externally, there have been some joint initiatives, but cooperation between United Nations country team agencies was weak. Human rights work was consistent with donor efforts in the country.
2.A. Internal programme coherence	1	
2.B. External programme coherence	2	
3. Efficiency	3	The country office responded swiftly to the new needs arising from the COVID- 19 pandemic and especially from the emergency following the 7M Bata explosion. A SURGE mission arrived on the ground within a few days and the implementation of cash-for-work mechanisms helped to clear the debris promptly. Digitalization interventions have been particularly efficient in their implementation. However, employment, youth and energy interventions have showed limited results for their budgets or presented delays in their execution. The lack of internal cooperation between the Operations and Programme areas has been identified as a source of delays.
3.A. Timeliness	3	
3.B. Management efficiency	3	
4. Effectiveness	2	The effectiveness of the programme has been negatively affected by the lack of government cost-sharing funding. Entire areas of planned interventions have been left without any possibility of implementation as a result – such as those related to social protection, access to justice, and national statistics. Other areas have been seriously impacted, narrowing the scale of the interventions, as in the case of human rights, youth employment, or energy. Weaknesses in the design of the results framework and changes in priorities during the intervention make it difficult to find contributions to the outcomes set out in the CPD. The lack of a gender and LNOB strategy has limited the potential for significant results in these areas, despite efforts at inclusion during the programme. Similarly, there is little evidence that the programme has enabled innovations for development.
4.A. Achieving stated outputs and outcomes	2	
4.B. Programme inclusiveness (especially those at risk of being left behind)	2	
4.C. Prioritizing GEWE	2	
4.D. Programming processes adhered to sustainable development principles	2	

Key criteria and parameters	Overall rating	Remarks/ justification
5. Sustainability	2	The lack of resources to scale up initiatives, and thus the low institutionalization of these initiatives, calls into question the sustainability of much of the programme. Nationally funded interventions such as those for HIV are more sustainable and have enabled awareness-raising campaigns to promote long-term change. In most cases though, no special measures were identified to ensure that the capacity achieved and/ or transfer of knowledge/ technologies could be sustained. No special measures were identified to institutionalize positive changes achieved at the national level. Paradoxically, given the difficult circumstances for mobilizing resources due to the lack of donors, UNDP did a remarkable job in mobilizing its own funds for development projects in a way it has never done before.
5.A. Sustainable capacity	2	
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 Equatorial Guinea, as well as the recommendations and management response.

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. UNDP Equatorial Guinea has operated in a very complex context in which the ability to deliver results has been limited by the lack of committed national funds. Adaptability and dynamism in the emergency response made it possible to mobilize core funds that have enabled the country office to raise its profile as a partner for development. Yet, most of the development challenges targeted in the CPD remain valid and collaboration with civil society organizations remains limited and confined to emergency responses.

The CPD set ambitious goals articulated around two pillars of action: inclusive and sustainable development, and effective governance. These goals were set in the context of a country with its own capabilities as an upper middle-income economy. However, various circumstances have meant that results achieved with the capacity to impact on the country's development have been limited. The country programme did not receive the funding committed by national counterparts, which would have allowed it to address areas of intervention that have been left out of the implementation (e.g., establish a social protection system, boost the national statistical system, or improve access to justice). Likewise, given the non-disbursement of government funds, the capacity to expand the scope and dimension of some of the initiatives developed (e.g., employment promotion), which would allow for their scalability and future sustainability, was negatively affected.

Many national counterparts, particularly from the Government, still view UNDP as a donor rather than a strategic partner. Circumstantially, UNDP has been able to mobilize its own resources as never before in the country. The capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergency after the 7M Bata explosion, has allowed UNDP to progressively change that vision and position itself as a reference actor for development in the country. Its support to the country in promoting employment and livelihood opportunities, with approaches such as cash-for-work or cash-for-training, was appreciated by the government authorities, which have asked the UNDP for further support to promote the country's economic diversification and boost new areas of development such as the blue economy. However, collaboration with civil society organizations has been limited and confined to the emergency response initiatives. This has prevented partnerships from leading to greater capacity transfers.

