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UNDP IN MONGOLIA

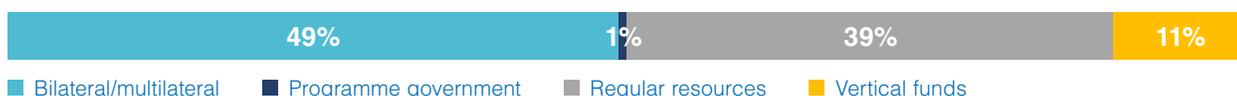
The transition of Mongolia from a Soviet-style socialist system to a democratic system with a market-oriented economy was relatively peaceful but resulted in an upheaval of structures that had been in place for 70 years. Generally sound legal and institutional frameworks have been put in place, but challenges remain in implementation and capacity. A high level of poverty has persisted despite periods of rapid economic growth.

Recurrent winter disasters and environmental degradation have emerged as critical challenges.

UNDP support has comprised the issues of democratic governance and human rights, human development and poverty reduction, and sustainable natural resources management. 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: \$37.9 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2010



EXPECTED PROGRAMME RESOURCES BY THEMATIC AREA, 2002-2011 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The strength of UNDP’s relationship with the Government of Mongolia had notable results, leading to the incorporation of core UNDP concerns into the country’s broad policy framework. The organization successfully promoted human development; policy discussions and documents now regularly refer to the concept. A Human Development Fund was created to manage the resources expected from greatly expanded mining operations.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) constitute the framework for the National Development Strategy 2008-2021. With support from UNDP, the Government has been working to extend MDG monitoring to the most decentralized administrative units. The State Great Khural has adopted the MDGs as the law of the land, including a ninth goal on democratic governance. The creation of the National Development and Innovation Committee (NDIC) in 2009 resulted from a long process of developing an institution with responsibility for coordinating and supervising the strategy to achieve the goals and middle-income status.

UNDP contributed as well to improved access to justice by supporting the establishment of Legal Aid Centres and awareness-raising on domestic violence; improved livelihood opportunities for the poor through its enterprise development programme; and improved disaster management by supporting the modernization of the disaster management agency.

The strong partnership with the Government at the

strategic level did not always translate into concordance between UNDP and the Government in individual initiatives, however. Mismatches were observed between the intent of UNDP’s initiatives and government follow-up actions. This has limited effectiveness and sustainability.

For example, UNDP steadily supported development of government capacities to collect and produce data to analyse poverty with a view towards informing poverty-focused policies. But policymakers have yet to make regular, effective use of this capacity in formulating policies or drafting annual budgets. There were long delays in passing laws related to grassland management drafted with contributions from UNDP and other development partners. A notable exception to this tendency was the initiative to provide legal assistance to criminal defendants. After UNDP helped set up the system, the Government assumed full responsibility and now bears the core costs of operations.

UNDP’s approach often appeared less strategic than tactical. Each project or activity seemed focused on achieving its narrow objective, and efforts were not coordinated among in-house teams or with development partners. One example concerned poverty and growing vulnerability in rural areas, seen partly as resulting from environmental degradation from poor grazing practices. The problem seemed to be exacerbated by weakness of the regulatory framework and lack of enforcement. It

would seem natural that the strategy to address such an issue would require multidimensional interventions involving all teams, but this was not the case.

There were too few examples of public involvement in policy formulation and programme implementation. Voluntarily created civil society groups are a relatively recent phenomenon; many are still weak and seeking their voice. UNDP often refers to the need for greater engagement with civil society groups. Representatives of a number of civil society organizations expressed the view, however, that UNDP had until recently interacted mostly with representatives of public institutions. As UNDP engages with the Government on diverse policy issues, including civil society in its activities would help strengthen their capacities and the country's democratic system.

UNDP's support did not lead to effective and transparent aid coordination at policy and programme levels. Progress was slow in establishing an effective and transparent coordination mechanism to align and integrate policy and programme support with national efforts. This resulted in incoherent policy support or uncoordinated parallel programmes by different development partners. With the establishment of the NDIC, the

Government made strides towards establishing such a mechanism centred on the Comprehensive National Development Strategy. UNDP could play a supportive role in this effort.

Projects mostly operated under a national execution modality (NEX) with a project management unit/project implementation unit (PMU/PIU) often staffed by outside experts working in parallel with a national partner. This practice weakened national ownership and contributions to capacity development, and diluted accountability and alignment with priority needs.

Questions remained over whether UNDP was sufficiently responsive to latent or developing issues in a way that advanced human development. Further, in a time of increasingly constrained resources, but also a persistent tendency towards the parallel implementation of similar activities, the path towards a more strategic programme approach likely passes through much closer collaboration and cooperation with other stakeholders. This would allow sets of activities to be designed and coordinated, give true meaning to partnerships, and provide a concrete platform to promote greater aid coordination around common objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should continue and enhance the support extended over the past decade to develop capacities to define and implement evidence-based policies focused on human development. It could further support capacity development of the NDIC, inter alia, through assistance in refining indicators.
- UNDP should better link its assistance to the government's priority actions and be more selective to this end. The development of capacities should not be an end in itself; it should be a means to realize an expected outcome. UNDP should continue to make strategic interventions where they have been making a real difference, such as in capacity development support for disaster management. At the same time, it should be more selective in initiating support and avoiding activities with little chance of follow-up actions.
- UNDP should make a serious effort to introduce a more strategic and programmatic approach, focusing on development objectives and achievement of results. To this end, it should foster more collaboration among its cluster teams and promote much closer collaboration with other development partners where appropriate.
- UNDP should take a more inclusive approach to democratic governance by involving civil society more directly and substantively into its activities. It could also support government efforts to improve the participation of civil society in governance. This should be achieved through mobilizing existing and developing civil initiatives in a variety of areas, from associations for environmental protection to NGOs providing social services.
- UNDP should strategically position itself as the facilitator of national efforts and government programmes, rather than being a project implementer. In doing so, it should utilize its comparative strength, such as its convening power, global network and value-based approach. Pilot initiatives should be designed within national programmes so that results can be replicated by the Government.
- UNDP should review its approach to the use of the NEX modality and initiate a strategy for transition to a full NEX modality. It should confine itself to playing a supporting role, providing specific technical assistance and financial support for implementation.

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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