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UNDP IN CROATIA

Croatia has gone through a significant transition in the past two decades, following its 1991-1995 war. In 2003, it applied for European Union (EU) membership, and officially joined the organization in 2013.

2013 was also the final year of a UNDP country programme with six portfolios designed to support Croatia's transition: social inclusion, regional and local development, environmental governance, business com-

petitiveness, justice and human security, and support to national development priorities. The business portfolio was phased out in 2011 and absorbed in other programme areas involving the private sector. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2007 to 2013.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2007-2012: \$45.8 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2007-2012



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2007-2012 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The country programme, based on the evaluation, was in direct alignment with national development priorities, EU accession requirements and relevant UN conventions. The social inclusion work, for instance, aimed at the development of social policies, with a particular emphasis on the protection of persons with disabilities, minorities and survivors of gender-based violence. The extension of energy efficient technologies in the residential and service sectors conformed with national strategies, EU directives and international commitments set by the Kyoto Protocol.

The degree to which programmes achieved their intended objectives varied, however. The social inclusion programme played a significant role in the development of informed and participatory approaches to strategic planning, and a systematic approach to monitoring the implementation of social inclusion policies. But the integration of social inclusion results into national strategies was limited due to capacity and resource constraints.

With slow progress on a national policy for regional development, dozens of small-scale local development interventions addressed the direct needs of war-affected and other underdeveloped regions of the country. The portfolio, however, lacked a clear link to an overarching national-level outcome aiming at the socioeconomic

development of those regions. UNDP's overall effects on the development of a long-term strategy and capacity-building were more evident during the second half of the programme, when support to preparing rural areas for EU accession became the focus.

The business competitiveness portfolio provided important tools, such as the Corporate Social Responsibility Index and Regional Competitiveness Index, to promote private sector engagement in national and regional sustainable development. But the use of these indices appeared limited.

Justice and human security focused on, among other issues, witness and victim support, capacity-building at the People's Ombudsman Office, community security, arms control and the state election process. The portfolio produced tangible results incorporated in national strategies. The witness and victim support project was one of the most successful efforts, managing to integrate witness and victims' rights into key regulatory acts, such as the Criminal Procedure Act, while providing services assisting more than 10,000 people. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe praised the programme as "a cornerstone for justice and reconciliation in the Balkans." The portfolio also made substantial contributions to Croatia's abilities to fulfil obligations in

Chapters 23, 24 and 31 of the EU negotiations.

The national development priorities portfolio initially aimed at capacity-building to enable the Government to plan and implement effective development policies. As the EU accession process moved forward, the portfolio appropriately shifted to sharing Croatia's experience, including through support to the 'centre of excellence' in the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. More sustained results may have been achieved, however, if the needs of recipient countries were clearly identified and the effectiveness of capacity-building measured.

Gender equality was promoted through numerous advocacy activities, and included men as part of campaigning against gender-based violence. But in general, there was limited evidence in the programme design of adopting a systematic, strategic approach to addressing gender equity as part of achieving intended outcomes.

Programmes were generally implemented in an efficient manner and demonstrated flexibility, but sustainability varied. The social inclusion portfolio delivered planned outputs in a timely fashion, yet further capacity-building of national stakeholders, including civil society organizations, would be needed to continue the reform process. Private-sector businesses appreciated additional funding channels, such as green business

portfolios set up in some banks, although it was not clear that these can be sustained or scaled up.

UNDP's comparative strengths included its ability to identify and respond to local needs, provide technical expertise and broker partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders. In the local development portfolio, a combination of UNDP staff expertise, local presence and critical partnerships with local stakeholders, including county government authorities, helped meet the specific needs of local communities. It became a good example of how a concentration of multiple activities and interventions can gradually create a trusting relationship as a basis for long-term cooperation.

UNDP has positioned itself well in Croatia, despite some weaknesses in national policy impact, measurement of capacity-building and gender mainstreaming. Croatia's EU accession marks a turning point, with the country becoming a net contributor under the UNDP classification, and therefore no longer eligible for receiving UNDP core funds. The evaluation found that the country programme has provided a strong foundation for UNDP's work in the remaining phase of the country programme. Some lessons learned and best practices from Croatia should be identified and replicated in supporting other EU accession countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should prepare for transitioning its development activities in Croatia during 2013.
- UNDP activities should continue only in areas where partners demonstrate their strong endorsement and request UNDP's technical assistance to carry out agreed activities within a time-bound framework.
- UNDP should strengthen performance monitoring and results-based frameworks.
- UNDP should analyse its capacity-building strategy to strengthen outputs and outcomes.
- In the social inclusion portfolio, UNDP should increase sustainability by focusing on capacity-building among national institutions for the implementation of planned social policy reforms.
- UNDP should promote the work done so far in war-affected and less-developed areas under the local development portfolio, and focus further on advocating at the central political level for the need to prepare those areas for challenges and opportunities that await after EU accession.
- UNDP should promote the model of long-term local support by its field offices and encourage the Government to treat the model as a pilot for areas with specific local needs.
- The environmental governance and climate change team should build upon the current portfolio by taking appropriate measures to help ensure the sustainability of its results.
- The Corporate Social Responsibility Index and Regional Competitiveness Index should be promoted.
- The justice and human security portfolio should focus on ensuring the sustainability and 'irreversibility' of finalized reforms and those in progress, including through capacity-building, strengthening of partnerships with civil society, and the dissemination of good practices to other countries in the region.
- Continued support should be provided to the fledgling 'centre of excellence' established by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs as well as to other Croatian institutions seeking to share best practices.

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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