

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The Evaluation Office (EO) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) regularly conducts a number of country evaluations called Assessments of Development Results (ADRs), in order to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP contribution to development results at the country level. This evaluation:

- Provides an independent country-level assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of the development results achieved through UNDP support and in partnership with other development actors during the last four to seven years, with particular emphasis on the UNDP country programme;
- Contributes to accountability and to learning from experience, taking into account self-evaluations (project and outcome evaluations) and the role of development partners;
- Analyses how UNDP has positioned itself to add value in response to national needs and changes in the national development context; and
- Presents key findings, draws key lessons and provides a set of clear and forward-looking options to assist management make adjustments to current strategy and the next country programme.

Located in West Africa, Benin stretches a distance of 650 kilometres from the river Niger in the north to the Atlantic Ocean in the south and shares borders with Togo, Burkina Faso, Niger

and Nigeria. Benin ranked 163rd out of 177 countries on the 2007–2008 Human Development Index. The number of poor increased by nearly 10 percent between 2002 and 2006, leaving more than one third of the country's population living in poverty.³ During this period, Benin made advances in sustaining economic growth in a broadly stable macroeconomic framework, and in improving key social indicators. The country is regarded as a model for democracy in Africa. The current President, elected in 2006, is committed to transforming Benin through accelerated economic growth and significant reduction of poverty by 2025.

UNDP played an important role in accompanying the Government of Benin in preparing and monitoring the first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) 2003–2005, formulating its second generation, the Growth Strategy for Poverty Reduction (GSPR)⁴ 2007–2009, and elaborating the Strategic Orientations for Development 2006–2011. The UNDP programme in the Republic of Benin was selected for an ADR for the following reasons:

- The completion of the 2004–2008 Country Programme Outline (CPO) presents an opportunity to evaluate the achievements and results of the past programme cycle and earlier.
- The findings will be used as inputs to the 2008–2011 country programme, within the context of the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).
- The challenges that the Republic of Benin faced during the years encompassed by the

3. The World Bank International Development Association and International Monetary Fund, 'Second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Joint Staff Advisory Note', May 2007.

4. Stratégie de Croissance pour la Réduction de la Pauvreté (SCRPR).

2004–2008 country programme can be summarized as establishing political, economic and environmental conditions for development. Assessing the UNDP contribution to this process yields lessons for the organization.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The EO retained the services of a consulting company to carry out this evaluation, with the support of the UNDP EO and UNDP Benin. The independent evaluation team consisted of two international consultants supported by one national consultant. EO support was provided by a Task Manager and a Programme Associate. In accordance with the Terms of Reference,⁵ the ADR focused on UNDP contribution during the 2004–2008 programme period, and also examined activities that were started before 2004 and pursued thereafter. The mid-term review of the first country cooperation framework (CCF, 1997–2001) served as the baseline for the overall strategy and approach of the country programme.

1.2.1 OVERALL PROCESS

The ADR was undertaken in three phases. During the first, or preparatory, phase the EO collected background information on Benin and the UNDP country programme and uploaded it to a Web site established for the evaluation. After the consulting company was selected through a competitive process, the evaluation team began developing the Web site and expanding the database to accommodate the evaluation's Terms of Reference.

The second, or inception, phase started with the Team Leader's briefing at UNDP headquarters in New York from 28 to 30 January 2008. It included meetings with representatives of the Regional Bureau for Africa, the Bureau for Development Policy, the United Nations Development Group Office and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). Headquarter expectations for the Benin ADR included:

- Evaluating UNDP capacity to adjust to the high expectations of the population following the installation of the new president in 2006;
- Assessing the extent to which the UNDP programme supported capacity-building of the government;
- Examining the relevance and usefulness of UNDP support to attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and
- Identifying areas where UNDP country-programme support could result in Benin becoming a model country or a centre for South-South cooperation.

The one-week scoping mission to Benin, which took place from 11 to 15 February, was the second key feature of the inception phase. Carried out by the Task Manager and the evaluation team, the mission aimed to validate the ADR methodology and complete the stakeholder and document mapping. Furthermore, the mission helped the team identify a sample of UNDP interventions by sector and by region for further investigation and initiate the logistical process for the main mission. These objectives were realized through individual and group meetings with UNDP country staff and other stakeholders, which included government officials and representatives from the private sector, civil society and international organizations (including UN agencies). An inception report describing the context, objectives and planned methodology for the ADR was produced at the end of this phase.