Conclusion 2. UNDP has contributed to inclusive development, promoting the application of the SDGs, economic diversification and youth economic empowerment and supporting the fight against HIV and the COVID-19 vaccination process. However, most of the resulting outputs lack integration and have had limited reach and sustainability.

In its contribution to inclusive development, UNDP advised on the formulation of the national development strategy and its alignment with the SDGs. It has also accompanied national efforts aimed at economic diversification and trade development. It has provided technical assistance and conducted pilot interventions for employment generation and entrepreneurship, as in the case of the youth centre or the different innovation challenges. Although the outputs presented aspects of public policy that are related to each other, no explicit strategic integration was found from the point of view of the design and implementation of the interventions. Likewise, the lack of government funds has limited the scalability and sustainability of results.

Inclusion efforts focused on youth, mainly on aspects of economic empowerment. Other targeted groups, such as women, PWD or people from remote or isolated communities, were given special consideration in COVID-19 pandemic response initiatives. However, results in the rest of the programme were very limited. Health interventions to support the fight against the disease and the discrimination against people living with HIV remain the most relevant area of programme intervention in financial terms, and one where UNDP brings efficiency and quality. UNDP added value was highlighted with the timely procurement and delivery of HIV medicines and supplies, despite disruptions in the global supply chain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the deteriorating epidemiological profile and health system weaknesses remain a challenge for the country. Likewise, the recent COVID-19 vaccination process continues to be a challenge, but it has opened up an opportunity to strengthen the national health information system.

Conclusion 3. In terms of sustainable development, UNDP achieved little progress in promoting renewable energy and the transition towards green and blue economies. The main environmental priorities outlined in the CPD remained unaddressed due to a lack of funding. Despite this, UNDP is still considered a key player in promoting sustainable development in the country.

Programme results were limited by the lack of government and donor interest in contributing to the outputs set out in the CPD, which was reflected in the lack of funds available for the initiatives. The UNDP GEF-funded sustainable energy drive was the only vertically funded intervention, but it lacked a national counterpart, significantly limiting its ability to meet anticipated CO2 reduction targets or solve remote communities' energy needs. Similarly, the lack of funding limited the drive to promote the green and blue economies. The approach of encouraging entrepreneurship in these areas served its function as a pilot initiative, but was inadequate to ensure replicability.

Environmental priorities highlighted in the CPD, including biodiversity conservation, deforestation, and climate change, were not addressed in this cycle and remain critical for the sustainable development of the country. Potential funding sources, such as the GCF, were not tapped, and within the United Nations country team there is no synergy with other key environmental actors, such as FAO. Despite this, stakeholders continue to identify UNDP as a key player for the promotion of environmental conservation and sustainable development in the country.

Conclusion 4. UNDP has contributed to a more efficient and transparent public administration through its commitment to digitalization and has leveraged its partnerships and provided capacity development to fight human trafficking and promote human rights. However, lack of government funding has limited the ability of UNDP to advance its goal of effective and inclusive governance by contributing to local development, women's empowerment, or access to justice.

The UNDP governance portfolio has been focused on strengthening public administration and promoting human rights. UNDP leveraged the strategic corporate momentum of digitalization as an enabler of development and mobilized internal funds to boost public institutions' modernization and the transparency of public services. It took advantage of its alliances to introduce the SIGOB in the country and to promote the training of new INAP civil servants in democratic governance topics. In cooperation with the US embassy, it continued to support efforts to combat human trafficking and improve the country's international standing. However, the lack of resolution of pending human trafficking cases may jeopardize this progress.

The strengthening of national capacity is reflected in the country's ability to follow up on the commitments of international treaties and agreements, as evidenced in the latest Universal Periodic Review. However, UNDP was unable to contribute to better governance at the local level, or reverse the low participation of youth and women in institutional politics, or contribute to better access to justice or the fight against gender-based violence.

Conclusion 5. The country office has promoted gender equality and women's empowerment internally and at the programme level. Nevertheless, results have been limited to ad hoc interventions in the economic promotion and socio-economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, given the lack of resources and a strategy that prioritizes long-term transformative results.

