



INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION

MALI

Draft report

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Independent Evaluation Office

Acknowledgements

Foreword

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ACRONYMS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted an Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) in Mali in 2018. The ICPE covered the period from 2015 to early 2018, namely the first three years of the current 2015-2019 cycle. Its objectives are as follows:

- Support the development of the new UNDP Country Programme;
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP vis-à-vis national stakeholders;
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP vis-à-vis the UNDP Executive Board.

This first ICPE in Mali aims to provide key elements for the development of a new Country Programme, which the Country Office and relevant national stakeholders will implement starting in 2020.

1.2 NATIONAL CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Mali, a vast landlocked country, is located in north-western Africa, bordering Algeria, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger. The country has a total area of 1 241 238 km², with significant variations in population density between its regions.¹ The total population of Mali is 17.8 million.²

Long considered a politically stable country, and a model for democracy in the region, Mali has been governed, since 1991, by civilian governments elected through democratic, multiparty elections held every five years. However, in 2012, fighting erupted between Government forces and Tuareg rebels, leading to a political and security crisis that has resulted in dire economic and social consequences. In January 2013, French-led military forces were deployed, which handed over to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in July 2013. Negotiations between government and rebel coalitions culminated in the signing of a peace agreement in 2015 (“Accord d’Alger”), which highlighted the need for decentralization and regional development, particularly in the North.

In July and August 2013, presidential elections deemed transparent and credible were held with the joint support of UNDP and MINUSMA. The current Head of State is President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who holds a five-year mandate with a two-term limit imposed by the 1992 Constitution. The President appoints the Prime Minister, who, as the Head of Government, holds executive power and shares legislative power with the National Assembly.

After a decade of solid economic growth (5.7% on average for 2000-2010)³, the 2012 crisis had a severe impact on the country’s economy. Net GDP growth rates went from 0% in 2012, to 1.7% in 2013 and reached 7.0% in 2014.⁴ Between 2015 - 2017, average economic growth reached 5.5%. Mali’s agriculture, fishing and livestock sector represented approximately 40% of the GDP over 2012-2015 and accounted for just under half of that period’s economic growth. Due to its potential demographic and economic

¹ Le PNUD au Mali, “A propos du Mali”: <http://www.ml.undp.org/content/mali/fr/home/countryinfo.html>

² As of 2015. UNDP, Human Development Reports <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/44206>

³ African Economic Outlook (AEO), 2017

⁴ Rapport de mise en œuvre à mi-parcours du CSCRP 2012-2017, 2015. The updated 2013 growth is 2.3% (source : World Bank)

impact, the development of the primary sector is a major challenge for the country, as it is subject to climate change and price fluctuations for primary commodities. Agriculture employs around two thirds of the workforce in Mali, making inclusive growth in the country highly dependent on the sector's prospects.⁵

In 2016, Mali's Human Development Index was 0.442, ranking it 175 out of 188 countries in the 2016 index, which positions the country in the Low Human Development category.⁶ Progress towards the MDGs deteriorated due to the 2012 political and security crisis, with poverty rates increasing between 2012 and 2013. Overall progress on health indicators show encouraging results, but the nutritional situation remains precarious and access to quality health services must be further focused on in future governmental plans. The CSCR framework had allocated 8% of its 2012-2014 budget to the health sector, but only 5% was spent on this sector.⁷ Education is a clear priority of Mali's Governmental action plan for 2013-2018, and a key sector in the CSCR, representing a fifth of its budget, which shows the government's commitment to improving schooling in the country.

The Government adopted in late 2016 the Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development 2016-2018 (CREDD) as a framework for designing, implementing and monitoring development policies and strategies. The new National Development Strategy integrates the government's strategic orientations and makes it possible to realize the ambitions of Technical and Financial Partners in a single reference document reflecting development priorities for the 2016-2018 period. It was adopted on April 27, 2016 and formally approved by Decree No. 2016-0889 / P-RM of November 23, 2016 as a national policy document. Thus, the priorities of Mali's Plan for Sustainable Recovery (PRED 2013-2014), the Government Action Programme (PAG 2013-2018), the Accelerated Development Programme of the Northern Regions (PDA/ RN), New challenges of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali are translated into this new single reference document, making it possible to bring all these policies and strategies into coherence.

Gender equality, and in particular women's participation in economic and political activities, remains an important challenge. In 2015, Mali's Gender Inequality Index (GII) value was 0.689, ranking it 156th out of 159 countries. In Mali, 8.8 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women, and 7.3 percent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education – compared to 16.2 percent of their male counterparts. Female participation in the labour market is 50.1 percent compared to 82.3 for men.⁸

Mali's key environmental challenges arise from desertification, natural disasters and decreasing rainfall due to climate change. Due to the large share of a rural, small-farm holding population, impacts of environmental challenges negatively affect livelihoods and food security. Mali was hit by a drought in 2011, resulting in poor harvests, and floods in 2012, further compounding the regional inequalities preceding the 2012 conflict and political crisis⁹. Rapid demographic growth and urbanization puts additional pressure on natural resources, and access to water is also a key concern. In 2014, the country adopted a national policy for climate change, as well as a strategic framework for investment and sustainable land management (*Cadre stratégique d'investissement et de Gestion durable des terres* – CSI-GDT).

⁵ International Monetary Fund, Mali Country Report No. 15/340, December 2015

⁶ UNDP, Human Development Report briefing note for Mali, 2016.

⁷ Rapport de mise en œuvre à mi-parcours du CSCR 2012-2017, 2015

⁸ UNDP, Human Development Report briefing note for Mali, 2016.

⁹ European Parliament, Mali: Economic factors behind the crisis, 2014.

1.3 UNDP IN MALI

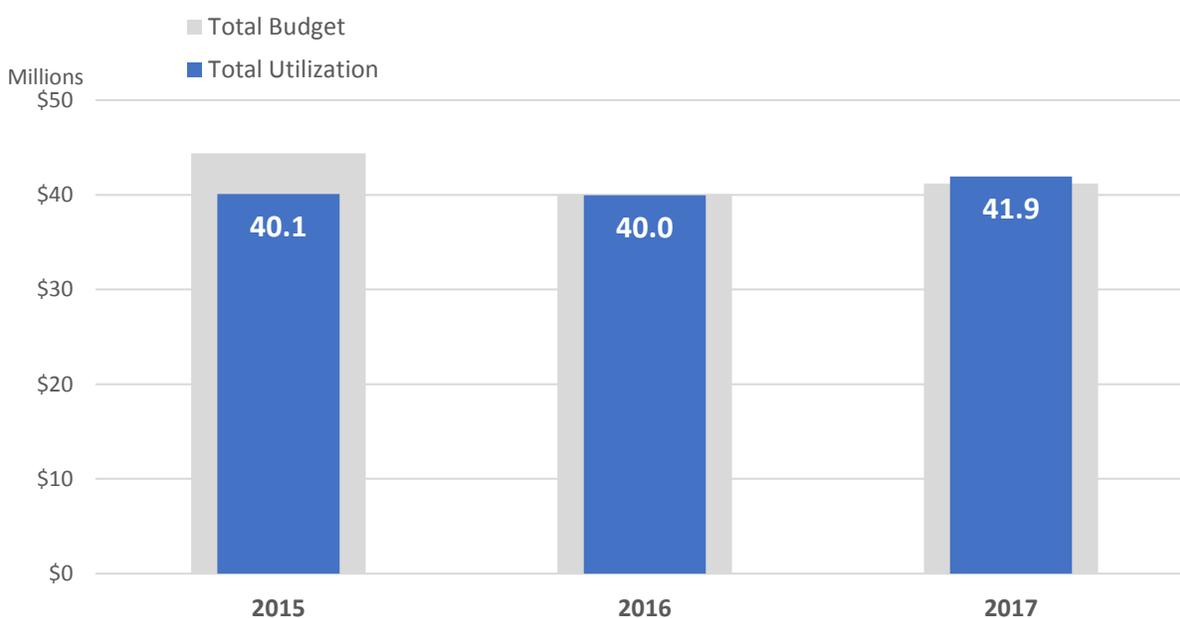
The UNDP programme for 2015-2019 was developed based on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2015-2019 (UNDAF +¹⁰), in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the other 20 funds and programmes of the United Nations System¹¹.

The UNDP Programme is built around the four UNDAF+ outcomes, which are:

- 1- Strengthening security, peace and national reconciliation,
- 2- Inclusive growth and sustainable development,
- 3- The promotion of good governance, and
- 4- Access to quality basic social services.

At the time of the evaluation, the country office employed a total of 152 personnel, including 49 staff, 12 UNVs and 91 service contract holders. For the implementation of the current country programme, UNDP has had an average budget of about \$ 40 to \$ 45 million a year, and has spent around \$ 40.5 million a year on average, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Evolution of Programme Budget and Spending, 2015-2017



Source: Atlas Executive Snapshot

¹⁰ The development assistance framework, named “UNDAF +”, is the reference document for the United Nations intervention in Mali, including the integrated stabilization mission MINUSMA. It is commonly referred to as the “UNDAF”.

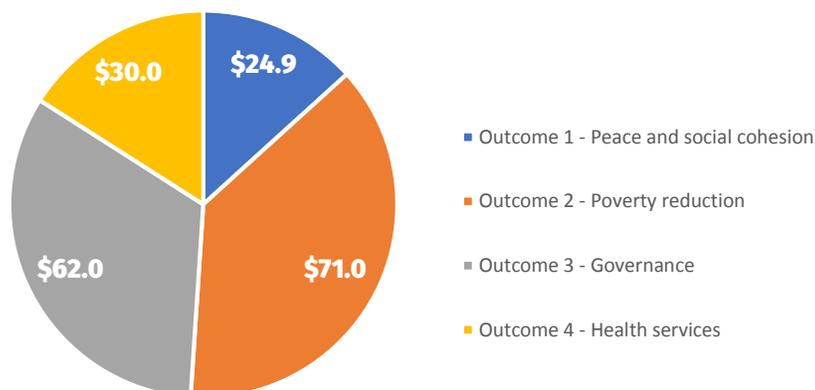
¹¹ FAO, ILO, IOM, OCHA, OHCHR, UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNMAS, UNODC, UNOPS, UN Women, WFP and WHO.

In each of the programme areas, UNDP has, through its country programme document (CPD)¹², identified the expected outcomes, priorities, main targets, UNDP-specific results, as well as indicative programme resources.

At the resource level, the programme area focusing on poverty reduction was the largest part of the programme, with 71 million - 38% of the total resources, foreseen in the CPD. The smallest share of programme resources were allocated to the peace and social cohesion outcome, accounting for about 13% of the total planned resources, with nearly \$ 25 million earmarked for its programme.

Figure 2. Indicative programme resources, 2015-2019

Millions, US Dollars



Source: CPD

1.4 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Scope of the evaluation. This ICPE covers the period from 2015 to early-2018, namely the first three years of the current 2015-2019 programme. The ICPE covers all UNDP activities in the country, and interventions financed by all sources of funding, including UNDP core resources, donor funds and government funds. The ICPE also covers non-project activities - such as coordination or advocacy - considered important for the country's political and social agenda.

Methodology. The Evaluation based its analysis on the results framework presented by the CPD. It looked at each of the planned results and considered their links to the programme's objectives.

