

UNDP IN IRAQ

Until two decades ago, Iraq was highly regarded for its public sector management, effective growth strategy and social welfare programmes. Years of war and international isolation subsequently led to deteriorating infrastructure and underinvestment in public services. Since 2008, rapid economic growth and improvements in services have substantially reduced income poverty, but not without significant inequalities. Weak legal mechanisms and widespread corruption constrain development.

From 2008 to 2010, UNDP focused on governance,

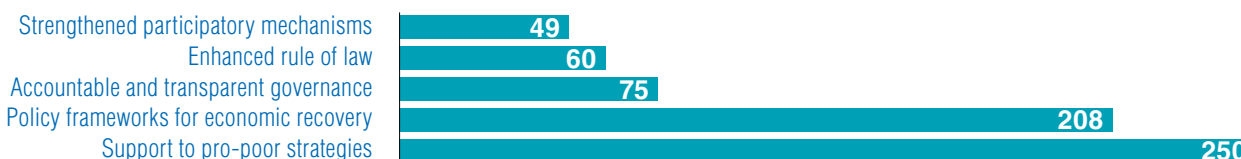
and economic recovery and poverty alleviation initiatives. Starting in 2011, programmes sought to foster inclusive participation; strengthen accountable and responsive governing institutions; promote inclusive growth, gender equality, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and Millennium Development Goal achievement; and restore foundations for development. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2008 to 2014.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2008-2013: \$377.7 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2008-2013



PROGRAMME BUDGET BY OUTCOME AREA, 2011-2014 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Through its programmes, UNDP delivered tangible benefits in terms of strengthened policies, legislation and institutional capacity. Its flagship support for elections achieved considerable results, helping to establish the Independent High Electoral Commission as a self-sufficient and participatory mechanism. Under the access to justice and human rights programme, the Ministry of Interior strongly supported the Family Protection Units that provide police and legal assistance to women, children and families to respond to domestic disputes.

Efforts to enhance the rule of law in the federal system encountered questions around sustainability, but in Kurdistan, where the Regional Government welcomed the modernization of its judiciary, future prospects are more promising. The numbers of judges and cases in criminal courts have increased, although there is little evidence of greater court efficiency, reduced case backlog or increased public confidence in the justice system.

Programmes assisting with policy frameworks for economic recovery were challenged by an absence of coherent demand from the Government. Economic trends have been towards further concentration of economic activity in the state, driven by a rapid increase in

the oil sector. In this context, there was limited progress towards economic diversification and private-sector development, even though these were key elements of successive national development plans.

UNDP programmes to support pro-poor strategies, while relevant, focused on localized recovery activities and were not consistent with an overall orientation around policy and institution-building. Recovery projects made tangible contributions to the restoration of public services and infrastructure, such as through the doubling in the use of two hospitals after they had been rehabilitated. The local area development programme contributed to strengthening planning systems at the governorate level and to building vertical linkages between governorates and the regional and federal planning frameworks. The contribution remains unique; ongoing insecurity and the declining international presence in Iraq mean that few if any international organizations are working on governance issues at the governorate level.

UNDP took on complex topics such as inefficient delivery of basic services, abuse of the public trust by civil servants and the need to ensure that capital investment expenditures addressed real needs. All of these

are relevant to the challenges Iraq faces, yet an emphasis on grand programme designs meant that some were too theoretical to yield tangible results, and did not take practical constraints into consideration. Gender equality did not receive adequate priority.

Some programme models were not sufficiently customized to the local context, which undercut national ownership as well as effectiveness and sustainability. For example, the peace and reconciliation projects applied a western reconciliation method that was rejected by local stakeholders. UNDP showed improvement over time in adapting programme models to Iraq, but the lack of initial adaptation had significant impacts.

Since 2008, UNDP has aimed to shift its programme focus from reconstruction and recovery to development, and from a project-based approach to a more coherent and strategic programming approach. This coincided with deteriorating security conditions and a sharp reduction in resources. Yet due to a lack of strategic leadership during a crucial transition period, programmes operated relatively independently, and synergies were not pursued. A preoccupation with fundraising led to some isolated projects that, while good in their intentions and hence marketable, were too small and ad hoc to create much discernible impact. Further, UNDP pursued pro-

grammes even when political support was lacking, when there were political and reputational risks, or when the lack of delivery resulted in a loss of credibility.

An important consequence of operating under security restrictions is that programme implementation focused on support primarily to the central Government. Several programme areas would have benefited by broadening their focus to the provincial and district levels.

UNDP's programmatic collaboration with the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) was weak, which undermined activities in some areas. The comparative strengths that UNDP usually exercises in the United Nations country team were overshadowed, sometimes with justification and sometimes without.

Though UNDP has increasingly been counting on sharing the cost of programming with the Government, officials seem not fully convinced of the value of shared expenses. For its part, the Government has often not clearly articulated what it wants from UNDP. Attaining the status of a trusted development partner through enhanced interactions with the citizens and the Government of Iraq may be a priority in re-establishing UNDP's comparative strength as a leading UN development agency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should consolidate its programme support, ensuring that it has adequate scope and depth to address the key development challenges confronting Iraq. UNDP should move away from funding-driven, low-impact activities.
- UNDP's future relevance will depend on establishing strong development partnerships with the Government and people of Iraq. UNDP should make it a priority to develop and sustain partnerships with national counterparts.
- UNDP should develop adaptive strategies that will continue to contribute to Iraq's development under different and evolving political and security scenarios, particularly the challenging security context of central and south Iraq.
- UNDP should ensure the appropriate balance of programme support between the national and governorate levels and should strengthen the synergies between programmes at the two levels.
- UNDP programmes need to prioritize promoting gender equality. The lack of a conducive environment cannot justify inadequately pursuing programmes that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.
- UNDP should strengthen its own technical and advisory capacities. UNDP should review programme management and should develop an appropriate strategy to respond effectively to Iraq's development needs.
- Recently, the importance of UNDP's mandate in integrated peacekeeping missions has been increasingly recognized. UNDP and UNAMI should draw lessons from countries where close coordination between UNDP and the integrated mission has been mutually beneficial and has enhanced their contributions to peacebuilding and development. UNDP and UNAMI should make concerted efforts to solve disagreements regarding their roles in the area of governance.

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.

See the full reports at the Evaluation Resource Centre, erc.undp.org