The internal promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment has materialized with the push to obtain the UNDP Gender Equality Seal. At the programme level, the project design has made a significant improvement in the inclusion of a gender perspective among its objectives. However, the country office has not yet managed to implement any project with gender equality and its potentially transformative outcomes as a primary objective. The CPD had explicit outputs to promote women's political empowerment, but there was no possibility to work on these issues or address other structural problems, such as sexual and gender-based violence.

Conclusion 6. The working environment and programme performance have been affected by a lack of clarity and coordination in the country office's organizational structure, as well as weaknesses in the formulation of the programme's results framework and monitoring and project management.

The response to emergencies and changing priorities during this programme cycle has been reflected in substantial changes in the office's structure. The integration of new staff under the logic of internal programme coherence and the search for synergy in the organizational structure has been limited. The effectiveness and efficiency of the programme have been affected by delays caused by this situation, which has also created a lack of a sense of teamwork and an unfavourable working environment. Previous audits and evaluations have already highlighted these issues. There has been a lack of internal communication, particularly between the operations and programme areas.

In terms of planning and design, weaknesses have been found at both programme and project levels. At the programme level, there was a disconnection between the theories of change designed in the UNDAF and the results framework established in the CPD. At the project level, there were areas for improvement in terms of project design and quality standards, such as the need for a Local Project Appraisal Committee. Other identified areas for improvement were implementation and monitoring, addressing weak project management skills and poor or non-existent indicators and baselines to measure progress.

3.2 Recommendations and management response

RECOMMENDATION 1.

In the next programming cycle, UNDP should be realistic, build on the progress made and consolidate its position as a strategic development partner in the country by scaling up the initiatives piloted in this cycle and deepening its relationship with non-governmental actors.

Its current positioning in advising the government on economic diversification and the pilot initiatives on employment and the transition towards 'greener' and 'bluer' economic models, and the incorporation of digital solutions to strengthen governance and health systems should enable UNDP to secure the political and financial will of national counterparts to jointly scale up initiatives on these intervention fronts. In designing the next CPD, however, UNDP must be realistic in its objectives and implementation capacity. It should plan for and be aware of the risks of relying solely on government funding for project implementation and take measures to mitigate them. It must ensure that its outputs are tangible for both the Government and the country's population, as has been the case in this cycle with support to the HIV programme, thereby facilitating the delivery of committed funding.

To act coherently and achieve synergy, UNDP needs to deepen work on common mandates within the United Nations country team, coordinate with donors to align objectives and leverage additional funds from government cost-sharing. It also needs to deepen partnerships and interventions with non-governmental actors, seeking their empowerment and positioning as agents for the sustainability of interventions with a long-term vision.

Management response: **Fully accepted**

The country office is currently developing its next Country Programme Document (CPD) and this recommendation is already being incorporated into the discussions.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking ⁸³	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Scale up successful initiatives such as digital Document Processing System (TRANDOC) to other government institutions.	September 2023	Senior Management Programme	The CPD formulation.	Ongoing

⁸³ Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1.2 Ensure selected outputs for the next programme cycle are tangible and people centric through deepened Common Country Assessment (CCA) and CPD consultations at strategic thematic level with national counterparts but also a realistic resource mobilization strategy.	September 2023	Senior Management Programme	Thematic strategic paper discussions ongoing A wider partner discussion planned in March	Ongoing
1.3 Source strategic partnerships with non-government institutions for the implementation of the next programme cycle (extend the perspective of the resources mobilization to partnerships). Develop a Partnerships and Resource mobilization strategy for the CO.	December 2023	Senior Management Programme		Planned
1.4 Develop a holistic risk assessment log for the CPD, include the risks related to reliance on government cost sharing, and define a new approach as mitigation measure.	September 2023	Senior Management Programme		Planned
1.5 Improve overall communication with the stakeholders (including the UN agencies, donors, NGOs, and other potential partners) for better synergy and sustainability of interventions through annual programme review meetings for knowledge/results sharing, joint programming, capacity building, etc...	December 2023	Programme		Planned

RECOMMENDATION 2.



