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UNDP IN CHILE

Chile has progressively consolidated its macroeconomic stability while carrying out institutional and political reforms, giving priority to social policies in conjunction with a special concern for economic growth and poverty reduction. As a middle-income country, Chile has made significant progress in per capita income and is not a major recipient of traditional international cooperation. Technical assistance has been concentrated in ‘third-gen-

eration’ reform areas such as the strengthening of democratic governance and improvement of social protection.

UNDP programmes have covered environment and energy, equity, human development, democratic governance and South-South cooperation. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2001 to 2009.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2001-2008: \$204.5 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2008



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2001-2008 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP has been very visible in Chile through its national Human Development Reports, published since 1996. The reports’ quality, continuity and timeliness have brought recognition from the highest level of the Administration, and across the Government and civil society. Promotion of a human development approach, which transcends the reports, includes the generation of studies and provision of advisory services. Over time, the approach has taken deep root and is being mainstreamed across public policies. Politicians with different points of view now incorporate elements of human development into their political platforms.

During the first years of the period under evaluation, UNDP anticipated a reduction in funding in Chile. Given strong demand by the Government, and bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies for support with streamlining administrative procedures for development projects, UNDP expanded its role as operations facilitator, while maintaining its widely appreciated work on human development.

As the Government improved its management processes, especially in public procurement through the Chile Compra programme, the margin for operational projects was reduced. This in tandem with UNDP’s new orientation in Latin America and the need to introduce additional quality control mechanisms for administrative

procedures led the organization to upgrade its substantive role. In particular, it added a new dimension as provider of high-level advisory services with a focus on human development, equity and social policy, and multiparty political dialogue.

Activities related to human development and equity have contributed to the promotion of effective and efficient public policies. UNDP collaborated with public officials from the ministries of planning, education and labour in policy design and evaluation. A number of changes were inspired by a human development approach, such as educational assessments targeted to the most vulnerable youth, and social protection mechanisms to detect beneficiaries grounded in an understanding of human capacity. Professional counterparts in different ministries have adopted new practices and methodologies despite the lack of special emphasis on enhancing institutional capabilities.

The participation of UNDP experts in presidential advisory commissions proved valuable in facilitating technical discussions on complex issues, such as social security reform and higher education. Within a consultative and participatory framework, technicians came together from across the political spectrum, expediting political consensus.

In the area of democratic governance, the Consor-

tium for Political Reform became a ‘good practice’ that could be transferred to other countries in Latin America and beyond. Activities to advance the decentralization process, however, have yet to yield significant results. Through different social cohesion projects, UNDP has been instrumental in spotlighting new issues crucial for democratic governance, such as the involvement of the young in the political process, democracy audits, increased transparency and access to information, and gender equity in political representation.

In the environment and energy area, interventions supported a significantly stronger environmental institutional framework. One major achievement was the 2006 National Biodiversity Strategy, Action Plan and Communication to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Other contributions supported more environmentally sustainable urban transport and the adoption of important standards on non-conventional renewable energy.

South-South cooperation capitalized on UNDP’s neutrality, global presence, and knowledge and expertise, but was premised on a narrow definition of Chile

as a provider. Such cooperation could also offer benefits to Chile in addressing some of its challenges, such as decentralization.

New and positive partnerships with civil society have broadened the spectrum of partners beyond the Government. But there is still room for a better relationship with other stakeholders, in the environment and energy area, for example, and, eventually, with the Chilean Congress. These partnerships can be crucial in strengthening the role UNDP plays in promoting social dialogue.

UNDP’s strategic repositioning in Chile was critically aided by its capacity to provide high-level technical advice, which increased its responsiveness to government requests for support. Yet demand for such support will progressively diminish as the Chilean State becomes further modernized. This would require a future redefinition of UNDP activities, with one possibility being to meet currently unfulfilled demand as a facilitator of knowledge and experiences from other countries, within Latin America and beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP could make better use of knowledge accumulated in Latin America and other regions, placing it at the disposal of the Government and Chilean society. This could be done in the context of projects already being implemented and in the design of new projects. The active search for, and the use and dissemination of, UNDP’s global knowledge should be an integral part of the responsibilities of UNDP staff.
- Focusing the work on thematic or practice areas improves specialization and helps programming and implementation. Yet, due to reasons both of efficiency and effectiveness, it is recommended to seek synergies and complementarities among those thematic areas. Furthermore, it may be difficult to address issues like decentralization head on, so a more indirect approach may be required to carve out a different ‘point of entry’. (For example, in addition to the work on decentralization supported by UNDP Chile as part of the governance area, that issue could also be addressed laterally through environmental or indigenous people projects, which will require capacity development at the local government level.)
- A simple information system could be developed to provide access to project data, including costs and final outcomes (explicitly including among them capacity development). The information gap on the activities sponsored by UNDP must be closed. Therefore it is necessary to ensure that every project generates a final report, which would provide information on costs and results achieved, as well as on capacities developed. In addition, the Office should make outcome evaluations an integral part of its annual programming activities.
- UNDP could make significant contributions in a relatively short time and at low cost by embracing the knowledge and expertise gained from UNDP’s global experience in the environment and energy areas.
- On equity, more could be done to link the issue of jobs with youth, and to enable Chile to profit from successful experiences in other countries, such as on institutional mechanisms to assess social policy.
- Despite limited progress made on decentralization, several new themes could include support for the reform of central Government structures and management, and the design of decentralization policies from a diversity perspective with regard to the institutional framework, financial resources, and the types of relationships between regional and municipal authorities as well as with the central Government and social actors.

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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