The evaluation methodology is structured around three main questions: (i) what did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?; (ii) to what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?; and (iii) what factors contributed to or hindered UNDP's performance and eventually, to the sustainability of results? In addition, as gender equality is central to UNDP's support to countries to implement and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

¹² DP/DCP/MLI/3

Development and the SDGs, the evaluation will also analyze the extent to which UNDP Mali support was designed and contributed to gender equality. To answer these questions, the evaluation methodology includes triangulation of the following elements:

- An analysis of the project and programme portfolio as well as a review of programme documents, documents and reports on projects / programmes carried out by UNDP and the Government of Mali, evaluations, UNDP institutional documents (strategic plan, annual results-oriented reports, etc.), action research, and other available country-related publications. The main documents consulted are mentioned in Annex x.
- Approximately 80 interviews were conducted with staff of the UNDP Mali country office, representatives and staff of the authorities and government institutions at central and local levels, officials and staff of other United Nations organizations, as well as development partners, civil society organizations, and beneficiary populations (men and women) of the Country Programme. The institutions that were met by the evaluation team were identified on the basis of the desk review of UNDP programme and country context documents. These interviews were used to collect data and obtain a thorough understanding of perceptions from a variety of partners and development actors on the scope and impacts of UNDP interventions on men and women, its contributions and performance, and to determine the constraints in the implementation of the projects as well as the strengths and weaknesses of UNDP in Mali.
- Field visits made it possible for the evaluation team to directly identify achievements of a few key projects and conduct semi-structured interviews with beneficiaries of UNDP-supported interventions. The evaluation team visited areas of the country where UNDP has a high concentration of key projects, including Yanfolila, Segou, Sikasso, Mopti, Timbuktu and Bamako, to observe the achieved results. The identification of relevant stakeholders for the interviews was based on available project documents, dialogue with UNDP programme managers and national partners, and on the availability of individuals. In addition, appropriate safety precautions, the remoteness of project sites and air travel requirements had to be taken into account.

Limits. The UNDP programme in Mali is being implemented in a context that remains, several years after the events of 2012, complex - especially in the Central and Northern regions. Access to project sites is not only limited by security conditions, but also by the geographical distance and isolation of certain territories. These difficulties have affected the evaluation mission, as they can affect UNDP programme operations. They make it particularly difficult to know exact beneficiary needs and limit the capacity to collect updated data on the situation on the ground.

The problems of access to the ground are aggravated by the geographical and thematic dispersion of the programme. With limited time in the country, and only part of the evaluation team allowed to travel outside of Bamako, choices had to be made for the selections of localities and projects to visit. In addition, scheduled meetings in the capital with government partners and technical and financial partners have sometimes suffered from calendar errors or cancellations. However, in each of the regions visited (South, Central and North), several interviews were conducted with partners, representatives of local authorities and beneficiaries.

As will be discussed in the rest of the report, the UNDP programme, and development actors as a whole, suffer from a lack of data and national capacity for under-developed statistics, although progress has been

made since beginning of the programme, for example through monitoring the CREDD indicators. This context is compounded by the lack of dedicated monitoring and evaluation resources within the country office. The mid-term review of the CPD also noted weaknesses in the programme's logical framework, and the fact that some indicators of programme outputs and outcomes are, at least in part, inadequate for monitoring. The evaluation team therefore had to analyze some aspects of UNDP performance on the basis of incomplete or imperfect data.

Process. Following the drafting of the Terms of Reference for the ICPE (Annex 1) in January 2018, the IEO recruited three consultants to cover the areas of the country programme. The Lead Evaluator, the Associate Evaluator and the three consultants undertook a data collection mission from 5th to 23rd February 2018. At the end of the mission, preliminary results and key issues for reflection were discussed with the country office management and staff. Subsequently, the team drafted separate reports on each thematic area. The findings of each of these reports were then synthesized in the overall ICPE report.

The draft report was submitted to the IEO for internal peer review and review by a member of IEO Evaluation Advisory Panel, then to the country office and UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, and finally to the government and other partners. The organization of a videoconference workshop brought together key programme stakeholders and provided an additional opportunity to discuss results and recommendations, and to obtain feedback and clarification on the ICPE report prior to its finalization.

CHAPTER 2. EVALUATION FINDINGS

2.1 PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES FOR 2015-2019

Finding 1: UNDP is active in all areas of the UNDAF and has not clearly defined specific areas towards which to target its contribution. This led to a certain thematic dispersal, as well as a multiplication of targets, making its objectives overall more difficult to reach. This lack of prioritization in the programme strategy also led to geographically scattered projects, further reducing their potential impact.

Programme outcomes, as well as UNDP-specific results are defined in the country programme document (CPD) and summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Outcomes and Results of the 2015-2019 Country Programme Document

Programme Outcomes	UNDP-specific results
Outcome 1: "By 2019, social cohesion is facilitated by transitional justice, community dialogue, culture and education for peace."	The institutions responsible for the national reconciliation process have the technical and operational skills needed to drive social cohesion-building for sustainable peace
	Decentralized and local authorities and civil society (community leaders, religious leaders, women's and youth organizations) in the north have the necessary capabilities for local conflict prevention and resolution
	IDP reintegration and rehabilitation is ensured through the effective implementation of a sustainable solutions strategy
Outcome 2: "By 2019, vulnerable populations, especially women and youth, are using productive capacities in a healthy (natural) environment that is conducive to poverty reduction."	Ministries in charge of the economy, finance and planning have improved their capacity for policy formulation, public finance management and aid coordination in order to stimulate broad-based growth and reduce inequality
	The resilience of the most vulnerable populations in rural areas is strengthened through better use of natural resources, promotion of disaster and climate risk reduction, utilization of renewable energy sources and better access to economic opportunities and financial services.
	The planning, evaluation and resource allocation capacities of the institutions responsible for the environment are strengthened to implement sectoral plans that better integrate poverty-environment links, disaster and climate risk reduction concerns
Outcome 3: "By 2019, the state and national and local institutions are more effective in fulfilling their public service mission and non-state actors participate in the life of the nation and exercise citizen control in accordance with the principles of good governance and of the rule of law. "	Parliament's legislative and government oversight capacities are strengthened.
	The justice reform and the redeployment of the administration in the regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu are consolidated to strengthen State authority and the rule of law
	The institutional capacity of bodies in charge of decentralization and of local civil society are strengthened for the effective transfer of powers and resources to local authorities

Outcome 4: "By 2019, communities, especially the most vulnerable and those affected by the crisis, will be able to access and benefit from quality basic health care on an equal and more equal footing. "	Coordination, management and monitoring capacities of the Ministry of Health, civil society and subrecipients are strengthened for an effective response to HIV.
	Quality prevention and treatment services are available to achieve a significant decline in the HIV prevalence rate

UNDP’s approach and strategy within each CPD outcome is further defined in the programme document, including the choice of partners and targets.

In the area of **social cohesion and peace**, UNDP's strategy for achieving its goals focuses on strengthening the institutions responsible for the national reconciliation process, and in particular those of Justice, to provide them with the technical and operational skills required to promote strengthening social cohesion and to achieve sustainable peace. UNDP also sought to mobilize the local population, through labor-intensive activities for reconstruction and rehabilitation work, in the localities where the projects aimed at giving back to the State authorities the premises necessary for their operation.

UNDP also plans to build the capacity of local authorities and civil society (traditional leaders, religious leaders, women's and youth organizations) in the north to prevent, manage and resolve conflict. The Commission for Truth, Justice and Reconciliation (CVJR) was also targeted through support to the development of its work plan and ensuring local authorities and civil society can participate to its implementation.

Finally, UNDP has targeted the reintegration and rehabilitation of internally displaced persons. However, at the time of the evaluation, and because of the lack of agreement between the Malian government and the armed groups on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, UNDP had not yet implemented activities in this specific area.

To achieve the goal set out in the area of **poverty reduction and a healthy and sustainable environment**, UNDP sought to strengthen partnership with civil society organizations, technical services and decentralized communities, especially for sustainable development, climate resilience and social cohesion. Priority has been given to the Central and Northern regions where conflicts have taken place and where disparities and inequalities are most prevalent.

UNDP focused on strengthening the capacity of national structures responsible for national policies and strategies for economic cooperation and human development, as well as bodies in charge of public financial management. UNDP targeted support at these central structures to facilitate strategy development and institutional capacity building. A central element of the programme in this area was Mali's capacity to manage development aid, an area directly related to the UNDP position among development actors. Support for economic development structures should also focus on the emergence and development of small businesses for the creation of employment and wealth.

To strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations, the UNDP strategy has relied on working to improve the use of natural resources and renewable energy, and to reduce disaster and climate risk, for

the development of economic alternatives. This work was to be strengthened through partnerships with environmental institutions, including about their planning and resource allocation capabilities.

UNDP's **good governance** strategy has focused on supporting central government institutions, including Parliament, to strengthen its legislative and oversight capacities; and the Ministry of Justice, to accompany the redeployment of the judicial administration in the northern regions. In addition, UNDP has targeted support for the effective transfer of powers and resources to local authorities, by strengthening the institutional capacities of the decentralization bodies as well as local civil society.

Finally, in the programme for **access to basic health services**, UNDP's work is centered on its role as the principal recipient of the GFATM funds and as such contributes to the implementation of the national response to HIV / AIDS infection.

The UNDP strategy is thus first aligned with that of the country and is reflected in the objectives of scaling up the fight against HIV through the strengthening of screening services and the treatment of PLHIV through institutional and social mechanisms. operational at the local level, accompanied by support targeting the coordination, management and monitoring capacities of the Ministry of Health, civil society and secondary beneficiaries to effectively combat HIV status.

UNDP's programme is directly linked to the UNDAF outcomes, and it is understood that UNDP is implementing projects contributing to these UNDAF objectives. It is also understood that achieving this depends on the action of the entire United Nations system, in partnership with the Government of Mali, and often in collaboration with development actors in the country. In parallel, the programme document also defines UNDP-specific outputs, which are listed in Table 1 and include goals that cannot realistically be achieved by UNDP alone. By engaging in results that cover a wide range of thematic and technical areas, partnerships and targets across most of Mali's territory, the country office has not clearly defined the development priorities to which its work would contribute, nor did it organize its own structure accordingly. Annex x provides an overview of UNDP's projects implemented in 2017, showing a programme portfolio covering nearly 40 "cercles"¹³, in all 8 regions of Mali.

UNDP is identified as a "co-lead" in three of the four UNDAF programmatic pillars and is also included in the list of partners contributing to the fourth. By taking up a central role in the activities and objectives of the United Nations programme in Mali, without always having the resources to fulfill this role, the country office has taken on a difficult task of mobilizing significant resources, in all areas of the UNDAF, and without identifying real priorities through this document. As the evaluation mission found during interviews with different partners or stakeholders, this situation created misunderstandings about UNDP's positioning, and made it more difficult for the country office to mobilize funds.

In addition, the proliferation of projects of limited size and scope, targeting a large number of development issues and beneficiaries across the country, must be seen in light of the high-level objectives defined in the programme results framework. The results that UNDP achieved could generally not be commensurate with the programme's objectives and, more broadly, to development challenges in Mali. Interviews with various UNDP partners in Mali confirmed a weakness of the programme's logical framework, also identified in the CPD mid-term review, showing that the link between UNDP activities and the objectives of its programme is tenuous.

