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UNDP IN ARMENIA

Armenia's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 was followed by a period of economic and social crisis. Today, it is a lower middle-income country, but as of 2013, a third of the population still lived in poverty, with sharp disparities across regions. Other challenges include a high vulnerability to disaster. Some progress has been made in fighting corruption and human trafficking.

UNDP's country programmes have covered

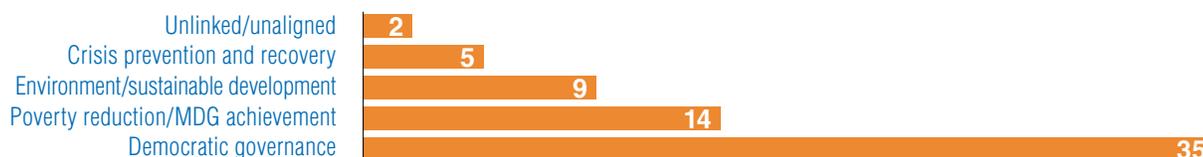
social-economic governance, with an emphasis on human development; democratic governance, with the main thrust being human rights; environmental governance, aimed at regulatory and management frameworks; and integrated border management (IBM). The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2005 to 2013.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2005-2013: \$65.5 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2005-2013



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2005-2013 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, UNDP initiatives were high in quality, sustainable and aligned with national priorities. There was strong national ownership, demonstrated through changes in legislation and regulations. UNDP was most effective in supporting the formulation or reform of national policies and strategies, developing and strengthening national institutional capacities, implementing large and complex projects, administering resources and piloting innovative solutions.

Contributions to poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have helped to strengthen regulatory frameworks to revitalize small and medium-size enterprises, such as the National Strategy on SME Development. UNDP bolstered national and local capacities to implement innovative and diversified income-generating policies and practices targeting vulnerable groups, with the aim of reducing inequalities. There are signs of an increasingly improved environment for trade among regions, and an improved system of agricultural market chains. Successful engagement with civil society organizations and private stakeholders in discussions on vocational education were followed by an amendment of the employment law to enable rural youth to enrol in free training programmes.

UNDP helped the Government enhance data collection and systematization, and develop a unified

community database that informs national and regional decision-making, tracks progress towards achieving the MDGs and monitors commitments to human development. Other efforts assisted in building capacities at all levels of government for decentralization, planning, management, delivery of public goods and services, and monitoring social policies, leading to some improvement in the Government Effectiveness Index score, albeit less than an intended target.

In democratic governance, UNDP's contributed to expanded institutional capacities to address human rights, including at the Human Rights Defender's Office. Other assistance helped develop the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities. Despite a growing effort to mainstream gender in programmes, UNDP lacked a clear theory of change for how gender could fast-track development.

With UNDP support, a functioning disaster risk reduction system now exists. While it has not yet been fully integrated in government strategies and plans, the Ministry of Emergency Situations was established along with a national platform to address emergencies.

Contributions to the environment and sustainable development enabled the Government to meet its commitments under the Montreal Protocol and prepare a greenhouse gas inventory. The protected areas system

expanded by 38,828 hectares, and the Law on Specially Protected Natural Areas was fully revised to enable communities to participate in protected areas management.

UNDP has been successful in mobilizing resources and expanding cost-sharing for IBM initiatives, including to improve the quality of border management services and upgrade infrastructure at border crossing points. However, it was not clearly articulated how IBM initiatives will contribute to human rights and other development areas, which may impede results with strategic potential to advance development. Stronger programmatic synergies could be promoted with trade, local development, poverty reduction, human rights, migration and good relations with neighbouring countries.

From 2005 to 2015, UNDP had 18 programme outcomes, a major challenge for a Country Office with a limited number of staff and scarce resources. Despite

significant efforts, results-based management and outcome monitoring and evaluation could better feed into decision-making, learning and course corrections, and could more strategically contribute to outcome-level development results.

On the whole, the Government of Armenia and civil society consider UNDP a reliable, responsive development partner. It is strategically positioned through its strong relationship with the Government, long-term engagement with key civil society organizations, effective outreach to local governments and communities, and unique convening power to foster dialogue on key development issues. It could promote more frequent and inclusive consultation, particularly with government counterparts, to better help the Government coordinate and leverage international development efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should hold further discussions with government stakeholders to redefine a more consultative relationship with regard to strategically prioritizing resources and identifying and selecting programme themes and beneficiaries. Equally important would be to define with the Government ways to ensure that UNDP's neutrality, efficiency and effectiveness are not compromised. This may require putting in place mechanisms to allow UNDP the flexibility needed to foster innovation, ensure value for money, and make timely and efficient contributions to sustainable development.
- UNDP Armenia should develop the next programme with a focus on fewer and more specific, realistic and strategically targeted outcomes, narrowing the range of activities accordingly. UNDP should prioritize initiatives in which it can bring added value and in which costs can be shared by strategic national partners to ensure national ownership and sustainability of results.
- UNDP should further capitalize on the opportunities offered by IBM initiatives. It should develop a well-articulated strategy, in close cooperation with the National Security Council and other stakeholders, to leverage synergies with interrelated development issues and diversify funding sources with a conscious technical and value-for-money strategy.
- UNDP should make further efforts to effectively document and disseminate its successful experiences and lessons learned in programme approaches and initiatives, particularly the successful pilot ones.
- UNDP Armenia should strive to adopt a more holistic, sustained, long-term and multipronged approach in order to more fully and explicitly integrate gender equality components into all areas of work. UNDP Armenia should focus not only on gender responsive, but on gender-transformative contributions that can fast-track development and address power relations and cultural structures.
- As Armenia is a country prone to disasters, UNDP should explore how to further integrate and mainstream DRR into all its programmes and initiatives.
- UNDP should further improve results-based management and monitoring and evaluation of the programme at the outcome level, and work with coherent and comprehensive theories of change to map assumptions and ensure complex contexts and the multifaceted nature of development are considered to contribute to development, behavioural and transformational change.

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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