



IN BRIEF

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2018-2020

CAMEROON

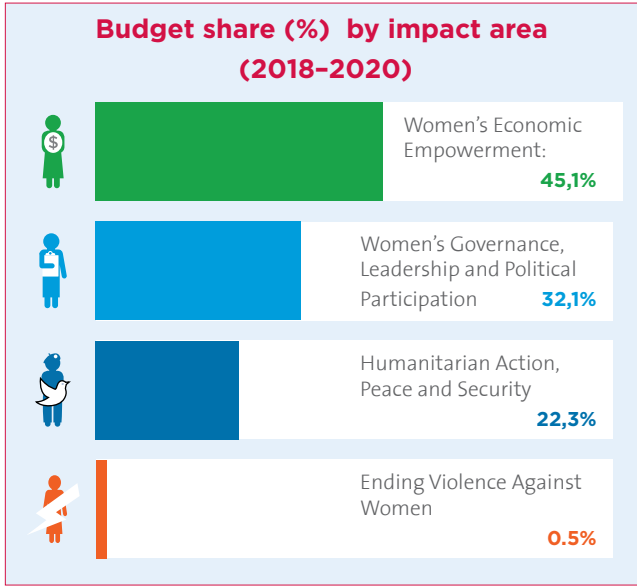
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This summary presents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation of UN Women Cameroon conducted between July and December 2020. The evaluation is a systematic assessment of the normative, operational and coordination aspects of UN Women’s contribution to gender equality and women’s empowerment results at the country level.

Cameroon has remained a lower-middle-income country for the past 30 years, despite its significant resources such as petroleum, agriculture, forestry, mining, tourism and hydropower. Re-election of the country’s President in October 2018 did not take place in a peaceful context. In addition to political tensions, the country has been affected by insecurity in the English-speaking regions of the North-West and South-West, and by religiously inspired terrorism (Boko Haram) in the Far North region.

According to the 2019 Human Development Report, persistent gender inequalities have led to significant disparities between Cameroonian women and men in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. The number of women without education is more than 1.7 times that of men living in a similar situation. Fifty-two per cent of women have experienced domestic violence at least once since the age of 15.

Although UN Women’s presence in Cameroon dates from 2010, it only became official in September 2014, when the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement was signed by the Government. This evaluation of the 2018–2020 Country Programme follows the evaluation that covered the previous period of 2014–2017. The Country Programme required an average of US\$3.2 million annually between 2018 and 2020, divided among four thematic areas: 45 per cent devoted to Women’s Economic Empowerment, 32 per cent to Women’s Governance, Leadership and Political Participation, 22 per cent to Humanitarian Action, Peace and Security and only 0.5 per cent to Ending Violence Against Women.



Following the signing of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement in September 2014, UN Women carried out its development programme as a fully fledged agency. This gives the 2018–2020 Country Portfolio Evaluation, following that of 2014–2017, an object of study as pertaining to its internal coherence, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. The evaluation applied primarily a qualitative methodology with information collected through focus groups, opinion surveys and semi-structured interviews with 53 respondents selected from several categories of stakeholders. As the validity of the 2018–2020 Strategic Note has been extended to December 2021, the lessons learned from this evaluation will be used to inform the development of the new Strategic Note (2022–2024).

The analysis and recommendations of the CPE are those of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN WOMEN. This is an independent publication by the UN WOMEN Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS).

KEY FINDINGS

Regarding the relevance of the country programme, both the 2014–2017 Country Portfolio Evaluation and the present one observe the overall alignment of UN Women Cameroon with national and international strategies, policies and legislation. The areas of gender and human rights covered by UN Women Cameroon's Strategic Note are significant but do not reflect some of the concerns previously expressed by review committees of international treaties, including those related to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The Country Office has largely demonstrated its *effectiveness*. Between 2018 and 2020, there is an upward trend in the results of outcome and output indicators. That said, the modalities of advances to partners, the virtual absence of field missions, and the lack of baseline data surveys hinder the robust monitoring of progress.

UN Women Cameroon's efficiency has been challenged by financial constraints. Funding from one of the country office's main funding partners ceased in 2018. There have also been challenges in disbursements by the Government of Cameroon. As a result, the Country Office has reduced its personnel and vacated its recent premises in the North-West, South-West and Far North regions. These challenges also affected the sustainability of some of UN Women's interventions in the North-West and South-West. That said, two programmes (*Second Chance Education and Women Count*) have shown tangible signs of sustainability.

Finally, regarding the inclusiveness of the Country Programme, the "leave no one behind" principle was upheld, in particular through the targeting of minority groups by UN Women programmes on HIV awareness and COVID-19. However, during the 2018–2020 period, there were no reported actions aimed at promoting the rights of people with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation recommends that UN Women Cameroon:



Adopt a long-term approach in its relationship with civil society organizations in order to develop new collaborative dynamics to strengthen their capacity for collective action in the area of promoting gender equality. There is a need to go beyond the strictly operational approach of project cooperation agreements, which are likely to restrict partners' roles to the simple status of service providers.



Increase the budget share of impact areas such as leadership and political participation and elimination of gender-based violence to enhance the relevance of the country programme and its ability to respond to key challenges.



Reconfigure the distribution of intervention themes across impact areas, so as to clearly separate headings devoted to governance in general and specifically to women's political participation from those devoted to gender statistics, HIV and menstrual hygiene mainstreaming, and gender-responsive planning and budgeting.



Strengthen its monitoring and reporting system by specifying indicator baseline data, by including monitoring missions in programme manager workplans and by channelling collected data through a functional system that complements the results management system.



Regarding the size of tranches advanced to partners, rather than entrusting entire project funds to partners, including Government institutions, at once, it is more prudent to put in place a monitoring system with deliverables, whereby disbursements are made against progress as observed in the field. Each instalment should be paid only on the basis of an assessment of the state of progress.



Retrieve, organize and preserve its institutional memory by appointing a knowledge management focal point.



Pursue resource mobilization efforts to fill gaps in staffing, avoid the practice of double-hatting several functions* into one position and recruit a Chief of Operations and a Country Representative** without delay.



Increase the involvement of women who are also excluded on the basis of ethnicity, disability, income, language, culture and lifestyle in the design, monitoring and implementation of its programmes, and dedicate a portion of the Women Count programme's research to marginalized populations to include their organizations in raising awareness about the use of gender statistics.

* For example, (1) the position of Governance Officer and Women, Peace and Security Officer concentrates the responsibilities related to Leadership and Political Participation of Women; Gender-Responsive Budgeting; Women, Peace and Security as well as the Coordination of the Gender Thematic Group; (2) the Finance Associate assumes the functions of the Operations Manager.

** We will communicate this recommendation directly to the Regional Office.