¹³ "Cercles" are an administrative unit of Mali, a subdivision of the regional level. There are 49 cercles in total.

Finding 2: UNDP is involved in the four thematic areas of UNDAF, with approaches and strategies that are largely distinct from each other. UNDP has not sufficiently explored synergies between activities in each thematic area of the programme.

Although programme managers, UN partners, and government partners understand that results in one specific programme area can have a positive impact on achieving the objectives of another area, these synergies have not been clearly explored. The CPD does not support the design of "cross-cutting" or larger-scale projects that would address several areas. On the contrary, and as indicated by the CPD review, the programme as it is implemented is largely composed of a multitude of micro interventions, responding first to the demands of the programme donors, and then linked to the objectives of the UNDP programme. The fragmentation of the programme has limited UNDP's ability to design projects that can meet multidimensional objectives.

One exception, which has yielded interesting results, is the implementation of High-Intensity Labor (HIMO) work in the field of security and restoration of state authority (Outcome 3 of the CPD). The project set forward an approach which integrated labor-intensive jobs, whose direct beneficiaries are the local populations¹⁴, to achieve the project's objective of redeploying the administration in the northern regions of the country. By including young people in activities related to the reconstruction of justice infrastructures, the project was able to contribute directly to the youth's financial resources, but also to their training, thus facilitating their access to employment. Furthermore, by improving their economic situation, it is expected that this young population will enjoy greater social cohesion, also contributing to the reduction of local conflicts.

Finding 3: Not all UNDP activities, as defined the objectives of the CPD, have been implemented. Differences and gaps between the planned activities and the implemented programme are evidenced by comparing indicative resources from the CPD and actual expenditures by programme outcome. Furthermore, activities in favor of internally displaced persons have not been implemented, putting the full achievement of UNDP's contribution to the peace and social cohesion outcome at risk.

Activities linked to the programme's goal of "Reintegration and rehabilitation of displaced persons are guaranteed through the implementation of a durable solutions strategy" have not been implemented. UNDP's 2017 annual reporting explains that this is due to the lack of agreement between the government and the armed movements on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration.

However, it can also be noted that other achievements in the areas of peace and social cohesion, governance and poverty reduction could potentially contribute to the economic reintegration of internally displaced persons. The UNDP-specific result is the effective implementation of durable solutions and strategies for reintegration, which have not yet been put in place. But this area of UNDP's programme could benefit from the results in other areas and exploit their potential contribution to this part of the programme. For example, an analysis of the needs of displaced populations could guide the UNDP response and assist in the reintegration of populations.

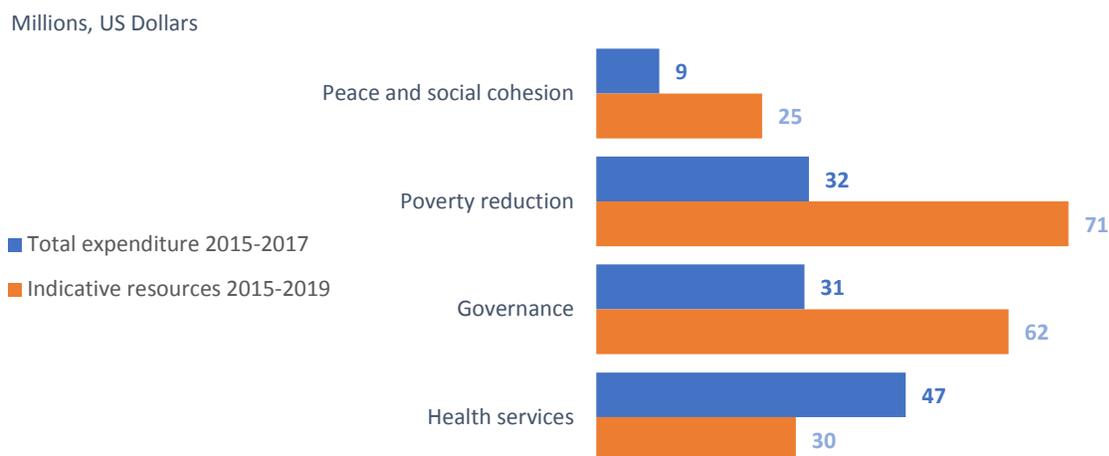
In support to refugee or displaced populations, several sources report that the greatest needs exist in the regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Mopti. Conflict and food insecurity are drivers of displacement and

¹⁴ According to the final evaluation of the project, without an accurate record of the number of people employed, it is estimated that about 1,500 people benefited directly from these jobs, and 300 people directly.

humanitarian needs. The needs expressed by displaced populations include security, food security and the need for health services. These are areas to which UNDP contributes through its activities in other parts of the programme. A more multidimensional approach and a better consideration of results would, however, allow UNDP to better understand its contribution to the crisis response, even if the projects planned and specifically related to the implementation of a strategy could not be implemented.

Another aspect of the difference between the CPD’s planned programme and the programme actually implemented is highlighted by comparing the programme’s indicative resources and actual expenditures by programme area or outcome.

Figure 3. Indicative resources and actual programme expenditures



Source: CPD and Atlas Executive Snapshot

It can be noted that the programme document’s financial focus on poverty reduction has not been reflected in UNDP’s expenditures. After three years of implementation, expenditures in this area reach only about 45% of what was planned in the CPD. However, UNDP has, by the end of 2017, already committed most of the regular resources, \$ 10m out of the \$ 13.5m indicated in the CPD for this specific outcome area. This illustrates two factual situations: it confirms the strong willingness of UNDP to invest in this area, and the difficulty for the office to mobilize external resources.

Another observation relates to the projects contributing to Health services, which with \$ 47m of expenditures made in the current period, already exceeds the amount of \$ 30m foreseen in the CPD. It is unclear, however, whether this is due to new activities, or an increased investment by the Global Fund, UNDP’s lead partner in this area.

Finally, the important difference between indicative resources and actual spending in the area of peace and social cohesion should also be noted. This can be explained in particular by the non-implementation of the activities foreseen for the benefits of refugees and displaced persons, as mentioned above.

2.2 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

Outcome 1 – Strengthening security, Peace and social cohesion

UNDP's main outputs in this area included sustained communication and education efforts towards conflict prevention and management. Peace volunteers, religious and traditional community leaders were trained to raise awareness on social cohesion in several localities. At the institutional level, UNDP targeted the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (CVJR) for the promotion of transitional justice, supporting the Commission's development of an action plan. In addition, UNDP supported the government's efforts to have a policy and action plan for the prevention of violent extremism. At the local level, UNDP projects implemented activities in support of social cohesion through local communities' livelihoods, targeting small grain and cereal growers in particular, with microprojects on irrigation and seed distribution, as well as vocational training.

Finding 4. An important progress put forward by UNDP relates to the operationalization of formal mechanisms of transitional justice and intra- and inter-community social dialogue. But the results of the CVJR remain limited and in the field, despite the increased activities at community level, inter and intra-community conflicts persist. UNDP did not adequately study the underlying causes of conflict and address the issues at the heart of the concerns of the most affected populations.

With UNDP's support, the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (CVJR) has consolidated its institutional capacities, notably through the establishment of texts governing its functioning, the regular holding of its meetings and the effective implementation of investigations on the territory. The Commission has collected a large number of testimonials from victims, but public hearings that would allow treating the cases and reaching reparation for victims have not yet taken place¹⁵. Given the commission's current capacities and its extremely complex and wide mandate, the results achieved by the CVJR are still insufficient to address deeply rooted causes of conflict at the community level¹⁶. In addition, a survey conducted in 2017 among the Malian population showed that the proportion of citizens who are not aware of the commission's existence was, at 63%, relatively high, although that figure has come down, from 75% the previous year¹⁷.

On the ground, the programme has implemented awareness and training activities focused on conflict prevention and resolution, for the benefit of civil society and community leaders. However, in view of the persisting inter-community conflicts, the question must be raised whether the interventions implemented by UNDP can be sufficient to achieve the goal of social cohesion and especially of culture and education for peace, which seem far beyond the control of UNDP only. The causes for the conflicts' persistence include the weakening of the authority of the state, delays in the implementation of key segments of the Peace Agreement, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups, and the fact that the crisis itself is spreading to the center of the country. These factors undoubtedly contribute to reducing the effectiveness of existing strategies for appeasement and national reconciliation.

¹⁵ As of November 2018, the Commission had collected 10 223 victim testimonials. The first public hearings were planned to take place in December 2018 (source: Journal du Mali, 8 December 2018).

¹⁶ The CVJR mandate includes investigating a large number of rights violations, covering the a very long period, from 1960 to 2013.

¹⁷ Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bureau Bamako, "Mali-Mètre – Enquête d'opinion "Que pensent les Maliens?", Nr. 9, 2017

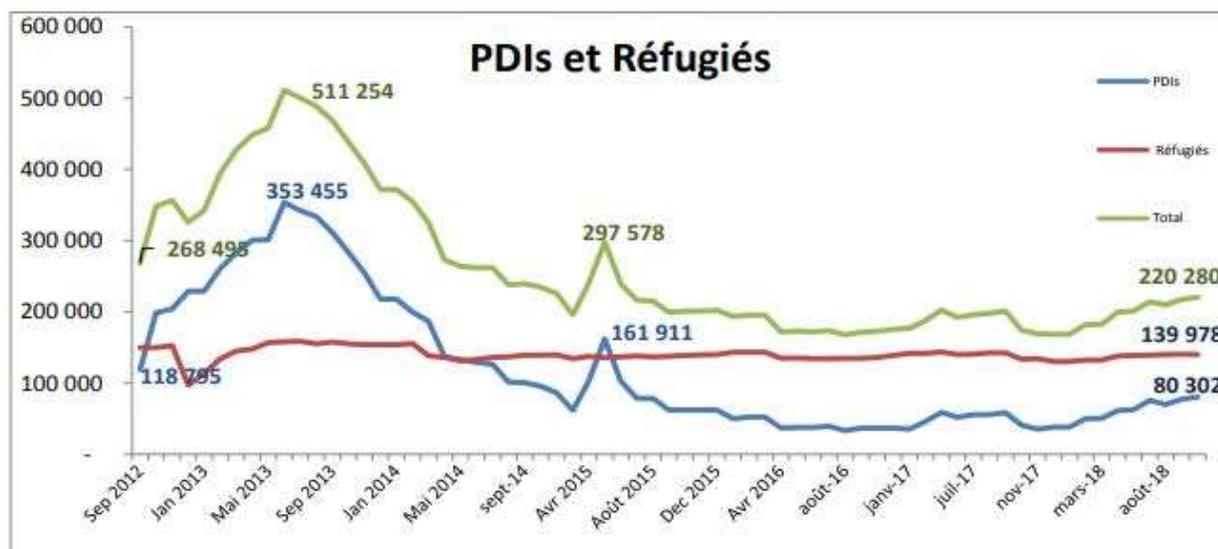
UNDP's 2017 annual reporting mentions, as an indicator of its programme's success, a diminution of conflicts in Timbuktu and Gao, going from 4 to 0. However, in 2017 and 2018, many sources still report regular clashes in the northern and central regions, with civilian casualties in different communities. The report of the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Mali on 25 September 2018¹⁸ reports a death toll of 287 civilians over the reporting period, the highest number since the deployment of MINUSMA.

