



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.

## UNDP IN THAILAND

Thailand's remarkable economic growth and modernization have made it a middle-income country with steady human development achievements. Benefits have been unevenly distributed, however, and poverty persists, especially in rural areas and among marginalized groups. Asymmetric urban-rural growth has spurred migration to cities, hollowing out the traditional village society and economy. Rapid growth has threatened natural resources.

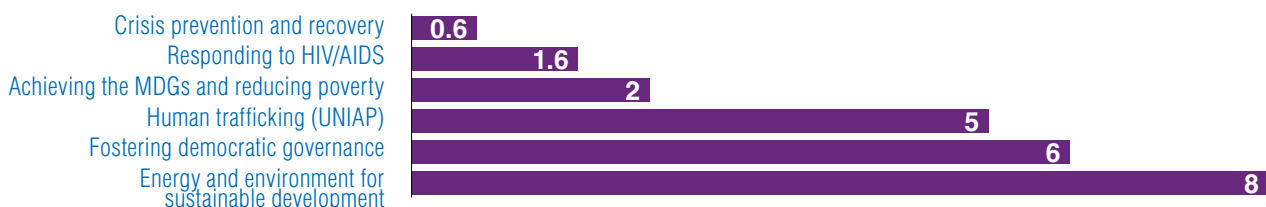
UNDP programmes have covered responsive governance, environmentally sustainable development, HIV/AIDS, the international partnership for development, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and human development. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2002 to 2011.

### TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2009: \$38 MILLION

#### FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2009



#### PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2006-2009 (\$ MILLIONS)



## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The human development promoted by UNDP has been in consonance with the Sufficiency Economy philosophy at the basis of national strategies. UNDP programmes were aligned with national priorities and addressed important development challenges. Activities contributed to policies and tangible impacts in communities.

UNDP paid great attention and responded well to crisis-affected communities along with vulnerable and disadvantaged population groups. A noteworthy example was the fast response to the tsunami emergency in 2004. UNDP's relief and recovery programme specifically addressed urgent needs in affected communities and raised their awareness of basic rights. Other cases entailed targeting mobile populations for the HIV/AIDS programme, ethnic minority groups in an integrated sustainable livelihood project, and women in the participatory approach to local governance. The 'people's audit' tool has led to the resolution of issues faced by tribal people who had no access to citizenship. The tool was integrated into national civil service training.

UNDP supported local capacity-building and a multisectoral response to the new wave of HIV/AIDS infections, involving provincial, district and subdistrict administrations. This resulted in a broad acceptance

of HIV/AIDS policy guidelines, and a HIV learning network among local administrations in each province.

In general, the organization effectively partnered with government agencies, civil society organizations, academic institutions and the private sector. Its effort to involve the private sector and civil society was particularly noteworthy at a time when traditional external funding was dwindling. Some partnerships with local governments were challenging, encountering difficulties due to rigidly applied rules and regulations, bureaucratic structure and behaviour, and local political interests.

Even though UNDP emphasized participation by diverse stakeholders, engaged in a variety of collaborative partnerships, promoted national and local ownership, and aligned its work with national policy objectives, the sustainability of development results was a challenge. Initiatives at the local level were not always taken over by partners, or scaled up or replicated at the national level. Initiatives at the central level were not always integrated into national programmes. Results-based management needs to improve to ensure proper results monitoring and exits from interventions.

There was a strong perspective that the United Nations has an important role to play by presenting the

values that it espouses, and acting as a neutral and conscientious broker to promote social cohesion. UNDP made a great effort in promoting these values through both advocacy, often in support of the UN Resident Coordinator, and its own programme activities. For example, it provided technical support for building gender-segregated statistics and gender strategies, and initiated province-level MDG reports to support targeted policymaking to reduce disparities.

Advocacy, however, often focused on raising the awareness of policy makers and providing information and tools for them to design appropriate policies. But this was not enough to make a social impact. Advocacy seemed more effective when combined with assistance to operationalize corresponding policies.

Support for Thailand's effort to contribute to a global partnership for development as part of MDG 8 and South-South cooperation took place mainly through institutional support to the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA). UNDP did not fully utilize its strengths, however, namely, its global network and presence in recipient countries. UNDP could have

helped TICA to overcome its key challenge: to improve the effectiveness of its assistance by identifying and responding to the demands and needs of partner countries. It also could have helped Thailand position itself better in terms of aid effectiveness and coordination.

As Thailand developed into a middle-income country, UNDP and the Government entered a new mode of cooperation, marked by a shift from traditional development assistance to policy support, and from a project-based to programme-based approach. Yet UNDP was still mostly implementing projects with the funds it mobilized, rather than leveraging government efforts. Given the shrinking funding base, these initiatives could be effective but isolated, thus lacking national impact.

Much of UNDP's comparative strength lies in its support for governance, including at the local level. UNDP would be justified in placing this emphasis at the centre of its future support to Thailand. It could help further improve public administration and enhance accountability, lay the foundation to address various sectoral policy issues, and provide value-based assistance, such as to promote inclusive participation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should transform itself into a true partner in the middle-income country context. It should strengthen national ownership and sustainability by designing its activities as an integral part of programmes and activities of the Government or other national partners, while refraining from mobilizing funds for and implementing projects of its own that are additional to national efforts.
- UNDP should significantly enhance and broaden its advocacy to reach out to Thai citizens at large, so that ordinary Thai people are aware of their rights and obligations, and the options they have. Further, such advocacy should be accompanied, whenever necessary, by support to operationalize corresponding policies and implement programmes.
- UNDP should work with national partners to sharpen focus on strategic priority issues that could produce national impact in the long term.
- UNDP should continue to expand and strengthen partnerships with local governments, and develop new partnerships with national civil society groups, academic institutions, state enterprises and the private sector.
- UNDP should further explore ways to provide a multisector response, especially at the local level.
- UNDP should examine sustainability much more carefully and systematically before embarking on and exiting from each intervention. UNDP should also put much more emphasis on scaling up pilot or other initiatives by developing such an understanding at the outset and conducting participatory evaluations before the exit.
- UNDP should use its global network more effectively and collaboratively in its support for South-South cooperation. UNDP's Regional Centre should play a more active role in this regard.
- UNDP should qualitatively improve its results-based management, including with capacity-building of both the country office and national partners. Together with national partners, UNDP should develop a results-based road map towards long-term development results, clarifying the roles the partners should play. UNDP should also build into projects the capacity-building of implementing partners in results monitoring and evaluation.

## 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](http://erc.undp.org)