UNDP should structure its next programme with the triple objective of generating changes at the level of structural transformation, building resilience, and leaving no one behind, in alignment with the goals of the 2022-2025 UNDP Strategic Plan. The focus of interventions should be on those areas where UNDP can best demonstrate its strengths and added value, such as sustainable socio-economic development, health and governance.

Given the country's economic dependence on oil, UNDP must continue to push for economic diversification that is sustainable and inclusive, with strategies such as those for boosting the green and blue economy. Poverty reduction and the work on youth employment promotion and entrepreneurship should be scaled up to foster MSME incubation and acceleration at the national level, where UNDP could bring in international experience and lessons from its own programme offer, such as the SDG Value Chain and its five methodologies.⁸⁴

The COVID pandemic has demonstrated the need to strengthen resilience at every level. E-governance solutions and a reliable health system have proven key for this. On the one hand, the UNDP governance portfolio should continue to support the modernization of public administration and the development of new e-governance solutions that help to provide better public services, particularly for those at risk of being left behind. In that sense, it should continue supporting the country's human rights institutional framework development and the implementation of its international commitments. On the other hand, UNDP must sustain the contribution made in the fight against HIV, build on good practices and efficiency in procurement, and strengthen stock control and monitoring of ARVs and warehouse quality to reinforce the health system. It should continue to work towards a better health information system through digitalization.

Finally, given the limited resources and the need to prioritize efforts, UNDP should discuss with the Government its interest in resuming work on local development, the social protection system or improving access to justice, highlighting the social and economic benefits of investing in those areas.

Management response: Fully accepted



As with Recommendation 1, the current recommendation has already been considered during the internal retreat for the next CPD formulation.

⁸⁴ The UNDP SDG Value Chains Programme builds on more than 20 years of experience in Latin America and the Caribbean to provide integrated solutions for the private sector, governments, and development partners to foster the incubation and acceleration of MSMEs, through a demand-driven approach towards more inclusive and sustainable economies. <https://www.undp.org/sdgvaluechains>.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Scale up initiatives that address structural transformation such as the GUINEA ON (business incubator for women and youth in the blue economy) for the promotion of youth as cross cutting throughout the programmes in the next programme cycle, ensuring inclusion of resilience and LNOB aspects in programming.	September 2023	Senior Management Programme	CPD discussions are ensuring this inclusion	Ongoing
2.2 Scale up of e-governance solutions (Services on line, District Health information system – DHIS2) in the next programme cycle including possibly e-LMIS to reinforce logistics management within Health sector.	September 2023	Senior Management Programme		Planned
2.3 Consolidate the support to the country's economic diversification as an advisor of choice in the framework of the blue economy, the implementation of the SDGs and the mobilization of private sector financing, in the next programme cycle.	September 2023	Senior Management Programme		Planned

RECOMMENDATION 3.



UNDP needs to be proactive in seeking funding and promoting joint initiatives for the promotion of environmental protection and sustainable energy access across the country.

Given its global importance, and the UNDP capacity to intervene in these areas, the next CPD should continue to drive interventions to address key national priorities in terms of environmental protection and sustainable energy generation for all. UNDP should map the catalogue of potential donors in the environmental area and re-approach those that currently have a portfolio with a willingness to act in Equatorial Guinea. GEF funds should be explored for the promotion of biodiversity conservation, climate change, land use planning and energy. In the case of the GCF, UNDP should explore funding to promote the management of the protected areas system, the promotion of the generation and management of meteorological data in the country, and the continuation of the promotion of sustainable energies with an emphasis on the remote areas and islands of the country.

UNDP should also seek to ensure that its programme initiatives, particularly those linked to economic development, are consistent with the overall environmental obligations of the country and international and national environmental objectives. In that sense, UNDP should highlight its Ocean Promise for a global blue economy⁸⁵ when planning the next CPD. It should also foster partnerships and collaborations, for example with FAO, to boost synergy and results.