Finding 5. Some contributions to the goal of social cohesion, as well as that of reintegration and rehabilitation of IDPs were obtained indirectly. But without a systematic integrated approach to exploit the results of other areas of the programme, these contributions are not measured, remain fragile, and are less likely to be sustainable.

Awareness-raising and training in the areas of conflict prevention and peace management are indirectly supported by strategies for bringing public services closer to the populations, developing access to basic social services, and promoting economic opportunities for people particularly vulnerable to the crisis, such as young people who remain vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups. These contributions, taken in an integrated way, can certainly help to stabilize the unstructured environments caused by the crisis and the inequalities it has accentuated.

Generally, the trend since 2014 shows an increase in the number of Malian refugees in neighboring countries¹⁹ (see Figure x), with over 118 thousand refugees in September 2012, and nearly 140 thousand in October 2018. The number of IDPs, following a sharp decline immediately after the conflict and a stabilization period in 2016 and 2017, has increased again in 2018.

Figure 4. Number of IDPs and refugees, 2012-2018



Source : UNHCR, Rapport sur les mouvements de population, Octobre 2018.

¹⁸ S/2018/866

¹⁹ Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso

The reasons for IDP's departures²⁰ and the needs expressed by Malian citizens²¹ illustrate that the populations of the North are particularly preoccupied by issues of security, unemployment and food insecurity - these three challenges are also among the most important for the populations of Timbuktu, Gao, Segou and Mopti. The needed transformational changes require long-term investments and efforts from all development partners. Because they directly address the issues of concern for vulnerable people and refugees, the work of other agencies, such as IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR and WFP, is particularly relevant to UNDP's goals in this area, although partnerships with such agencies appear to take only a small part in UNDP activities.

Outcome 2 – Inclusive and sustainable growth

This area of the programme is where UNDP had foreseen to invest the largest share of its resources, and it is in fact where it implemented the most projects over the period, with a total of 40 active projects. The large array of approaches included several projects in support of rural agricultural capacities and economic resilience, with the development of value chains (production and transformation of mango, shea and Gum Arabic), directly contributing to men and women's livelihoods. Other projects in UNDP's portfolio helped increasing access to renewable energy (installation of multifunctional platforms) as well as access to water (rehabilitation of water wells or irrigation systems). At the central level, UNDP supported the government's efforts to better coordinate and manage development aid, through the establishment of the country's new development framework for 2016-2020, direct support to the Aid Harmonization Secretariat, as well as improving the availability of baseline data on SDGs. UNDP helped develop and diversify Mali's trade capacities through national strategies pertaining to business climate and agricultural production for export. Finally, UNDP's activities targeting disaster risk reduction and environmental protection occurred through the formulation of a disaster risk reduction plan at the national and local levels, and the formulation of an investment plan for greenhouse gas reduction and climate change adaptation.

Finding 6. UNDP contributions in the area of economic development and inclusive growth first took place at the central level, through effective improvement of economic policy formulation and planning and business climate reform efforts. While results in the development of some sectors of the economy are apparent, poverty rates remain high, despite several years of economic growth. The questions remain of whether the economic policies can be effectively implemented, and the growth truly inclusive.

Although challenges remain important for Mali's economic development, UNDP has contributed to the institutional partners' efforts to find solutions to the structural problems of the country's economy. For example, results in the development of the mango industry have helped this production to increase its share of exports in 2016, and thus contribute to foreign currency inflows for the country. A key element of this contribution is that UNDP's work has enabled the government to become involved in supporting this sector, resulting in the development of its trade capacity, and the replication of these activities in other sectors. But while its support has been crucial, UNDP cannot attribute the positive results of an entire section of the economy to its sole action, at the risk of losing credibility with its partners.

²⁰ DTM Mali, "Matrice de Suivi des déplacements », December 2014

²¹ Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bureau Bamako, "Mali-Mètre – Enquête d'opinion "Que pensent les Maliens?", Nr. 9, 2017

In addition, the country's solid economic growth, which has continued since 2013, has not yet allowed to return to lower, pre-crisis poverty levels, particularly in the North. The growth rate in the primary sector is declining relative to other sectors, which are more often set in urban areas²². UNDP is highlighting results in the area of economic growth, due in particular to the creation of income-generating activities (IGAs) in agriculture and agri-food processing, but in at least one part of the country the food security is deteriorating. With the stated objective of the programme to contribute to growth that benefits the resilience of the most vulnerable people in rural areas and the reduction of inequalities, this raises the question of the adequacy of the programme in relation to the desired results.

In the area of development assistance planning, UNDP support has strengthened the country's capacity to centralize and analyze external aid data, improve planning, and thereby directly and indirectly contributed to increasing its effectiveness. The status, capacities and role of the Aid Harmonization Secretariat (SHA) are better recognized and its input is appreciated by line ministries and technical and financial partners. However, with many partners questioning UNDP's ability to coordinate UN action, it can be seen as negatively affecting this contribution to the SHA.

Finding 7. Support for the formulation of the 2016-2018 CREDD is a recognized contribution by many government partners and provided a gateway for the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national development strategies. The SDGs offer UNDP an opportunity to refocus and better define its programme focus.

UNDP played a key role in supporting the formulation of the Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development (CREDD 2016-2018), as well as in the formulation of its results framework and the definition of its indicators. The work that UNDP has done in parallel on prioritizing and integrating the SDGs in Mali's national development strategy is noteworthy, not least because it has also led to the establishment of a baseline situation on these goals. But UNDP must ensure that, in the long run, the country can itself monitor these SDGs. While many development partners are not fully familiar with UNDP's strategy in Mali, the SDGs are a real potential entry point for its support to the country's development.

Through its support at the central level, UNDP has contributed to the formulation of many national strategies, such as the CREDD, the Specific Development Strategy (SSD) for the North, the CSCRP, the SDGs, and the SCAP. However, some perceive these strategic documents as an end in themselves, and not constituting a coherent whole for the development of Mali. Because the support provided to the government for the development of their strategies is based on UNDP's programme, which has very distinct thematic areas, the numerous strategies lack coherent linkages. This further reinforces the scattering of UNDP's support, and weakens the government's capacity to implement and evaluate its strategies, policies and programmes.

Finding 8. Support at the local level has contributed to the resilience of vulnerable populations in rural areas through several targeted interventions. But some examples of successes, especially in cases where the benefits are likely unsustainable, do not ensure contribution to the programme's objective as it is formulated, the result of too great an ambition, an inappropriate approach and limited means.

²² Institut National de la Statistique du Mali, Résultats annuels de l'EMOP 2017/2018.

The CPD indicator in this area, the incidence of poverty, has increased relative to the baseline situation²³, and although at the country level it has fallen significantly, the target rate of 21% remains out of reach. In addition, the poverty incidence rate has increased again in rural areas in 2017, where UNDP operates, and where this rate is also the highest.

Although a relatively large number of people who have benefited from IGAs are highlighted by UNDP, the scope and sustainability of the results obtained is in question. The IGAs implemented with the target population are mostly in the agricultural and agro-processing areas, but by 2017, people in the North were facing increased food insecurity. The report of the 2017 National Survey on Food and Nutrition Security (ENSAN)²⁴ reports 11 localities where more than 40% of households are affected by food insecurity²⁵. The situation also deteriorated significantly in 7 localities²⁶, compared to the 2016 survey.

Building resilience of vulnerable populations through training in different trades is a good approach, but it must be followed-up to ensure impact. For example, one of the results presented by the country office relates to the work opportunities offered to local people as part of the work of rehabilitation of the judicial infrastructures under Outcome 3. Although this is a good example of an approach that includes cross-cutting links between UNDP programmes, and as these activities have indeed provided an income and a formative opportunity for young people, these IGAs are ad hoc and finish at the end of project's activities, so they are not sustainable. Thus, they cannot in themselves be a contribution to the resilience of vulnerable populations, and they further highlight problems in project design, the consequences of programme fragmentation, and lack of strategy in UNDP's overall approach.

However, the programme has also established local structures at the community level, which have accompanied the anchoring and popularization of good agricultural production practices. The involvement of local authorities in these projects has led to some ownership, with the establishment of local committees at the intervention sites, and the dissemination of good practices at the local level. UNDP could significantly increase its impact by partnering with other UN agencies such as WFP or FAO²⁷ on these projects.

Finding 9. In the area of environment, natural resources and resilience to climate change and disasters, UNDP support has also been active at the local community and at the institutional levels. Appreciable results have been obtained in both cases, but they are still far from the desired scope, or difficult to measure.

The installation of solar platforms in rural localities is recognized as an excellent initiative, but its sustainability is not evident. The project visits of multifunctional platforms (PTFM), showed that these investments were appreciated, and answered the needs expressed by the local communities. But it also brought evidence of dilapidated equipment, barely functional after some years. This reflects a lack of a clear UNDP exit strategy for the project, also illustrated by the repetition of phases in which UNDP is contributing to this initiative, which begun almost twenty years ago in Mali. The new project document

²³ The 2017 EMOP survey reports a poverty incidence rate of 44.9%, whereas the baseline value in the CPD (no year) is 43.6%

²⁴ ENSAN Mali, Rapport de Synthèse - Enquête Nationale Sur La Sécurité Alimentaire Et Nutritionnelle, Février 2017

²⁵ Those are the localities of Youwarou (74%) ; Gao (73%), Abeïbara (60%), Koro (57%), Douentza (56%), Kolokani (56%), Bandiagara (54%), Gourma Rharous (52%), Bankass (50%), Tominian (45%), Bafoulabe (45%).

²⁶ Abeïbara (+50%), Gao (49%), Bafoulabe (37%), Youwarou (32%), Bandiagara (25%), Tin-Essako (24%), et Gourma Rharous (19%).

²⁷ WFP's current operations in Mali focused on providing food assistance and asset creation in food-insecure areas, while FAO's programme is centered on support to agricultural production, competitiveness and food security.

("5000 villages", started in 2016), recognizes some of the installations from previous phases no longer functioning and require rehabilitation. That being said, the new project also contains elements for the gradual disengagement of UNDP and the sustainability of its activities through ownership at the community and local authorities' level.

Apart from these specific initiatives, and in view of the extremely low rate of access to electricity in rural areas - a rate which has fallen sharply since 2012²⁸ - the contribution for the use of renewable energies remains limited to constitute a contribution to the objective of the programme.

Finally, UNDP contributions to planning and resource allocation capabilities by environmental institutions resulted in the development of several strategic documents, action plans and publications on environment and climate change, and the effective integration of these issues into the CREDD. Some progress can also be noted on the decentralized capacities for environmental action, through the development of municipal plans integrating the issues of climate change and biodiversity, and the extension and reinforcement of protected areas. But at the time of the evaluation, the Protected Areas Management Authority had not been created, and the consideration of climate change in economic development strategies not yet established. Institutional results, can only be transformational for the country if the structures in place at the central, regional and local levels can ensure the implementation of the country's environmental priorities.

