



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

UNDP IN SRI LANKA

With a tradition of policies to ensure the spread of social welfare, Sri Lanka has achieved higher levels of health and education than expected of countries with a similar income level. This should not mask, however, a number of human development challenges, including those related to the prolonged civil war that ended in 2009. In 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami became the largest natural disaster in Sri Lanka's recorded history.

UNDP has provided assistance on poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), fostering democratic governance, energy and environment, crisis prevention and recovery, and gender. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2002 to 2012.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2012: \$147 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2012



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2004-2012 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Over the past decade, UNDP has responded well to evolving government priorities and the needs of the country, particularly in dealing with the effects of the war and tsunami. A significant contribution came from helping to establish a comprehensive national disaster management system. This entailed the creation of the Disaster Management Centre, local disaster response units and an early warning system. The Road Map towards a Safer Sri Lanka, designed with UNDP support, became a framework to identify and coordinate multistakeholder efforts in the next 10 years, and has been widely recognized for its relevance and timeliness. Interministerial coordination and local government involvement in disaster management are issues that remain.

The Transition and Recovery Programme, implemented in post-conflict areas, delivered major impacts through an integrated approach, helping communities regain their livelihoods and their sense of dignity, confidence and stability. Former internally displaced people in particular rebuilt not only their own personal lives but also collective community identities. A direct implementation approach led to greater effectiveness, but left gaps in the capacity of local governments to take over operations. There was no common understanding of the future or the exit strategy of this programme.

UNDP supported the Government to incorporate the MDGs and the Managing for Development Results approach into the national planning framework. On the MDGs, there was steady but slow progress. Application of Managing for Development Results had yet to achieve necessary depth and breadth. Dynamic linkages between national and sub-national entities, and between the central units and other parts of the Government were still largely missing.

Several projects to facilitate poverty reduction generally had limited impact and questionable sustainability. The Uva Poverty Alleviation project was relatively successful in providing poor and vulnerable groups with greater access to assets, markets and financial resources, working through 50 community-based organizations in 25 villages and the private sector. But it was not clear that these organizations can maintain their capacities, including to operate microcredit programmes.

A more proactive approach and leadership would have been needed to tackle structural poverty issues and emerging poverty gaps, such as for a rural ageing population. Some of UNDP's greatest contributions to poverty reduction in fact occurred where it was not a primary objective, such as in post-tsunami and post-conflict recovery, and the localization of the MDGs as a

framework for guaranteeing basic services. These programmes mainstreamed not only poverty reduction but also human rights and gender.

To promote democratic and inclusive governance, UNDP aimed to strengthen human rights institutions, decentralization and access to justice. Initiatives such as the introduction of a Citizen's Charter, and provisions of legal documents for internally displaced persons were effective in steering public service provision to people's needs. Capacity development support largely focused on institutional strengthening, yet systems to effectively use new capacities were generally missing.

Field projects for sustainable development and improved environmental management produced results on a limited scale. One clear success was the Montreal Protocol project, where a target to reduce chlorofluorocarbon consumption was met two years ahead of schedule.

A gender dimension was well mainstreamed into UNDP's programmes, especially field operations. A standalone project to increase the representation of women in decision-making processes made limited contributions, but laid the ground for tangible progress in the future. A stocktaking report and needs assessment exercise helped clarify issues and possible actions to take,

and led to the formulation of a National Plan of Action for Women by the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment.

Programmes overall had a tendency to focus on the delivery of outputs without paying sufficient attention to the conditions in which these could lead to actual development results. Even beyond UNDP, in the community of development partners as a whole, this tendency to focus on delivery more than results may have hindered effective coordination of strategies and approaches among partners engaged in similar assistance to achieve similar objectives.

Today, UNDP faces the challenge of repositioning itself within a changing context. With post-conflict regions soon moving from a transitional to a developmental phase, UNDP must chart a clear course for its future in these regions. Sri Lanka is solidifying its middle-income country status and developing its own capacity. UNDP is expected to strengthen its policy advice, advocacy and partnership-building roles, while focusing capacity development on supporting national efforts. New issues are also emerging—such as an ageing society, and environmental and economic development links—to which UNDP could contribute.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP must strengthen its focus on the achievement of development results beyond the delivery of outputs.
- UNDP should support national development efforts more through coordinating and galvanizing support around national development goals, and engage in deeper programmatic coordination in the UN country team.
- UNDP should enhance its policy advisory role. To this end, it should engage in building broader partnerships among policy makers, intellectual communities, civil society and the private sector in the country.
- UNDP should more effectively use its successful experiences in downstream projects, and collate experiences of development partners engaged in similar activities to promote a more coherent approach.
- In all programmes, UNDP should more systematically consider how partnerships with the private sector could facilitate the achievement of development goals and build those partnerships into the programme design.
- UNDP's capacity development should encompass support to the development of systems and mechanisms that would make use of the capacity developed.
- UNDP should ensure that capacity developed in national institutions is sustainable after the completion of the engagement, and an exit strategy should be built into every project design.
- In promoting accountable and transparent public service delivery mechanisms, UNDP should systematically involve both decentralized and devolved structures of local governance as well as community-level organizations, take a policy leadership role in coordinating donor initiatives, and take a holistic approach encompassing human rights, access to justice, local public service delivery and results-based management at national and local levels.
- For post-conflict regions, UNDP should set up an exit strategy for its transition and recovery programme. It should consider retaining some capacities at the province level to monitor the socio-economic situation and coordinate capacity development and recovery support during the transition period.
- UNDP should re-examine where it could make a critical contribution to gender equality within the context of the UN development assistance framework, and provide focused support therein.

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