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UNDP IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

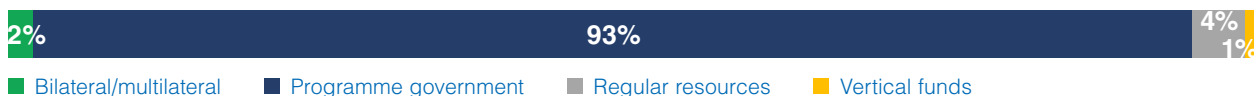
The United Arab Emirates has made significant development progress in the past four decades, achieving strong economic development and political stability. With about 10 percent of the current world reserves of crude oil, it is a major economic force. Remaining development challenges relate to regional disparities, migration and high rates of greenhouse gas emissions.

UNDP has provided programme support in the areas

of institutional and human resources development; integration into the global economy; protection, management and regeneration of natural resources and the environment; economic and social development; and governance. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2002 to 2012.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2011: \$16.2 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2011



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY TYPE OF PROGRAMME, 2002-2011 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The current context of the United Arab Emirates required UNDP to take a purposeful and strategic approach, adapted to national expectations and driven by the fundamental principles of sustainable human development. National stakeholders value UNDP for its neutrality and impartiality. But despite having a programme presence for two decades, UNDP has not positioned itself favourably to further development objectives.

UNDP primarily provided administrative and logistical services; only a few projects aimed for more substantive engagement. Severe limitations were evident in leveraging service-related interventions for a more strategic role in policy support and in strengthening institutions and human resources.

UNDP's lack of capacity for long-term and sustained engagement in the key areas of energy, environment and climate change, public administration and gender equality meant that in many cases, the Government preferred to work with other agencies or consultancy firms. Reducing the carbon footprint and renewable energy are on the top of the agenda, for example, but UNDP did not tap its corporate expertise or mobilize support to engage in high-level environment and climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Only a few activities related to environmental issues took place, such as on environmental monitoring and law enforcement.

Several factors contributed to programme shortfalls, including gaps in professional staff. The lack of national

staff in particular was a major issue, constraining efficiency and sustained engagement with the Government and other national stakeholders. Further, UNDP did not develop partnerships with leading research and policy institutions to access expertise required on short notice.

The UNDP development contribution could have been significantly higher had it not missed a number of key opportunities—most importantly, to support national efforts aimed at strengthening governance, economic prosperity and service delivery in the northern emirates. UNDP did not establish partnerships with the northern emirates, which have greater need for development services and support. In instances where official agreements were established, much of what was promised or expected was not fulfilled.

A significant intervention involved the emirate level Sharjah and Abu Dhabi human development reports. These generated interest in possibly producing a national human development report, and may have allayed cynicism among some government representatives regarding the usefulness of the reports. Better synergies with other UNDP initiatives, however, such as the Arab Knowledge Report project, were needed.

A key factor affecting overall programme coherence was the lack of a clear understanding of the real value added by UNDP and a similar lack of a realistic assessment of the agency's comparative strengths in an increasingly competitive environment. Even national

partners who worked with UNDP were only aware of the activities they were directly involved with, and were uncertain of UNDP's mandate or activities. The few stakeholders familiar with UNDP construed the absence of core resources as a lack of interest in the country's development discourse.

In other countries that, like the United Arab Emirates, have become net contributors to UNDP, the organization has maintained relevance due to countries' regional aspirations, such as European Union accession or Gulf Cooperation Council integration processes. This did not seem to be the case in the United Arab Emirates.

UNDP was detached from international and regional discourses, such as the increasing role of the United Arab Emirates in development and humanitarian aid. The country has made many efforts to systematize its aid, and UNDP could have facilitated cooperation with the global South, particularly in Africa and Asia. Its extensive presence in more than 135 countries makes it an appropriate agency to be involved in these issues, but UNDP has yet to explore the sharing of best practices

with other countries. A concerted effort is needed to devise and enable a system for sharing knowledge.

Despite immense potential for developing funding partnerships for its global programme, UNDP did not have systems in place for structured resource mobilization, coordinating project monitoring or providing periodic reports. A more structured approach would include a strategy tailored to the Arab States and the region's four top international development and humanitarian assistance donors, which include Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia alongside the United Arab Emirates. Such a strategy should unite an effective presentation of UNDP's work with systems for monitoring, reporting and communications.

The absence of regular and predictable funding challenged UNDP effectiveness and constrained more structured programming. UNDP needs to break out of this trap if it is to develop long-term local relationships, contribute to national development and facilitate aspirations in the United Arab Emirates to support development in countries where such assistance is needed and requested.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should demonstrate a strong commitment to strategically engaging on key development issues and to furthering global development partnerships. Responsiveness to United Arab Emirates expectations to provide services to government agencies is one option, but not the only option, given UNDP comparative advantages.
- UNDP needs to make a strong commitment to support the northern emirates in addressing their development priorities and to contribute to bridging the developmental gap among the emirates. It should support a human development report for the northern emirates and work on setting up a field presence, if requested to do so.
- UNDP should strengthen the country office's capacities to fulfil high-quality service needs. In addition to core staff, UNDP should build a network of professionals and use their expertise in delivering effective and timely services. The Government's expectations include services related to technical expertise and procurement.
- UNDP should make it a priority strategic goal to attract and develop an experienced workforce of nationals in the country office, who can take the lead in research, technical and advisory services.
- UNDP should develop a resource mobilization strategy tailored to the United Arab Emirates. This strategy should include an effective presentation of UNDP work, areas that UNDP can support, and fund management systems for monitoring, reporting and communications.
- The country office should realistically assess headquarters support, particularly when the United Arab Emirates needs high-quality professional support at an accelerated pace. UNDP should make concerted efforts to build mutually beneficial and sustained partnerships with local and regional research and policy institutions whose capabilities can be leveraged to improve country office capacities. It should seek opportunities to work together with other UN agencies based on comparative advantages and overall contributions to development results.
- UNDP should strengthen systems for programme management. This should include establishing clear guidelines for accountability and reporting within the country office and with clients. Engaging in global development partnerships also requires strengthening the country office's media and communications capacities.

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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