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UNDP IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

After a long dictatorship and two devastating wars, the Democratic Republic of the Congo embarked in 2003 on a transition that led to its first democratic elections since 1960. But it remains among the poorest countries in the world. In the east, continued violence is committed by armed groups.

UNDP has provided support to good governance, the fight against poverty, and crisis prevention and recovery. Additional activities reflected evolving opportuni-

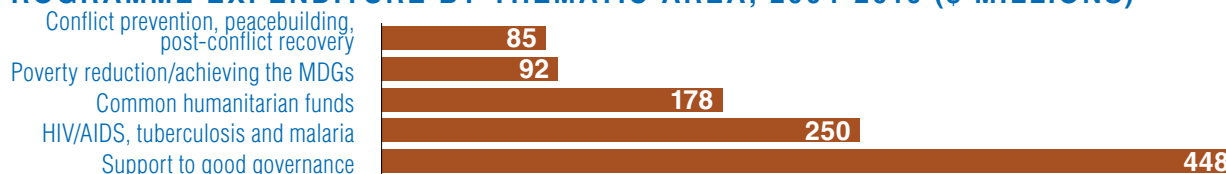
ties related to the sustainable management of natural resources, and the fight against HIV/AIDS and other pandemics. Starting in 2008, the country programme positioned UNDP as working towards peace and security through the strengthening of good governance and poverty reduction. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2003 to 2012.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2010: \$1,054 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2005-2010



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2004-2010 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP's achievements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo included assuming a leading role in the demobilization of ex-combatants, sometimes in extremely difficult conditions, thus making a significant contribution to peace and stability. It supported the transitional Parliament in drafting the new Constitution and election laws, and helped register over 25 million voters and organize three elections within a year. The National Forum on Decentralization, held at the end of 2007, defined the conceptual approach in this field.

In the fight against poverty and support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), UNDP saw achievements in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and community recovery; the drafting of pro-poor strategies and policies; the extension of microfinance and climate change. Support for the elaboration of the REDD (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries) Preparedness Plan opened the way for nearly \$75 million in new funding in 2010.

In some areas, UNDP achieved few concrete results. It did not influence national mechanisms and public policies to promote human rights and especially gender equality, for example. More effective support to decentralization, and strengthening local authorities and civil

society organizations could have accelerated democratization and peacebuilding. Capacity-building focused narrowly on training a few individuals without looking at operational constraints of institutions. One exception was work with the Court of Audits, a watchdog for the management of public finance. Following intensive consultations, the Government and active partners in public finance reform, including UNDP, developed a strategic plan for finance reform as a common framework for the Court and all actors in the field. By 2010, the Court was able to publish all required reports.

National ownership of results was limited for governmental units but better for community projects. Benefiting communities often contributed financially or provided labour to each intervention that concerned them, while the State repeatedly failed to allocate a budget and assign the personnel required to operate a rehabilitated service. The electoral process was a significant exception, as the Government was expected to contribute more than 66 percent of financing during the 2011 cycle.

In the second half of the period evaluated, donors began phasing out short-term emergency interventions and switching to long-term development assistance. UNDP formulated an ambitious programme to fight poverty and achieve the MDGs, but sufficient funding

never materialized, for reasons including donor concerns about a precarious context and the global financial crisis. In recent years, activities related to the management of two major basket funds, the Humanitarian Pooled Fund and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, have come to represent 61 percent of total outlays.

Through the Humanitarian Pooled Fund, the country office strengthened the management skills of humanitarian NGOs. But 300 humanitarian projects were considered UNDP projects from an administrative point of view. Under the Global Fund, UNDP's role has been substantive, but its performance assessment has been downgraded, resulting from poor monitoring, complex operational structures, and procedures that do not adequately take into account the operational context.

A sudden increase in resources in 2005 and 2006 required a rapid adaptation of the country office, with massive hiring, intensive use of United Nations Volun-

teers and the creation of many ad hoc structures and units. The organization was subsequently not quick enough to 'normalize' this situation. Seven field offices created in 2007 brought the organization closer to local authorities and beneficiaries, and boosted UNDP's credibility, but were expensive. In 2011, UNDP reduced its local presence, noting that persistent funding shortfalls required the reorientation of a programme initially built around community recovery.

In general, UNDP interventions have addressed key themes for the country's future and the welfare of its population. The overall programme, however, suffered from several imbalances, including the large share of operations now dedicated to managing basket funds. This raises an important issue around the external perception of UNDP, which may increasingly be seen as less of an organization providing visible leadership for development and as more of a service provider in domains not always central to its mandate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In planning for the next cycle, and considering a probable reduction in resources, UNDP must strive to reduce the number of sectors and subsectors of intervention, build upon the strongest elements of its former programmes to address the country's most urgent needs, and avoid redundancy with other stakeholders' interventions.
- Building on its comparative advantages as government partner, leading UN agency and Country Assistance Framework member, UNDP must reposition itself as a facilitator of change by developing strong advocacy and national debates on complex issues crucial to the country's development.
- The next programme must identify clear, quantifiable objectives to move towards compliance with the principles of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, building upon the principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations, and keeping in mind that national ownership without national co-funding remains rather theoretical.
- UNDP must redefine its approach to capacity-building of national institutions on the basis of internationally recognized good practices and in close coordination with other international partners active in this field.
- The country office should implement its gender strategy and correct the imbalance between men and women professional staff.
- While recognizing that a reduction in field office staff is inevitable, this kind of decision cannot solely answer to immediate financial considerations, but must also take into account UNDP's positioning as a privileged interlocutor for local authorities, its proximity to the poor it must serve as a priority, as well as future financing opportunities, for example, those that should ultimately result from the REDD+ or Peace Consolidation Programme process.
- The country office must strengthen its partnerships and improve its efficiency by working on its institutional culture, which is too bureaucratic and fragmented.
- At both the headquarters and country level, UNDP must improve its basket funds management skills and, to this end, reconsider some of the issues related to the management of these funds
- The UNDP country office must reorganize its monitoring and evaluation resources to provide for better synergy among M&E staff and greater independence of the evaluation function.

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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