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UNDP IN TUNISIA

Tunisia has undergone significant socioeconomic progress over the last few decades, becoming one of the 10 highest performing countries in terms of human development. Progress in the social sectors is attributable to the consistency of supportive budgetary policies. Yet inequalities and marked regional disparities are slowing continued progress. The January 2011 revolution released old tensions that previously were ignored or suppressed.

UNDP programmes have sought to help integrate the country into the global economy, address social challenges, protect the environment, and respond to governance issues involving the role and efficacy of the State and decentralization. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2002 to 2010.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2010: \$18.4 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2010



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



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The main themes of the UNDP governance and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) programme—notably the development of a long-term vision, work on governance indicators, capacity-building for the Court of Auditors, the modernization of public administration and support for human development—corresponded to the main objectives of Tunisian development plans.

While the promotion of the MDGs and human development took place in a timely manner, however, recommendations in two related national reports have not been acted upon. The Ministry of Development and International Cooperation did not deem it appropriate to review its approaches in light of the new conceptual framework of the MDGs. In 2007, UNDP overlooked an opportunity to adapt approaches relating to the MDGs and human development to the Tunisian context. The level of development required a more ambitious strategy, in which governance, technological innovation and adapting production systems for sustainable natural resources management would have carried more weight.

In terms of employment, UNDP had little effect. The joint project on employment in the governorates of Gafsa and Kasserine was slightly behind schedule due to the lack of cooperation and partnership between the concerned ministry and the United Nations system.

UNDP's assistance led to gender-sensitive budgeting being incorporated into the 11th plan (2007-2011), but

action on gender equality was not targeted or persistent enough to generate momentum.

In work on governance, UNDP's constant support in modernizing and developing new financial evaluation methods enabled the Court of Auditors to assert itself as an institution guaranteeing the inspection of public expenditure. But across the various components of its governance programme, UNDP did not achieve all expected results in terms of consolidating the rule of law and the emergence of regional and local actors. With public administration reforms, actions faced some delay and had not yet produced conclusive interim results. Mixed results for the good governance development indicators stemmed from the sensitivity of this topic and disagreements between UNDP and the Government. Little progress was made towards an expanded partnership with civil society.

UNDP has consistently supported work on the environment and energy, particularly on desertification control, the preservation of biodiversity, the fight against climate change and energy conservation. These intervention areas align with national priorities and international commitments. Different programmes unquestionably strengthened the capabilities of national, regional and local institutions, and attracted several additional sources of funding. Assistance improved organizational management and the implementation of national strategies and

policy, notably through training and improving local competencies, as well as via the transfer of new technologies, such as cogeneration, technical checks for energy efficiency, in vitro propagation of date palms and others.

From 2007, UNDP made efforts to adopt a programme approach to reduce the number of small projects and foster innovation. Yet the rigidity of the political system, and at times Tunisian bureaucracy, did not encourage dialogue between UNDP and the Government in the design and implementation of some programmes in governance and the MDGs.

Projects were generally set up to strengthen ownership and sustainability of results. Hosted by various institutions, they were often led by their staff and carefully overseen by senior staff, as in the case of the Court of Auditors and the National Agency for Energy Management. Several indications of weak ownership were evident for certain processes, however. The government-imposed confidentiality for the main documents of the Tunisia 2030 prospective vision exercise reduced its impact, and an envisioned national dialogue never took place.

UNDP's low capacity for advisory support, the hybrid nature of the implementation approach and the lack of proper monitoring and evaluation limited abilities to manage programmes, establish fruitful partnerships and bolster national ownership. This situation was linked to the lack of sustainability strategies and to micromanagement by programme managers. The absence of a monitoring and evaluation system deprived UNDP of an overall view of programme performance and of an ability to capitalize on good practices, which could have enriched dialogue with national partners on major challenges such as employment, inequalities and governance.

The 2011 revolution opened new prospects for cooperation. Opportunities stem from the emergence of a pluralist political system and the potential for public policies that can, among other ends, spur job creation for youth. There is scope for promoting values that have been neglected for decades—such as justice, dignity (including through employment) and citizenship—and increasing possibilities for all sections of the population to exercise their hard-won freedom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the coming years, UNDP should view democratic governance as a priority in order to aid the emergence of a new pluralistic political system, and support the establishment and strengthening of the capacities of the new democratic institutions.
- The programme approach, initiated in 2007 by UNDP, should be extended to all projects. This will help create a critical mass of outcomes and impacts, and promote a new culture of evaluation, accountability and the integration of environmental and social dimensions into sectoral policies.
- UNDP should help the Government improve its understanding of employment-related issues and of the challenges that globalization poses to the Tunisian economy, and to develop programmes that bring innovation and provide access to expertise.
- UNDP should improve its support and advice capabilities to facilitate more effective capacity building, given the acceleration of changes in production systems.
- UNDP should improve the design and implementation of its interventions and introduce an effective monitoring and evaluation system enabling it to apply lessons learned and capitalize on best practices.
- With the Government's agreement, UNDP should implement an action plan whereby project implementation is gradually passed on to national execution, thereby allowing for greater national ownership and a greater focus by UNDP on its strategic functions relating to development issues.
- UNDP should adopt a clear and operational development strategy for wider technical and financial partnerships that are open to the private sector and civil society.
- UNDP, in concert with other UN agencies, should consolidate and expand its advocacy and support to grass-root social networks on certain important transversal issues, such as human development, citizenship, HIV/AIDS, gender and violence against women, notably by supporting the media in order to promote the image of, and respect for, women in all spheres of society.

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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