Outcome 3 –Governance

In the area of Governance, UNDP's activities have been linked to projects for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of state authorities' infrastructure in the North of Mali and the support to the 2016 local elections – through logistical support and awareness campaigns, including for the participation of women in the electoral process. UNDP projects also targeted the reinforcement of Parliament's capacity to improve the accountability of government action and public affairs. The support to the country's Justice sector led to the formulation of the justice sector reform, training of police forces on human rights, and rehabilitation efforts in justice sector infrastructure, including several prisons and the national police school.

Finding 10. UNDP has contributed to significant efforts for the redeployment of State structures in the northern regions, and has helped to restore the administration's infrastructures, in support of the establishment of interim authorities in the region. But not all the built or rehabilitated infrastructures are functioning, and the public servants assigned to them rarely occupy the buildings.

The redeployment of state structures in the northern regions, where they have been absent or very precarious since the crisis, is a direct contribution of the programme in the area of governance. It also contributes - indirectly - to the UNDP outcome for national reconciliation, while it has also benefited local populations through income-generating activities. The programme helped to restore the infrastructure park of deconcentrated and decentralized administrations in the northern regions, making it possible to install the interim authorities resulting from the Peace Agreement, and the reopening of certain local jurisdictions. The 44 administrative entities built or restored have opened the door to a return of the administration on the ground, and consequently to the availability of strategic services such as justice. This return of state at the local level is also a factor of social stabilization, since it is in the voids left by the

²⁸ Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) – Mali, Country Statistics

public authorities that conflicts can develop. However, the impact of the redeployment of the State and its technical services, which has suffered from the deterioration of security in the North and in the Center, must be put into perspective. All infrastructure built or rehabilitated does not operate systematically, with many of their staff still in the capital and other urban centers where they feel safer.

Finding 11. In addition to the restoration of state authority in the North, UNDP has articulated its governance support programme around the capacity of the Malian Parliament for its oversight role in the management of public affairs and institutional capacity building in support of decentralization efforts.

At the institutional level, Parliament and the Supreme Court have been supported to better exercise their oversight mandate vis-à-vis the executive power. All the technical commissions and parliamentary groups in the Assembly and Supreme Audit Section Advisers have benefited from capacity building processes, and transformational results are visible. A sign of parliamentary vitality, the chamber had 4 government interpellation sessions in 2016, whereas none took place in 2015. The same year, it also initiated 2 proposals of laws, also compared to none previously. The Accounts Section of the Supreme Court, in turn, audited in 2016 the management of 39% of local authorities.

The added value of the programme in the field of decentralization is particularly anchored in the Directorate General of Territorial Communities. It is evidenced, for example, by the creation of a framework guiding the sector's policies. A National Decentralization Policy covering the 2015-2024 decade, and its Action Plan, are available. Above all, and in relation to the context, the sector has also developed an Inclusive Decentralization Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, which is in fact the basis for implementing the Decentralization Component of the Peace Agreement. The decentralization process is also supported by a portion of the national budget transferred to local authorities, which increased from 3.1% in the pre-programme period to 18.3% in 2017.

Finding 12. In the area of elections, the work done by UNDP prior to the start of the current programme has yielded successes recognized by many technical and financial partners as well as within the government. This has allowed UNDP to position itself effectively in this area, and to extend its support to the elections in 2016, including through initiatives aimed at the development of civil registration data.

UNDP's contribution to the 2013 elections was considered essential by most UNDP partners. The office played a determining role in the conduct of the elections, without violence and with a higher participation rate than in the past, notably thanks to its ability to coordinate and work with partners for the smooth conduct of the electoral process. The Trust Fund established for the elections had 12 contributors.

The programme has accompanied the country in the finalization of the Administrative Census to Vocation of Civil Status. As a consequence, the inclusiveness of the electoral process has improved: the communal elections held during the cycle were based on a biometric file of 7,5 million voters, close to half of the total population. On the other hand, civil society engagement in the electoral assistance programme has remained mixed. The goal of 107 non-governmental organizations foreseen to play a role in the electoral process is far from achieved, with only 26 organizations engaged in 2016.

Outcome 4 – Health Services

UNDP's main activities in support to the objective of improving Mali's citizens' access to health services directly derived from its renewed role as principal recipient of the HIV/Aids grant, funded by the GFATM. UNDP aimed to strengthen the national capacities for HIV/Aids screening and treatment, training of medical staff, as well as the provision and distribution of medicine and equipment.

Finding 13. The programme mobilized significant resources for the fight against HIV/Aids, which also represented its main budget component: almost \$ 50 million was mobilized from the Global Fund. This represented more than 65% of the total financing for the fight against HIV / AIDS in Mali. A significant portion of these funds was spent on medicines and health services management costs, thereby addressing an important need for the country, but the treatment of HIV infections remains insufficient, and far from the programme's objectives

UNDP, as the main recipient of the Global Fund, collaborates with – and helped build the capacity of – five national entities: The AIDS Unit in the Ministry of Health, the Technical Secretariat for AIDS Control at the level of the Presidency of the Republic, the civil society through national NGOs ARCAD/Sida and SOLTIS and finally the People's Pharmacy of Mali, for the storage of medicines. In addition, midwives and nurses have been trained in the treatment of patients, which has helped to improve the provision of treatment services and decentralize them down to the level of community health centers.

The programme also supplies drugs, reagents and consumables. However, it should be noted that the regularity of this supply suffers from structural problems (lack of electricity and inadequate storage conditions), as well as supply disruptions, and of large quantities of medicines approaching the end of their shelf life. These problems are recurrent and have often been raised in Mali, without finding appropriate solutions, even with UNDP's involvement.

The number of screening sites has increased significantly, and these are expected to eventually become treatment sites. In addition, 199 sites for the care and treatment of HIV / AIDS, as well as 4 national structures for prevention and medical care are operational throughout the national territory, which has contributed to the detection and treatment of infected persons.

Most of the treatment sites and the largest number of patients on ARVs are in the south-west of the country, in the regions of Koulikoro, Kayes, Sikasso and Bamako. The remainder is distributed between the sites of Mopti in the center and those of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal in the north. It should be noted that more than half of these patients are monitored at the sites of the District of Bamako, which showcases the need to further develop service provision in other regions. In addition, half of ARV patients are followed by medical, paramedical and administrative staff from and managed by civil society organizations operating in public and parastatal structures.

However, the pace of progression of treatment of HIV infections is far from sufficient. In fact, just over a year from the end of the programme, the proportion of treated patients is only 45%, down 5 percentage points from 2013 when it was 50%, and especially still far from the programme's target of 90%.

Cross-cutting issues

Finding 14. In the programme's results framework, only one out of four outcomes, and one out of eleven UNDP-specific results clearly specifically mention targeting women. Despite this weakness in the programme design, women and youth have benefitted from UNDP interventions, and there is some

progress achieved through UNDP's work in the areas of women's participation and representation in electoral processes.

In terms of economic recovery, women benefit from most interventions - although they are not always the project's specific targets, their place in society makes them preferred beneficiaries. Income-generating activities have essentially benefited them, alongside the youth, a large proportion of whom are also women. Capacity building around resilience strategies also benefitted them significantly. Basic community infrastructures, such as multifunctional platforms, solar energy and micro hydro-development schemes also allowed women to develop an activity and increase their incomes.

In the context of national reconciliation, while the programme remains gender blind in its design, it has contributed to raising awareness in favor of a culture of peace, and strengthening conflict prevention and resolution capacities, particularly with civil society, many of them directly addressing women.

But some interventions also directly targeted gender equality and the protection of women's rights. For example, in the governance programme, and specifically in the area of justice, the promotion of women rights and the fight against gender-based violence, were clearly gender-targeted activities. The evaluation team observed, for example, that students from the National Police Academy had received training on the protection of women's rights, and were putting these principles into practice in their daily work.

Still in the area of governance, UNDP's support to electoral processes has amplified advocacy for greater participation of women in the electoral process as voters and as candidates, including through an awareness campaigns targeting women and men. Activities promoting women's leadership contributed to the process that led to the passing of the law on the promotion of gender in the nominative and elective functions in November 2015. However, if these results were obtained for the elective positions, they were different for the nominative positions, where the representativeness of women is far from reaching the standard of 30%.

In the health sector too, the fight against the AIDS pandemic has produced notable results for women in general, pregnant women in particular, and children. Significant efforts have been made to ensure that women and their children have access to services, and the decentralization of treatment has helped to bring women closer to services with less stigmatization. As part of the capacity building activities, midwives and nurses were trained to perform the necessary treatments and to address the shortage of doctors in the community health centers.

It should be noted, however, that these results - although notable - do not constitute real transformational changes, and are not yet adequate to addressing the main socio-economic barriers in Mali: culturally strong inequalities in roles, responsibilities and the status of men and women in society; the structure of economic and family systems, particularly with regard to ownership of the means of production; the current rise of religious obscurantist tendencies that threaten recent and still fragile progress. The country still lacks qualified human resources and willingness to address challenges and ensure the transversality of gender dialogue in society. These are issues of magnitude too important to hope for results through limited and fragmented interventions. UNDP has not been able to address them effectively, lacking a gender strategy encompassing the entire programme, and taking into account cross-sectoral contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment. The 2015-2019 programme was developed while the country office did not have a gender strategy, or a gender specialist in its staff. This certainly

explains the lack of consideration of gender equality and women's empowerment in the programme's statements of results and outputs

Finding 15.. In 2016, the country office recruited a gender specialist, which helped the country office in developing its Gender strategy, offering prospects for a better contribution of the programme to more gender-responsive and even transformational results.

The recruitment of a gender specialist in the country office in 2016 occurred after 5 years without a dedicated gender position. This situation negatively affected gender-sensitive data collection and the establishment of relevant indicators for the programme. These are also five years in which the country office has not been able to capitalize on the knowledge needed for the strategies in each thematic area. This is highlighted by the shortcomings of the programme's results framework, in terms of gender-targeted results and indicators. As a consequence, it is still difficult to measure programme changes in this regard.

At the time of the evaluation mission to Mali, the country office, with the support of the gender specialist, had come to develop its gender strategy for 2016-2020. The specialist also worked to ensure that gender equity and women's empowerment were taken into account in strategic planning processes and project formulation.

In order to achieve significant results on gender equality and women's empowerment through its projects, the question of the capacity of all office staff needs to be addressed. A single gender specialist alone can not deliver the expected results. Although a "Gender Team" has been formed (including management and programme managers), the field programme coordinators also need to be trained and sensitized, especially to ensure the feedback of data and information, as well as for a better consideration of women's needs in programme implementation.

Training of the Gender Team should also allow for more effective collaboration and the search for synergies with other UN agencies on gender issues. The evaluation mission observed that other agencies, such as UN-Women or UNFPA, were working on topics directly related to UNDP projects, such as gender-based violence.