The third, or data collection and validation, phase started with a two-week ADR mission in Benin from 17 to 30 March 2008. Drawing on research carried out in previous phases, the team reviewed additional documentation; conducted in-depth interviews with country office staff, international organizations, civil society, partners and beneficiaries of UNDP in the government; and visited a site in Borgou to meet with beneficiaries

5. See Annex 1.

of decentralized projects. The team made the approach as participatory as possible, taking care to ensure that the people selected for meetings during the scoping mission provided substantial detail, felt involved in the evaluation process and were interested in the results, recommendations and follow-up of the ADR report.

The third phase concluded with a one-day stakeholders' meeting, held in Benin in November 2008, to validate the last ADR draft report with stakeholders and obtain their final inputs.

It should be noted that ADR draft reports were prepared in English and had to be translated into French. Delays between the March 2008 data collection phase, the preparation of the French final draft report in September 2008, and the November 2008 stakeholders meeting did not coincide with an equivalent halt in the programme implementation. Programme activities have been ongoing during this period, and measures have been taken by UNDP Benin to address weaknesses identified by the evaluation team through interim English versions of the draft report submitted from May 2008 onwards. The present ADR report does not reflect activities conducted between March and November 2008; it provides a portrait of the programme at the time of the data collection phase.

1.2.2 EVALUATION DESIGN

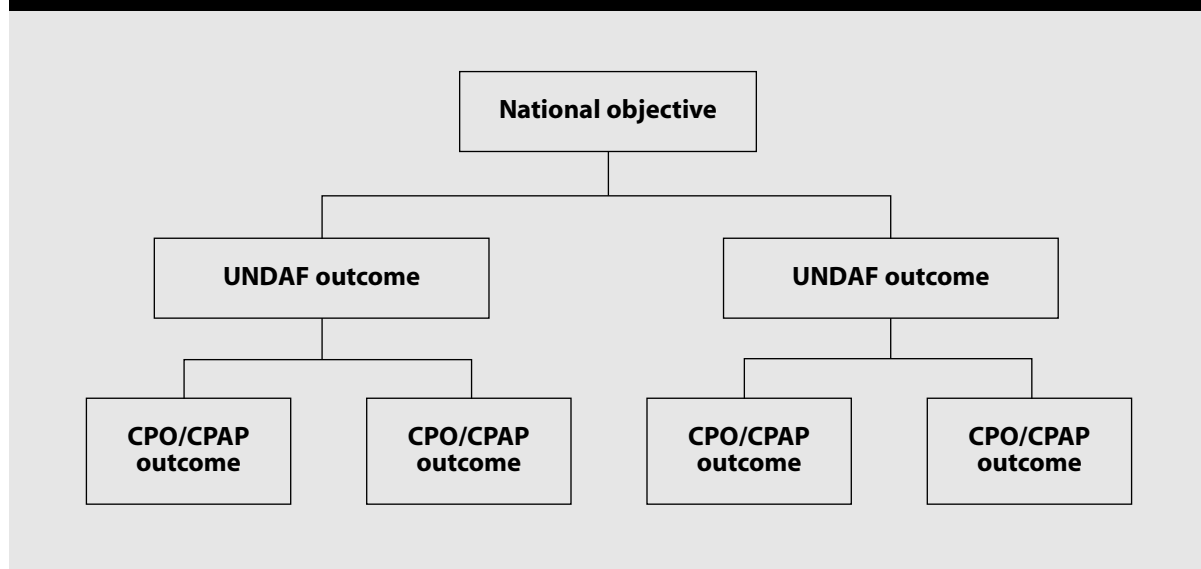
The overall design of the evaluation has been based on the following principles:

- Using, as the starting point of the ADR, the priorities and development objectives identified by the Government of Benin, along with the priorities and objectives UNDP committed to during the 2004–2008 programming period;
- Mapping a broad range of stakeholders at national and regional levels, including some not directly linked to the UNDP programme; and
- Evaluating UNDP contribution to these priorities and objectives, as well as factors affecting this contribution.