Management response: Fully accepted



The country office will endeavour to broaden its partnerships and resource mobilization strategies to the extent possible in the context of an upper middle-income country.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Elaborate a resource mobilization strategy for the next programme cycle, inter alia build on previous resource mobilization strategies and expand on partnerships. A PCAP developed to include energy and environment	December 2023	Senior Management Programme		Planned

⁸⁵ UNDP Ocean Promise. <https://www.undp.org/ocean>.

3.2 Initiate discussions on joint programming with FAO , UNEP for development of joint programs on biodiversity and adaptation under CO agreed portfolio programming	September 2023	Senior Management Programme		Planned
Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.3 Expand energy and environment CO portfolio to include national meteorological and early warning systems, support to protected areas and biodiversity among others , in the next programme cycle.	September 2023	Senior Management Programme		Planned

RECOMMENDATION 4.



UNDP should have a gender strategy and an LNOB strategy, which should guide all programme interventions in a cross-cutting manner, enabling the establishment of potentially transformative objectives for the prioritized population.

UNDP should use the opportunity provided by the Gender Equality Seal process to develop a strategy for gender equality and women's empowerment to guide the type of transformative interventions that can be promoted during the next programme cycle. It should consolidate the internal team working on the Seal so that its contributions go beyond the achievement of the Seal and are reflected in the programme approach as a whole and its indicators. In the next cycle, UNDP should prioritize the implementation of its first GEN3 project in the country, to reinforce its role as a provider but also as a convener and advocate for gender equality. UNDP should reinforce collaboration with UNFPA and explore partnering with CSOs, and grassroots and women's organizations to promote a policy shift towards equality and raise awareness through communication campaigns.

UNDP Equatorial Guinea should also have an LNOB strategy. It should guide the prioritization of beneficiaries to ensure that the furthest behind are reached first, and that no one in the country is left behind. UNDP should leverage the experience of this programme with youth, women, PWD and people living in remote areas, so the next programme focus is on addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of deprivation, disadvantage, and discrimination among them.

Management response: Fully accepted



Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Elaborate a country office gender Equality Strategy for the CPD.	December 2023	Programme Gender Committee	Terms of reference for the recruitment of the consultant are available.	Ongoing
4.2 Elaborate the LNOB strategy.	June 2024	Senior Management Programme		Planned

RECOMMENDATION 5.**UNDP Equatorial Guinea needs to make internal changes to maximize its programme’s potential for results and improve internal communication and the working environment.**

The new management of the office should consider the opportunity to review the organizational chart, and undertake an organizational realignment, if necessary, to effectively redeploy skills, competencies, and resources to respond to the next programme cycle. The findings and recommendations of the previous audit should be re-examined in view of the significant changes in budget, funding, and human resources since it was conducted in 2018. Clarity and coordination between the operational and programme sections must be ensured to improve efficiency and the working environment.

The country office must implement its annual training plans on time. It should strengthen language and project management, and monitoring skills among the team. In terms of regional support, the office would benefit greatly from having a clear interregional protocol for interacting with the RBA and RBLAC and the identification and receipt of corporate resources.

Management response: Fully accepted

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Review the organizational chart for alignment with the next programme cycle (if required).	June 2024	Senior Management Human Resources		Planned
5.2 Include language, project management and monitoring in the staff training plan and assign the adequate budget for implementation.	September 2023	Senior Management Human Resources		Planned
5.3 Improvement and clarity on communication, between operations and Programme units via joint meetings, audit recommendations review and quarterly update meetings	December 2023	DRR and unit heads		Ongoing

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/22469>

Annex 1. Evaluation Terms of Reference

Annex 2. Evaluation Framework

Annex 3. Project List

Annex 4. Stakeholders Interviewed

Annex 5. Documents Consulted

Annex 6. Status of Country Programme Document (CPD) Outcome and Output Indicators Matrix **Annex**

7. Rating Matrix

Annex 8. Country at a Glance



Independent
Evaluation
Office

United Nations Development Programme

Independent Evaluation Office
United Nations Development Programme
One UN Plaza, DC1-20th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel. +1(646) 781 4200

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