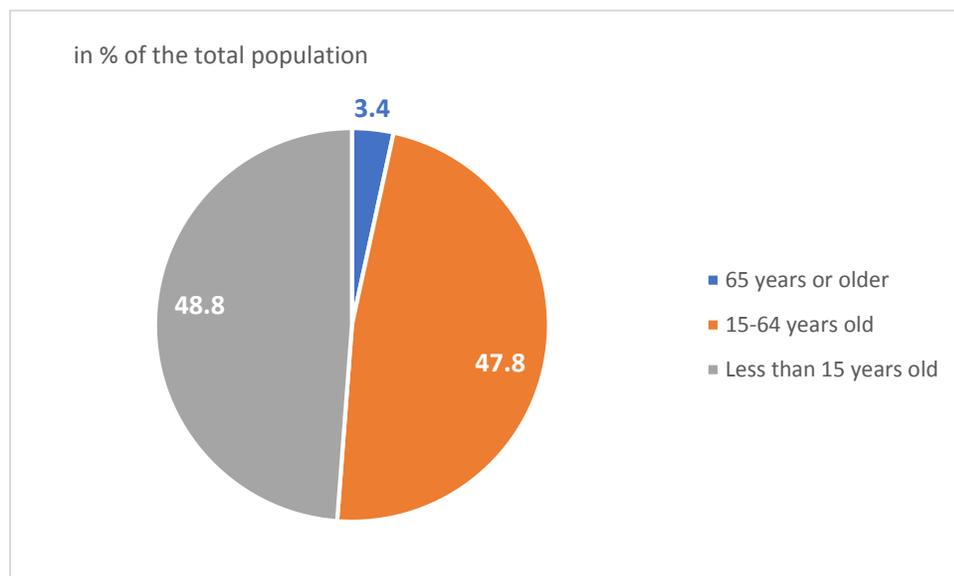
Finding 16. The contribution of UNVs to the programme implementation and achievement of results has been significant. They are involved in all areas of the programme and have helped mobilize volunteers who are close to the communities and know the field. However, UNVs were not included in either the UNDAF or the CPD results framework. UNDP must recognize and better exploit the potential of UNV engagement on the central issue of youth in Mali.

To date, the country office has 9 UNV staff, and the CPD review reported that 23 volunteers participated in the implementation of the programme. Field project offices employ UNVs, who are sometimes responsible for sensitive projects.

More specifically, the contribution of UNV was made through the mobilization of national and international volunteers for the project to support the electoral process in Mali (PAPEM), where they supported the project in the governorates of the 8 regions of Mali, as electoral advisers. As part of the activities related to peace and social cohesion, they intervened as trainers and participated in awareness-raising activities, particularly targeting the youth. UNDP has benefited from their knowledge of the field and their proximity to the targeted populations, which is a specific asset of UNV in supporting young

people whilst promoting their inclusion in peace and sustainable development processes²⁹. In parallel, the corporate youth strategy of UNDP is guided by the promotion of youth's role in development. The partnership between UNDP and UNV plays an important role in designing initiatives that can support capacity and skill building of young volunteers, and contribute to peace and development of society.³⁰

Figure 5. Structure of Mali's population by age groups



Source: World Bank, WDI

Youth is recognized as central to development in Mali: people under the age of 15 represent the largest part of the population (see Figure 5), but also show one of the lowest school enrollment rates in sub-Saharan Africa: 68 % of young people have never been to school, are out of school, or have dropped out of school³¹. Young people also suffer from a high unemployment rate, estimated at 14.9% for all 15-35 year olds, and up to 21.9% for 15-24 year olds³².

This situation of a large youth group, having had limited access to schooling, and suffering from a high unemployment rate, increases inequalities in the country and represents a particularly important issue for social cohesion and peace. Unemployed youth are more vulnerable to radicalization and intercommunal conflict. The issue of youth was raised by many UNDP partners and beneficiaries during the interviews conducted by the evaluation mission. Some also deplored the lack of sustainability of actions for young people, and it can be considered that ad hoc activities, with real but temporary benefits for young people - such as HLI work - can also create frustration and resentment. Also, as mentioned in the evaluation of the PAPPEM project, UNV services were terminated at the end of some project activities, while their commitment would have been particularly important for the continuity and anchoring of the results.

²⁹ UNV Youth Volunteering Strategy 2014-2017

³⁰ UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017

³¹ EDS survey, 2010

³² EMOP survey 2017/2018

Work with and for young people, as well as the development of volunteering, for example, are principles found in UNDP activities in Mali, but in a diffuse way and without there being any strategic inclusion of the question of youth in the programme. The UNDP 2014-2017 Youth Strategy³³ provides guiding principles for achieving results in three areas of particular relevance to the UNDP programme in Mali: sustainable development, inclusive democratic governance and resilience. For the sustainability of progress in the protection and inclusion of young people, the strategy also mentions the importance of supporting the development of national policies to influence the legal framework and ensure the mobilization of human and financial resources.

2.3 FACTORS

Positive Factors

Finding 17. Overall, the Programme demonstrates a good balance of work at the central and local levels. In addition, the interventions take into account local needs in the different areas of intervention.

The analysis of programme results shows that UNDP has been able to balance its action between upstream interventions and on-the-ground (downstream) projects directly benefiting local populations. UNDP's intervention at the central government level includes project-related activities (for example, with the reform of the justice system, or the National Export Development Strategy), but also non-project activities, including coordination, outreach efforts and informal consultations with ministries and development partners.

Upstream activities are facilitated by generally good UNDP-Government relations, and an appreciation of UNDP's technical capabilities by the Government. An analysis of the 2015 and 2017 partner surveys results also shows a strong increase in favorable responses to the assessment of the quality, efficiency and professionalism of UNDP by government partners. Successful upstream activities allow for a good alignment of programme activities with national strategies, and ensure the relevance of its programme in the future.

With regards to downstream activities, the majority of beneficiaries said they appreciated the fact that they were consulted, and their needs were taken into account into programme design. Needs assessment efforts upstream of project design are recognized, and here again ensure the relevance of UNDP's action.

Finding 18. The partnership initiated with government, technical services and local communities has been successful in some cases. UNDP has been able to establish effective partnerships with the government and national counterparts, leading to tangible results.

The partnership - and generally good collaboration - with national actors at different levels has led to key results for the programme. At the central level, for example, important work included UNDP's contribution to the CREDD, but also to sectoral strategies, emergency plans and strategies for the economic development were developed in partnership with the ministries and technical services.

³³ UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017: "Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future" (2014)

At the local level, partnerships with local communities have enabled the effective targeting and completion of infrastructure rehabilitation works for the restoration of state authority in the North. The work capacity of these communities has been restored and, as part of the programme for access to basic health care, the provision of services by community health centers has been restored.

Overall, partnerships with institutional partners have yielded tangible results that have allowed UNDP to move towards the achievement of its goals. Its' proximity to government and technical services is an asset for the country office, which is also recognized by other UN agencies and bilateral partners. This is an advantage that UNDP can leverage for better collaboration and achievement of development goals.

Finding 19. In implementing its programme, UNDP has applied the fundamental principles of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment and environmental sustainability. It is an added value of UNDP, which is a recognized actor for the integration of social and environmental standards in its interventions.

UNDP has made efforts to target vulnerable populations in the design of its projects, and to take their specific needs into account. The programme also includes a few initiatives specifically aimed at gender equality and the empowerment of women, and, with the new Gender strategy, recent changes in the country office offer encouraging prospects of a more effective targeting of women in future projects.

Integrating the fundamental principles of human rights in its projects enables UNDP to accompany its programme implementation activities with advocacy and outreach efforts on questions that are at the center of UNDP's mandate. Furthermore, the advent of the SDGs, and their integration into the national development strategy, gives UNDP an opportunity to expand its programme, while anchoring it on specific targets.

Negative Factors

Finding 20. The implemented projects did not systematically and effectively take risks into account, leading in some cases to significant delays in the execution or cancellation of planned activities. Weak risk mitigation efforts affected the achievement and sustainability of results.

Project documents and implementation monitoring tools (for example in the Atlas system) contain risk matrices, most of which are completed. These matrices include identified risks and suggested solutions or actions to address them. However, for many projects, the security situation and the intensification of conflicts have been put forward as justifications for delays in implementation, non-achievement of results or the cancellation of certain activities.

The security context, particularly in northern and central Mali, constitutes an important blocking factor for development projects. But this situation was known at the time of programme design, and the design of most of the current projects. The risk mitigation strategies and responses provided in the project documents were therefore insufficient to effectively manage the risks.

In the analysis of project documents, for example, we can observe inappropriate solutions, such as "Systematic monitoring to observe all signs of insecurity and react in time", which is a vague answer without any real proposal for action towards the identified risk of "resurgence of hostilities and persistent

insecurity"³⁴. In a project that is particularly sensitive to the security situation, and that has actually suffered in its implementation and the sustainability of its results, the risk management efforts have not been sufficient.

The CPD does include a chapter dedicated to risk management, however it does not present a clear strategy on how to deal with conflicts, other than through the diversification of partners, and the development of an "analysis in a conflict situation will be carried out as part of the development of new projects to mitigate their vulnerability to conflict risks". Although some new projects have more detailed risk matrices (for example, the project "Fighting Mali's Conflict Factors Through the Rule of Law"), this is not really an analysis as outlined in CPD, and the approach is still not systematic.

UNDP, however, has tools at the regional³⁵ and global³⁶ levels to design and implement programmes them in a context of insecurity, and better achieve the objectives of its programme. It is also working with partners - and in particular MINUSMA - who face the same challenges, and who can help UNDP find appropriate responses.

Finding 21. Most of UNDP's projects are carried out outside of the capital, Bamako, including in remote and hard to reach locations. UNDP is limited in its capacity to implement and monitor projects at the local level, which in some cases has led to difficulties in fully achieving planned results. The country office has made recent efforts to expand its local presence, which could improve UNDP's ability to support efforts on the ground.

UNDP staff managing field activities do not always have the technical or material resources to cope with the challenging context and implementation challenges in these areas. These difficulties are aggravated by the multiplication of micro-interventions, which require increased coordination and monitoring capacities. With limited presence near the more remote project locations, UNDP has in some cases failed to address certain issues in time, for example when rehabilitated justice infrastructures in the North were not occupied, or when multifunctional platforms stopped functioning properly.

In addition, the UNDP programme includes activities related to transfer of competencies to local governments, the development of local action plans for disaster risk reduction, and the strengthening of decentralized institutional capacities. These objectives require a strong presence, supported by an effective capacity to deliver policy advice at the local level.

During the evaluation mission, the country office confirmed that it was making efforts to strengthen its local presence, particularly in Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu, by creating positions for experienced field coordinators. Although these recruitments had not been completed at the time of the mission, it is expected that they will improve UNDP's local capacity and the complementarity of its actions on the ground.

Finding 22. The evaluations carried out during the period under review found significant weaknesses in the country office's project monitoring, which was confirmed by the observations of the ICPE mission. The country context, combined with the country office's weak monitoring capacities, made it very

³⁴ Project document « Restoration of State authority and access to Justice in North Mali”, Annex 1

³⁵ Regional project document “Preventing and responding to violent extremism in Africa: a developmental approach”

³⁶ UNDP, “UNDP offer on SDG implementation in fragile situations”, 2016

difficult to carry out project visits, and report on achieved results. This has had significant implications on the way UNDP has been viewed by development partners, as well as its ability to attract funds.