During the 2004–2008 period, UNDP, through the CPO/country programme action plan (CPAP), and the UN system, through the UNDAF, supported four national development objectives. These objectives have been used to frame the assessment of UNDP contribution. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the different levels of results.

This approach raises two fundamental questions for the assessment of UNDP contribution to national development:

Figure 1. The hierarchy of UN-system outcomes and national objectives



- Are the CPAP outcomes sufficient and sufficiently in line with the UNDAF outcome to contribute directly and positively to its attainment, and are the UNDAF outcomes sufficient and sufficiently in line with the national objective to contribute directly and positively to its attainment?
- Are the CPAP outcomes necessary to attain the UNDAF outcome, and are the UNDAF outcomes necessary to attain the national objective?

Answers to these questions are provided in the analyses presented in chapter 4, UNDP Contribution to National Development Results, and constitute the thread that logically links evaluation criteria presented in this Introduction.

The evaluation takes into account the fact that the programme was redesigned at the middle of its implementation leading to the revision of the UNDP outcomes, although remaining in line with the UNDP and national development objectives.

1.2.3 GATHERING AND USING DATA

This evaluation was conducted in a number of steps. These entailed document review, working sessions with country office staff, and individual and group interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The first step of data collection and analysis was to initiate a mapping of the country programme over the period under review. The overall structure of UNDP and UN development system programming tools were used as the basis for the mapping process, as indicated by the following hierarchy:

- The common country assessment (CCA) analyses the national development situation and takes into account national priorities and development objectives;
- The UNDAF establishes the strategic framework for the country-level operational activities of the UN system;

- The CPO identifies the UNDP role within UNDAF, ensuring that this role is consistent with the corporate goals of UNDP.
- The CPAP presents the management plan for CPO implementation.

Since there was a change in programme structure during this period, the evaluation team worked with the country office staff to identify the most suitable framework of programmes, projects and outcomes that would adequately capture the sum of activities conducted by the country office. A first mapping used the main sectors of intervention as defined by the 2004–2008 CPO. These included poverty, governance, environment and HIV/AIDS, with the cross-cutting issues of gender and information technologies. Efforts were also made to capture the non-project activities that contributed to each programme outcome.

The evaluation endeavoured to examine the architecture of interventions that were designed to bring about development changes agreed upon by UNDP and the Government of Benin in the 2004–2006 and 2007–2008 CPAPs. In order to determine and identify the appropriate level of outcomes and results, the team compared those identified in the CPO, the CPAP and the Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF).⁶

Then, the final mapping linked national objectives, UNDAF objectives and outcomes, CPAP objectives and outcomes, and projects in a hierarchical model. This final mapping was developed through a review of UN, UNDP and key country documents (including ‘Strategic Directions for Benin Development’, PRSP and GSPR) and extensive working sessions with UNDP programme officers.

The second step of data collection and analysis consisted of interviews, which used semi-structured data collection tools, conducted using the final mapping as basis. Interviewees included:⁷

6. Until 2008, the MYFF was the principal UNDP strategic-planning instrument as a corporate entity. It consists of two basic elements: a strategic results framework and an integrated resources framework that brings together all financial allocations for programmes, programme support, support to the UN and management, and administrative costs.

7. See Table 1.

Table 1. Data collection matrix

Geographic area	Category of stakeholder	Data collection tools		
		Individual interview	Group interview	Mapping
Regional and national levels	UN/UNDP personnel			•
	UN country team – Benin		✓	
	UNDP Benin personnel	✓	✓	
	Government of Benin			•
	Sectoral ministries	✓	✓	
	Coordination and/or monitoring groups	✓	✓	
	National Assembly	✓		
	Public and semi-autonomous organizations or institutions	✓	✓	
	Civil society and CSOs by sector	✓	✓	•
	Donors	✓		•
Local level (including stakeholders located in Cotonou and Porto-Novo)	Government of Benin			
	De-concentrated administrative services	✓		
	Local elected bodies		✓	
	Leaders of opinion		✓	
	CSOs by sector		✓	
	Target population			
	UNDP intervention beneficiaries	✓	✓	
	Target population outside of UNDP support		✓	

- UNDP Benin team members, who provided information on staff perceptions of their own achievements, relations with national counterparts and international partners, and internal working environment, including communications with UNDP regional bureaux and headquarters;
- Representatives of the National execution modality (NEX)⁸ unit of the Ministry of State in Charge of the Economy, Planning,

8. National execution, managed by National Execution Units, is a modality under which a specific country-level programme or project is carried out by an eligible local government entity. The NEX Unit in Benin regroups national experts in project and programme management, and monitors such work with UNDP country office specialists.

