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UNDP IN MEXICO

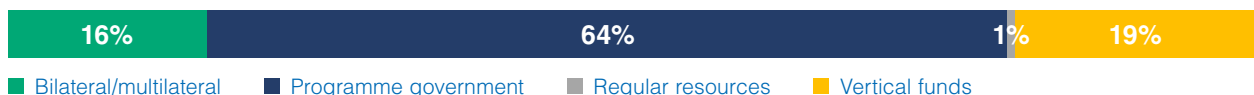
Mexico is an upper middle-income country with the world's 11th largest economy. It met most targets of the Millennium Development Goal, yet multidimensional poverty affects over 46 percent of the population. A number of challenges relate to governance, human rights, corruption and security. Pressure on natural resources has accelerated environmental degradation.

Since 2008 UNDP has focused on poverty reduction and inequality, democratic governance, systemic competitiveness and environmental sustainability. As of 2014,

programme outcomes included sustainable human development, inclusion and equality; productive economic development and competitiveness; improved capabilities for the sustainable use of resources and resilience; public and citizen safety, social cohesion and justice; transparency, accountability; citizen participation and human rights; and leadership in international cooperation for development. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2008 to 2016.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2008-2015: \$199 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2008-2015



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2008-2015 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In Mexico, UNDP has contributed to improving the impact of public policies that support poverty reduction, the environment, sustainable development and democratic governance by creating knowledge, fostering dialogue, providing skills training and implementing projects. It has also helped the three branches of government, the private sector, academia and civil society to strengthen their capabilities to achieve social inclusion, quality of life, and economic growth and competitiveness.

UNDP has contributed to the efforts aimed at reversing environmental degradation and maximizing natural resource use in a sustainable and equitable way by making environmental sustainability, low-emission development and the green economy cross-cutting matters in legislative processes. It helped develop the electoral system, and supported public safety strategies focused on citizens. New public policies to prevent crime and foster social cohesion now take a rights-based approach and offer a gender perspective. As the Government's main partner in positioning Mexico as a regional cooperation partner, UNDP backed progress in consolidating a valid international development cooperation platform.

UNDP is considered by the Mexican Government, local governments and civil society organizations to be a valuable and trustworthy ally. It is appreciated for transparency in handling public resources, its capability to access a network of experts, and impartiality. Its support

has been valuable, for instance, in intervening in communal land issues and communities where the Mexican Government is not fully accepted. UNDP also offers well-acknowledged opportunities to build knowledge through the production of Human Development Reports, and to assist monitoring and evaluation of the MDGs and now of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNDP has moved from macro- to micro-level policies with state governments, focusing on everyday concerns such as violence, the deterioration of social fabric, patronage and poor state capacities. Yet it has left aside fundamental topics to which it had previously made important contributions, such as gender equality, human rights, and topics related to security, transparency, corruption and impunity. UNDP has lost its leading role in gender equality, not having a gender strategy since 2012. In governance and environment, the organization did not contribute approaches, methodologies or experts to improve gender equality. UNDP also has been lagging behind in advocating a comprehensive view of development based on multidimensional poverty.

Contributions to the design and implementation of national development policies faced several challenges, including electoral cycles. The National Development Plans run every six years and do not coincide with UNDP programme cycles, thus limiting opportunities to link international commitments with the national agenda.

Further, UNDP's collaboration with Government has decreased, due to the latter showing reduced interest and to UNDP not being proactive in promoting topics that could be part of the public agenda. High-level dialogue has been weakened by staff turnover at UNDP and in government agencies. With the 2030 Agenda opening a new window of opportunity, UNDP re-established high-level dialogue and contributed to the Government's identification of national targets to meet the SDGs.

While UNDP's activities are pertinent to national development priorities, project results cannot be easily evaluated against outcomes. The formulation of outcomes was very ambitious in relation to the specificity of projects. That said, the vast majority of project results were positive, with the best results from generating evidence, optimizing the use of resources by forging strategic alliances with local and national agents, and engaging communities to better understand local leadership and generate trust. There was little coordination between different areas of cooperation, however.

Project sustainability was affected by staff turnover and dependence on temporary consultants who implement permanent work. Increasing public budgetary restrictions led to cuts at national counterparts responsible for ensuring the continuity of project results, many of which, as a result, will not be replicated on a larger scale.

Efforts were made to improve capabilities in institutions involved in UNDP projects, but at risk that they be lost and, with them, the sustainability of results. Capabilities developed in the academic sector ensure long-term continuity, but there are no mechanisms through which their potential can be used once projects end.

Programme management was efficient, and resources were suitable for projects. Yet administrative procedures were rigid and costly. Accountability mechanisms and project audits put time and resource burdens on civil society groups in particular. Financial sustainability was satisfactory, despite lower government funding resulting from budgetary restrictions.

UNDP is present in places and events where other cooperation agencies have limited presence in Mexico. It has the potential to be very pertinent with certain agents, such as municipalities, where capacities in some cases are very basic. Other comparative advantages include UNDP's strategic and issue-based approach to dialogue with partners. This varies from the approach taken by cooperation bodies such as development banks, which contribute their own ideas and modalities. Overall, the work undertaken by UNDP with the Mexican Government stands out for its sensitivity towards social, economic and environmental circumstances, and for its capacity to develop national models.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP needs to be autonomous, firm and agile in proposing alternative pathways for sustainable human development and to influence the 2030 Agenda at the highest level. It needs to strengthen its capacity for high-level policy dialogue with the Mexican Government to achieve greater impact in formulating and implementing public policies, and acting as a bridge in periods of political change.
- To remain an active partner in supporting the national development agenda, UNDP should proactively identify development challenges and prioritize its work in the next cooperation programme to include support in promoting fair and democratic elections, improving transparency and accountability and promoting good governance, where it has a clear comparative advantage. It should focus on long term projects at the national level and integrate the environmental agenda with multidimensional poverty work in order to address social and economic inclusion, promote green economy in all economic sectors and address climate change challenges.
- UNDP should move beyond procurement and consultancy projects to address human development issues, and better engage with the national public agenda, private sector, civil society and academia to formulate its priorities for the next programme cycle.
- Moving into the next programme cycle, UNDP needs to strategically position itself vis-a-vis the Government and other development partners; diversify its funding sources; and develop a resource mobilization strategy that includes other donors and the private sector, while continuing its cost sharing arrangement with the Government.

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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