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UNDP IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan had its first peaceful democratic transfer of national administrations in 2013, attributed to more independent and strengthened election bodies. Following reform initiatives, economic growth rates have ticked up, but the country lags behind its neighbours in terms of competitiveness due to challenges including weak public institutions. Pakistan has suffered a series of large-scale natural disasters as well as protracted crises and conflicts.

UNDP has provided support related to development policy, crisis prevention and recovery, democratic governance, and the environment and climate change. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2013 to 2017, which included projects from previous programme cycles.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2013–2015: \$136.6 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2013-2015



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2013-2015 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP programmes aligned with Pakistan’s key national, regional and sectoral strategies, and relevant international commitments. By forging a close relationship with the Government, UNDP increasingly took development policy work as a major focus area, facilitating national discussions including on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Partnerships with various research and academic communities helped develop tools, such as the multi-dimensional poverty index, to capture a realistic poverty and human development picture. Support to the 2013 elections aided the peaceful transition of power. A comprehensive development strategy for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa facilitated decentralization efforts, and strengthened parliamentary capacity and the rule of law.

Institutional capacities for disaster risk reduction and management improved at the national level and in select provinces, while community mobilization and infrastructure schemes assisted conflict-affected regions. UNDP helped the Government add environmental and climate change issues to the national agenda, make progress in environmental management, and bolster national capacity to address climate adaptation and mitigation measures.

UNDP has unique access to operate in the country’s most complex and sensitive regions. For many donors, this was one of the key reasons to work with the organiza-

tion. UNDP successfully established crucial government cost-sharing agreements with national and provincial governments in several areas, such as for SDG units in all provinces, and the rule of law programme in KP.

On environment and climate change issues, UNDP primarily worked with the central line ministry, with limited provincial engagements or inclusion of other stakeholders. Support for devolution was highly selective, missing opportunities to influence national goals.

Engagement of women was generally weak, with some exceptions, such as successful capacity-building of the women’s parliamentary caucus in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. After a 2013 office realignment exercise abolished the gender unit—based on a decision to ‘rely on’ UN Women and other agencies to lead gender aspects in development—UNDP missed opportunity to encourage its staff to integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment in its programming. There was no structured instrument for gender monitoring and addressing gender issues in projects, other than a general reference to ensuring gender-disaggregated data in programme/project documents.

The 2013 realignment aimed to improve programme efficiency and effectiveness. It closed over 100 small-scale projects and introduced policy-oriented work. Challenges remained in achieving envisaged goals, however.

The reasons included limited internal capacity to design well-articulated, long-term programmes/projects. Programmes generally lacked a clear theory of change and a thorough needs assessment as well as critical political commitment in some cases. Interventions were typically characterized by small-scale, service-delivery efforts, with limited prospects for sustainability or scaling up. Many technical guidance and advisory services were outsourced, except in some areas, such as rule of law.

UNDP operated in some arenas where other UN and development partners have also been significantly engaged, such as youth employment, the election process, disaster risk management and area development in Balochistan. A 'silo' approach to the SDGs, including a decision to establish the SDG units without substantive engagements with other UN agencies, was a concern for many technical agencies that have already substantively engaged with their respective federal/provincial authorities on relevant SDG goals. Similarly, while UNDP was designated to lead the early recovery cluster within the UN system, collaboration with humanitarian actors was insufficient, lacking a 'spirit of open dialogue' and information sharing.

Overall, the results-based approach was weak, with a general absence of data and documentation. Few data were available demonstrating capacity changes among those who participated in training and workshops, for

instance. A new monitoring policy was launched in 2014, along with a web-based monitoring system to track progress and results of all projects, measured against targets defined by the common country programme action plan. Given the spread and remoteness of many UNDP-supported projects, where monitoring has been highly dependent on national project managers (and community-based organizations in some cases), a robust mechanism for effective and efficient monitoring, measuring and reporting of results is critical.

Several challenges in the national implementation modality affected final results. They included the appointment of national project managers without a relevant technical background, resulting in coordination and mediation issues among stakeholders. Other issues included complex, multiple layers of actors along with the slow pace of decision-making. Some project steering committees were established at too high a level to function effectively in solving operational problems on the ground in a timely manner.

Despite some areas requiring improvement, UNDP's long-term, strong relationship with the Government at different levels has given it some comparative strengths over other partners. These include its potential as a catalyst for further policy development and reforms, and lead role in some sectors, such as democratic governance, and the environment and climate change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Leveraging its strong relationship with the national and provincial governments, UNDP should focus its programme efforts to accelerate a development-oriented agenda (support to state building) in the next cycle. Each thematic programme should be guided by a clear strategy, envisaged to achieve the objectives as defined in its country programme.
- UNDP should strengthen its upstream policy work to influence policy, institutional reforms, and creation of systems. UNDP's internal sector-specific knowledge and expertise should be strengthened.
- UNDP should strengthen its coordination and partnership with other UN agencies in all its programme areas, including the areas requiring collective efforts within the UN in advancing national-level development goals (e.g., SDGs) as well as in early recovery efforts with other humanitarian actors.
- UNDP should more explicitly articulate gender equality and women's empowerment in its programming strategy. These efforts should be led by senior management.
- In collaboration with the appropriate government partners, UNDP should revisit its overall NIM strategy to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of UNDP-supported NIM projects. Particular efforts should be made in strengthening of the project management structure, oversight mechanisms, and implementation strategies.
- UNDP should strengthen its result-based approach.
- UNDP should invest in fostering innovation and cross-fertilization of programme efforts.

ABOUT THE ICPEs

Independent country programme evaluations (ICPEs) are the backbone of the work of the Independent Evaluation Office. They capture evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results and the effectiveness of strategies supporting national development. They enable continued improvement in UNDP programmes, contribute to strengthened national ownership and evaluation capacity, and underpin accountability to national stakeholders and UNDP's Executive Board. To date, over 100 ICPEs have been conducted worldwide.

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