Development and Evaluation of Public Policies (MECEPDEAP),⁹ who offered an assessment of UNDP performance and achievements from the perspective of the main UNDP national partner;

- Donors, who discussed UNDP positioning among the donor community; and
- Stakeholders and beneficiaries—such as sectoral ministries, public and semi-autonomous organizations or institutions, and civil society organizations (CSOs)—who provided details on the support received by UNDP, the organization’s capacity to adapt to the evolving needs of its target population, and the benefits for the population, specifically those pertaining to living conditions or professional performance improvement.

Information collected through interviews with more than 100 participants (on an individual and group basis¹⁰—see Annex 2) was compiled and organized under each factor that influenced UNDP contribution (see section 1.2.4). Many persons were interviewed more than twice and by two different team members. Each interview was conducted using a standard grid, adapted to each informant on the basis of his or her role in the country programme (e.g., actor, beneficiary, outside observer) and the specific issues identified during literature review (e.g., expected results, partnerships, challenges in the sector, long-term perspectives). Interviews were compiled and contrasted with documentation.

Triangulation was done through data collected from literature and the perceptions expressed by UNDP staff, national counterparts, stakeholders and beneficiaries, international partners, and the donor community. The evaluation team used at

least three different sources for each UNDP practice area, and most sources were explored by two team members. The evaluation team compared perceptions among different participant categories; among internal, national and independent assessments; and between participants and documentation.

The amount of documentary information available was impressive. Over the years, the country office and the NEX Unit have conducted a number of internal evaluations, including: the mid-term CPO evaluation; annual project results and CPAP reports; sectoral reviews; annual reports on the socio-economic situation in Benin; Resident Coordinator annual reports; programme briefing notes; and annual work plans. On a larger scale, also analysed were Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and strategic and planning documents from the UN system and the government, including CPO, UNDAF, MYFF, PRSP and GSPR.

In addition to this vast amount of information, the evaluation team reviewed external evaluations, such as the mid-term evaluation of the second Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening, a final assessment of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria’s national programmes to fight AIDS and other diseases, a final assessment of UNCDF Support to Municipalities’ Development and Self-Help Project (ADECOI)¹¹ in Borgou, a review of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) portfolio, Social Watch annual alternative reports, Multi-lateral Organizations Performance Assessment Network annual survey, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)¹² country evaluation, and country and sectoral assessments by The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Commission.

9. Ministère de la Prospective, du Développement et de l’Évaluation de l’Action Publique.

10. In addition, a group discussion bringing together past, actual and potential UNDP partners was organized during the mission. It included representatives from civil society organizations, NGOs, state bodies such as National Assembly and Economic and Social Council, private entrepreneurs and institutions, and international donors.

11. Projet d’Appui au Développement Communal et aux Initiatives Locales dans le Borgou. The Final evaluation report is available on line at: www.uncdf.org