At the time of the evaluation mission, the country office did not have a dedicated person to monitor and evaluate the programme. In addition to the internal capacity of project office staff, several factors have a negative impact on the monitoring and evaluation of projects implemented by UNDP. The fragmentation of activities across different thematic areas, but also the large number of projects implemented in many regions of the country, including some that were inaccessible due to the deterioration of conflicts, all together represent an important challenge for the country office's efforts for project monitoring. By implementing a multitude of micro-projects, UNDP needs to collect a multitude of data to ensure the smooth running of its activities, in an environment that does not allow it.

Another source of difficulty is the inadequate results framework, which does not allow monitoring projects' progress and measuring the achievement of UNDP objectives or its contribution to the country's development. The CPD mid-term review found weaknesses in the logical framework, with some non-measurable indicators, or objectives to which project implementation cannot realistically or effectively contribute. In addition, information on some indicators cannot be collected, due to a lack of data sources available during the implementation of the corresponding projects.

The combination of these factors means that UNDP faces significant challenges in reporting on its activities and results, even in cases where projects are successful in meeting their objectives. This is also sometimes perceived as a lack of transparency on the part of UNDP. As a consequence, several partners expressed not knowing what UNDP was doing in Mali, and the results achieved by the programme, going so far as to consider that the presence of UNDP in Mali did not make any difference to the country's development. This situation can be considered to have a negative impact on the ability of UNDP to mobilize resources.

Finding 23. While UNDP is a designated co-lead in three of the five outcomes of the UNDAF, it has so far not been able to coordinate the work of UN agencies effectively. In particular, while they could have a very positive impact on UNDP's results, the strong linkages between UNDP and the MINUSMA's mandate have not been sufficiently explored.

In Mali's complex development context, it is even more important that the United Nations and other development partners should coordinate their actions, seek synergies and strengthen the complementarity of their programs.

The evaluation observed significant but still recent efforts to coordinate UN activities in Mali. Several government partners also expressed appreciation for UNDP's ability to bring development partners together, formally or otherwise, to share information on ongoing programmes or future challenges. Working groups in specific areas exist and allow partners to consider potential joint initiatives. In practice, however, those efforts have not yet led to effectively coordinated action by the UN in Mali.

At the programme implementation level, there have been few common activities, and technically no joint projects. Efforts have been made to set up such projects, but at the time of the evaluation there were none in progress. Furthermore, UNDP has played a key role in preparing the integrated UN Transition Planning process in Mali, in support of a common repositioning of the MINUSMA and UN agencies and programmes. But at the time of the evaluation, this transition plan was still in draft, and had not yet resulted in increased common efforts on the ground. In theory, there are strong linkages between UNDP's

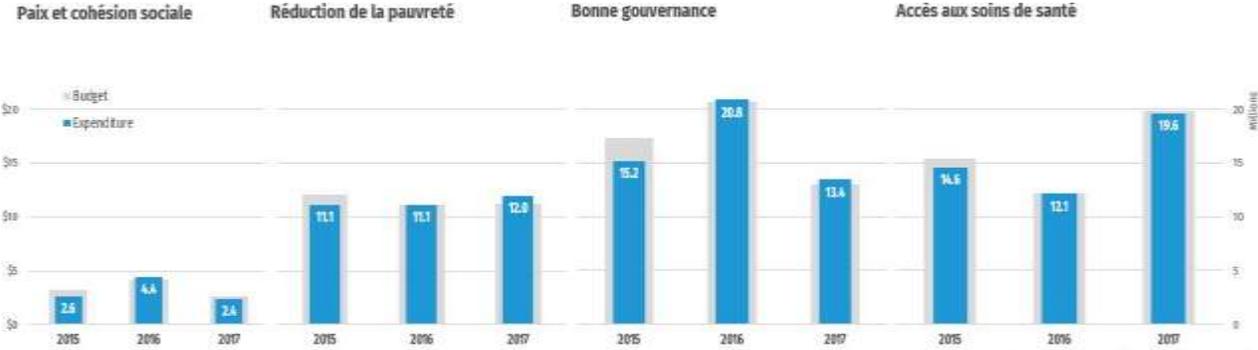
and the MINUSMA mandates, since stabilization efforts can lead to increased security, improved access to basic services and poverty reduction. UNDP’s projects in support to social cohesion, access to justice and the restoration of State authority are closely linked to immediate and long-term efforts of the MINUSMA to resolve the crisis in Mali. Additionally, given the challenges UNDP encountered in implementing and monitoring projects in areas still affected by conflict, it may not have sufficiently sought to benefit from the stabilization mission’s presence and logistical capacities. As a result, some partners were very critical of the lack of coordination between UNDP and MINUSMA, which should be their main ally on the ground. Partners in the UN system have also indicated their ability to develop projects with government partners without the support of UNDP.

The difficulties encountered by UNDP in reporting on its activities and results, and thus demonstrating its added value and positioning itself for the development of Mali, do not facilitate its cooperation efforts, particularly with the other UN agencies. And in the current state, the various development actors are forced to compete for funding.

Efficiency and Financial resource management

Finding 24. Analysis of programme expenditures shows a high implementation rate, and relatively low management efficiency ratios, below the regional average. The country office visibly has the required capacity for programmatic budget management, but financial risks are still present and have sometimes had an impact on UNDP's reputation in Mali.

Figure 6. Budgets and expenditures by CPD outcome and by year, 2015-2017



Source: Atlas Executive Snapshot

The performance of the country office in terms of spending annual budgets is good. While in most programme results areas, the implementation rate was lower in 2015, it improved in subsequent years, reaching or even exceeding 100% execution. This is probably due to a catch-up effect in the financial implementation of projects in the years following the start of the programme.

However, the 2016 internal audit report highlighted some financial risks, particularly in terms of transaction control, as well as weaknesses in the financial monitoring and closing of projects. The audit also made recommendations on the mechanisms in place for initiating projects, as well as controlling travel and procurement expenses.

The evaluation team identified at least one project case, where financial partners were dissatisfied with the delays in closing and sharing of financial reports by the country office, which were done two years after the end of activities. In addition, differences in the amounts reimbursed to donors could not be explained, further adding to the partners' dissatisfaction, potentially affecting their future collaboration with UNDP on similar projects.

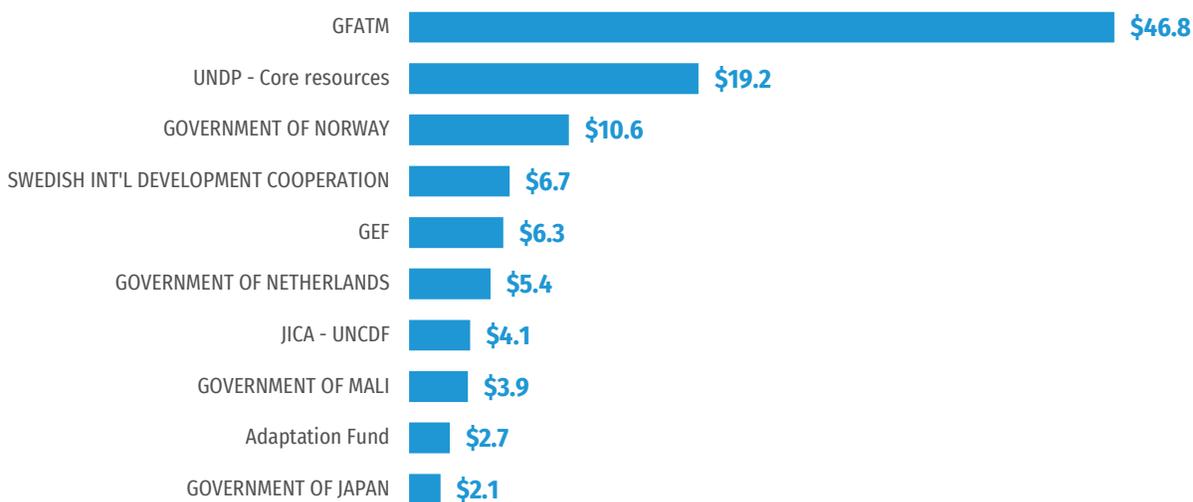
In response to the risks highlighted by the internal audit, the country office has put measures in place to monitor financial implementation. Renewed collaboration between operations and programme departments has been highlighted as a way of identifying and addressing implementation issues in time. The country office also highlighted efforts to train staff on business processes. While it is still too early to assess the cost-effectiveness implications for the country office, there are a few issues to note from the partner surveys: between 2015 and 2017, there is an increase in favorable responses on partner satisfaction with the efficiency of the country office. But, at the same time, the number of unfavorable responses has also increased³⁷, and exceeds the rate of dissatisfaction of UNDP partners at the global level. Government partners are particularly satisfied with the efficiency of the country office, showing that discontent is at the level of bilateral partners, who are also donors for the programme, and thus represent a challenge for resource mobilization.

Finding 25. The country office developed a new resource mobilization strategy in 2016 to support the implementation of its programme. The CPD mid-term review reports satisfactory results in mobilizing external sources of funding, but a more detailed analysis also highlights notable differences between programme areas, the heavy reliance on a small number of donors, and persisting financial risk factors.

Figure 3 is a good illustration of UNDP's progress in mobilizing funds in support of the planned programme. The mid-term review, in late 2017, reported a mobilization rate of 77% of non-core resources planned for the period. But the overall rate is not necessarily representative of the situation, and a closer look shows that there are important differences between each of the programme outcomes. The health services outcome, for example, has exceeded the targets set in the CPD, and the Global Funds (GFATM) represents approximately \$ 47m of expenditures for 2015-2017, out of a total of \$ 120m from external funding sources, representing nearly 38%. This figure is about twice as much as GFATM's expected share of CPD's external resources, and this reliance on one source of funding poses a risk to UNDP. UNDP's dependence on a small number of donors is further evidenced in Figure 7, showing that – excluding core resources – the four largest donors to UNDP's programme expenditures represent nearly 75% of the total spending.

³⁷ This is due to the decrease of "neutral" responses

Figure 7. Top 10 donors for programme expenditures, 2015-2017.



Source: Atlas Executive Snapshot

In addition, taking into account that the budget and expenditure amounts include projects that started before the current programme³⁸, that part of the funding included in the calculation corresponds to external resources already planned for in the previous programme. This further reduces the resources actually mobilized by UNDP for the current programme.

The evaluation team noted significant ongoing efforts to mobilize resources from donors in Mali, including potential new partners. These efforts had not been successful at the time of the mission, but many opportunities existed. However, the fact that the resource mobilization strategy was developed in 2016, well after the CPD, is problematic. In addition, as demonstrated by the country office audit and partner surveys, financial risks exist, and some partner discontent persists, which can affect UNDP's credibility and its ability to attract funds for his programme. Other factors already mentioned, such as significant weaknesses in monitoring, difficulties in showing results and lack of clear strategic positioning, are all important risks for mobilizing additional resources for the current programme, and potentially for the next programme.

Efficiency gains have been made through the pooling of operational services. But, in parallel, there has been a loss of efficiency due to the multiplication of small projects. The "Environment, Climate Change, Inclusive Sustainable Development" cluster, for example, manages a portfolio of 29 projects through both national and direct execution modalities. Each project has at least one coordinator, a financial administrative officer, a programme officer, a management assistant, a maintenance worker and two drivers.

³⁸ On a total of 64 projects (Atlas outputs) currently implemented during the period under review, 43 had started before 2015 – see also Annex for the complete list of projects.