12. Mécanisme africain d’évaluation par les pairs.

Table 2. Evaluation criteria and related questions

Criteria	Questions
A. Strategic positioning	
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Were the outcomes that the Government of Benin and UNDP agreed upon addressing Benin's national development priorities? ■ Was the UNDP-developed intervention architecture realistic, necessary and sufficient? ■ How relevant was the UNDP programme to its mandate and human development agenda?
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ During the CPAP period, was the architecture of interventions flexible enough to adapt to changes in the environment? ■ During project life, how flexible was the capacity of UNDP to adapt its interventions to changing needs? ■ What opportunities were taken? ■ What opportunities were missed?
Appropriate role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What was the key UNDP role (e.g., coordinator, convener, process support, technical input, supporting UN agenda)? ■ Was the role or mix of roles the most appropriate?
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Did UNDP engage in strategic partnerships? ■ What was the quality of the strategic partnerships established by UNDP?
B. Design and implementation	
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Were the expected results of UNDP interventions under each outcome attained? ■ Collectively, did the expected results allow UNDP to reach the outcome?
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Did UNDP use its human and organizational resources efficiently? ■ What was the quality of the planning and monitoring tools used by UNDP? Did UNDP use them adequately? ■ Were there leveraging effects planned and implemented between activities related to different outcomes? ■ What was the level of programme activities' dependence on outside funding?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How sustainable were these projects' results? ■ Was capacity-building included in project design? ■ Did the programming of new interventions during the CPAP period build on assets from a previous or ongoing project?

1.2.4 EVALUATION CRITERIA

Data collection and analysis was guided by evaluation criteria and related evaluation questions. The criteria were identified through literature review and interviews during the scoping mission. They were also grouped within the two sets of factors affecting UNDP contribution: those related to the

strategic positioning of the UNDP programme, and those related to the design and implementation of UNDP interventions. Efficiency issues were also included, if they were seen to have a significant impact on the UNDP contribution. Table 2 presents the evaluation criteria and questions used to assess these factors.

1.2.5 LIMITATIONS

Major constraints to which the evaluation team was confronted during the ADR include:

- Benin and UNDP internal environment instability during the CPO period: major changes took place at the country level (e.g., presidential and legislative elections), and at UNDP level (e.g., UNDP personnel turnover and management tools experimentations). The main consequences of these changes have been: (i) the lack of knowledgeable people who could inform the ADR team on the entire CPO period; (ii) the lack of corporate memory concerning the programme life cycle in both the government and UNDP Benin; and (iii) the inconsistencies in the reporting format and content of the projects and programme over the period. Despite using extensive data from the literature and making as much triangulation as possible, the evaluation team was not able to fully overcome this limitation.
- Recurring problems in each country programme evaluation since the mid-term review of the 1997–2001 country programme: issues are linked to indicators used for monitoring and evaluation, and to the availability of basic data; during the 2004–2008 CPO period, some of the stated outcomes may not have been attainable due to lack of specificity, were not measurable, or because they were not quantified; others were not action-oriented, and many lacked clear baseline data at the start. In consequence, the evaluation team had to make extensive use of qualitative data and some findings are not adequately supported by quantitative evidence. This may, unfortunately, convey the idea that outcomes cannot be assessed quantitatively and that ADRs are basically qualitative studies.
- UNDP programme review and generalization of findings: the programme was redesigned at the mid-term of the CPO, giving birth to what has been perceived by most national and UNDP actors interviewed as two different periods of support (2004–2006 and 2006–2008). Although the evaluation team found no indication of reorientation of ongoing projects between 2004 and 2008, UNDP did develop new interventions in support to the priorities identified by the new government in 2006. If the evaluation team was able to reckon that most interventions of the programme, taken individually, were relevant, it could not express a valid appraisal of programme consistency over the years considering the long-term nature of the development challenges facing Benin. This is a serious limitation to the generalization of findings: from a long-term perspective, the factual or short-term pertinence of UNDP support could be detrimental to national development due to potential inconsistency over time. Such analysis could not be carried out by the ADR team, but the risk of dispersion has been identified and duly stressed.
- Integration of UNDP interventions in national activities: through the NEX modality, UNDP interventions are highly integrated in national activities and UNDP itself is only one actor among many others involved in Benin development. Within the time-frame of the ADR, it was not possible for the evaluation team to clearly distinguish between UNDP and government-specific contributions to national development.

1.2.6 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is presented in five chapters. Following the Executive Summary and this Introduction, Chapter 2 examines the national development context, national planning and aid management, and remaining development challenges. Chapter 3 discusses UN and UNDP presence in Benin. Chapter 4 assesses UNDP contribution to development results through programme activities, including non-project interventions. It also reviews factors affecting UNDP contribution, according to the framework of the evaluation criteria presented above. Chapter 5 draws conclusions and lessons from the evaluation exercise and makes recommendations.