Sustainability

Finding 26. The sustainability of UNDP’s results is likely to be affected by the security situation, particularly in the North and Center. The intensification of the crisis can have an impact on project achievements, or directly on beneficiaries. UNDP has succeeded in establishing elements of sustainability in some projects, but in other cases the programme has also lacked effective exit strategies.

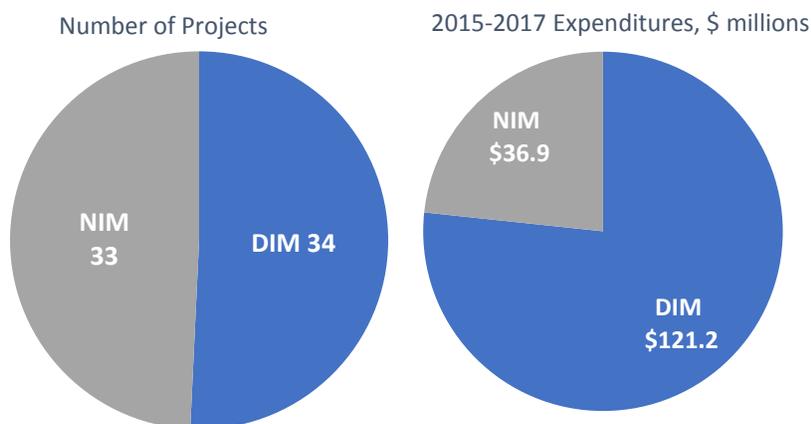
The review of the programme shows that some results have benefited from a good grounding at community level, conducive to a certain sustainability. This is the case for awareness-raising activities (for example for elections, or projects aiming at social cohesion and socio-economic resilience). Support for national entities, which takes their continuity and survival into account, without relying on the project (CVJR, Aid Harmonization Secretariat), is another factor that supports the sustainability of the results.

But the deterioration of security and the displacement of beneficiaries can of course be a risk factor that affects the sustainability of established capacities. In the case of the state authority restoration project, this has resulted in project outputs that have actually been completed but are not used. Without alternative solutions to ensure that what has been achieved can be used, UNDP runs the risk that achievements will be lost in the long run.

Lack of adequate monitoring can also compromise the full realization of some outcomes, and thus their sustainability. If a problem is not identified in time, it can potentially affect the success, even partially, of a project. This was the case, for example, with the Djiguiya cooperative in Yanfolila, where the loss of a single customer put an end to the sales of processed fruit products. Another example observed by the evaluation team is the delivery of inadequate furniture to the National Police Academy.

It may also be noted that the choice of direct implementation modality (DIM) does not favor the strengthening of Mali’s own project management capacities at the institutional level. However, since DIM projects represented a much larger share of programme expenditure , it can also be considered that this choice was made by the country office to limit financial risks.

Figure 8. Distribution of projects and expenditures between NIM and DIM modalities



Source: Atlas Executive Snapshot

Finally, the country office's heavy reliance on a limited number of donors, as noted in the previous section, reinforces the financial insecurity of the programme, with the risk that it will negatively affect longer-term outcomes.

CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: UNDP's programme in Mali is thematically and geographically scattered, and this raises concerns for the effective implementation and monitoring of results. In addition, the multiplication of efforts across the programme thematic areas illustrates the lack of strategy guiding UNDP's work in its development approach.

The programme is both thematically and geographically scattered. Geographically, this poses problems of project monitoring, limits the office's capacity to visit projects in the field and collect data on results. In addition, the multiplication of projects increases the operational costs of the programme and complicates its implementation. Finally, UNDP has approached each thematic area of its programme in a broadly compartmentalized manner, without systematically looking for possible synergies.

The evaluation noted a good balance between interventions at central and local levels. But again, the multiplication of interventions and approaches makes it difficult to find the coherence or link between these interventions at different levels. Because of the difficulties in monitoring field interventions, the strategies developed with the government are not, for example, systematically based on the information and results obtained through projects on the ground.

The fragmentation of the programme also demonstrates the lack of strategy guiding the work of UNDP. In practice, UNDP has tended to implement projects based on the demands of those providing funding rather than on the basis of its own strategic objectives.

Conclusion 2: Weaknesses in programme monitoring and project data collection negatively affected UNDP's capacity to address bottlenecks and implementation risks in time, as well as its capacity to communicate on what it has achieved. This has had negative consequences on UNDP's capacity for resource mobilization.

The Indicators in the CPD Results Matrix are generally not suitable for monitoring UNDP activities and measuring results. As a result, the objectives of the programme are not realistic enough, and their achievement ultimately does not depend on what UNDP implements.

The security situation, geographical remoteness and weaknesses of the country office in monitoring and evaluation capacities have the direct consequence that the implementation of the programme suffers from a lack of field visits to identify and resolve problems encountered. quickly. This weakness in monitoring also affects the ability of UNDP to measure its contribution.

However, better identifying the results obtained makes it possible to better communicate on them, and improves the visibility of the UNDP, which then helps to mobilize resources.

Conclusion 3: UNDP's position in Mali is unclear to many, affecting its ability to collaborate with development partners.

The role of UNDP in Mali is not understood by all, and many partners - including within the government - are struggling to identify the nature of its offer, or its comparative advantages. This situation is partly due

to the fragmentation of the programme, mentioned above, which decreases its visibility. In addition, the lack of follow-up by the country office on projects that are part of a results framework that is not easy to read, means that UNDP cannot effectively communicate on clear results and on its impact.

Government partners globally appreciate the work of UNDP, and this recognition has increased in 2017 compared to previous years. This appreciation is reflected in UNDP's ability to work with some ministries, technical services and government agencies on national strategies or policies. However, the picture is different for other partners, whether they are UNS members or bilateral partners. Some partners expressed frustration that UNDP was positioning itself in areas more related to their own activity, creating a competitive environment for financial resources. Others went so far as to express doubts about the difference made by the UNDP presence in Mali.

Conclusion 4: Coordination and joint activities with UN and other development partners has improved but remains largely insufficient. UNDP must work with the UNCT and the MINUSMA to develop a more coordinated and coherent development programme in Mali, making better use of agencies' respective expertise to better tackle the numerous challenges in Mali.

Examples of successful joint activities exist, and several partners acknowledged a recent increase of coordination efforts by UNDP. Some also appreciate their ability to bring development partners together, and to advocate for the benefit of all agencies. The pooling of operational services with other agencies, and the mission of MINUSMA also has positive effects on efficiency and reduced operating costs.

The benefits of better coordination with UN system partners and MINUSMA are recognized by all, but the current efforts are not consistent with the ambitions of UNDAF +, which sought to build partnerships to ensure the coherence of the UN action, strengthen the complementarity of programs, and seek synergies.

UN partners have recognized the strengths of UNDP through its advocacy capacity with the government, as well as its presence in the field, which could benefit all agencies. But in practice, there are almost no joint programs, and little use of thematic expertise between UNCT agencies.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: UNDP must clearly define, both geographically and thematically, its area of intervention. An increased focus will help the country office in setting realistic goals, improve the monitoring of its activities, and better communicate on achieved results.

In order to address the problems resulting from the fragmentation of its programme, UNDP must select a more defined area of intervention. It can for example implement programs in 2, maximum 3 regions where strong and immediate needs are recognized - where the populations are most vulnerable to poverty, climate change and inter and intra-community conflicts. The choice of intervention areas must be based on an in-depth analysis of needs and challenges.

By focusing on a better-defined area of intervention, and in response to well-defined needs, the country office will be able to set realistic goals and measurable results, leading to improved monitoring, evaluation and reporting of results. It will also clarify its "development offer", and will be able to demonstrate its added value, based on the results obtained. In addition, it will be in a position to demonstrate the validity of projects that can be replicated in other regions later, either by the UNDP itself in a future programme or directly by the government.

Recommendation 2: The next programme must be based on strategies that actively support exploring synergies and thematic integration, to address the complex development challenges of Mali more effectively.

UNDP needs to develop clearer strategies to support its work, including through the development of a theory of change for each programme area, and for the programme as whole. This strategy can highlight existing opportunities to move away from a silo approach and look for possible synergies between thematic areas. The implementation of the ongoing programme in Mali has shown, in a few cases, how results achieved in one area can have a positive impact on progress in another area. But this was not the result of an active search for thematic integration.

In the Malian context, it is recognized that the issues of poverty, climate change, social cohesion and security are inherently linked. By developing a programme where these issues are addressed in an integrated manner, UNDP can be more effective, have more impact, and thus deliver results to its government and financial partners.

UNDP needs to ensure that these integrated and geographically-focused programmes systematically include cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, and partnerships with central and local institutions, as well as with civil society.

Recommendation 3: Strengthening the country office's capacity for programme monitoring and evaluation will contribute to improved reporting, clear positioning as well as addressing implementation risks and insufficient results while projects are being implemented.

The UNDP programme must be articulated around realistic objectives and results that UNDP is able to achieve. The monitoring of results must be done through indicators that provide information on the real progress of the programme, based on data that UNDP is able to collect, either directly through the implementation of its projects, or in collaboration with its partners. Such efforts respond to more than just a procedural obligation, as a clear programme results framework can facilitate the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of results.

By choosing overly ambitious targets, out-of-scope results, and indicators that are detached of programme activities, UNDP complicates its communication work and reduces its credibility with its partners. A better-defined results framework can also enable UNDP to provide a more accurate picture of its positioning.

Strengthening programme monitoring and evaluation needs to be supported by increased monitoring and evaluation capacity, not only within the country office in Bamako, but also in the field. Improved monitoring efforts, particularly in the field, will allow UNDP to identify implementation risks and lack of progress in a timely and more efficient manner.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should improve and clarify its position among the development partners of Mali. It has a recognized advantage as the main actor who can bring effective ways to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals. In turn, the SDGs should also be a means for UNDP to better focus its programme.

Integrated and geographically-focused programmes, accompanied by a clear results framework, will enable UNDP to better position itself among development actors in Mali. This positioning must clearly

align with the Sustainable Development Goals and their implementation framework, to effectively support and monitor Mali's development efforts.

UNDP partners - governmental, technical and financial - consider that UNDP has an advantage over other development agencies on the integration and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals in Mali. The SDG framework can be used more clearly as an entry point to the UNDP development programme and can guide UNDP's engagement both with government and with local actors in the field.

UNDP must avoid engaging in the development of multiple national strategies, fragmenting its action and making its positioning more confusing. Refocusing on the SDGs has the potential to help UNDP gain efficiency and effectiveness.

Recommendation 5: UNDP can use its central role, its good collaboration with government partners and the SDGs as entry points for a more coordinated UN development effort.

One of UNDP's strength is in its central position within the United Nations system, exemplified by its co-lead role on three of the four pillars of the UNDAF. Thanks in part to its good collaboration with government partners in many sectors, and its proximity to MINUSMA, UNDP is well positioned to support efforts to design a more coordinated offer among UNCT agencies.

Finally, UNDP should use the SDG framework to map the activities of its UN partners to contribute to the establishment of a truly coordinated United Nations Development Assistance Framework. This will enable UNDP and its UN partners to make better use of available expertise, and implement programmes that are truly based on their specializations, for increased impact and more sustainable results.