



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

UNDP IN BANGLADESH

Natural disasters, food shocks and financial market shocks made Bangladesh particularly susceptible to slippages in meeting growth, poverty reduction and human development targets. Other shocks have been of a political nature. The country's desire to transition to middle-income status now underscores the need to pursue a strategy of accelerated growth with improved governance.

UNDP programmes covered the issues of economic

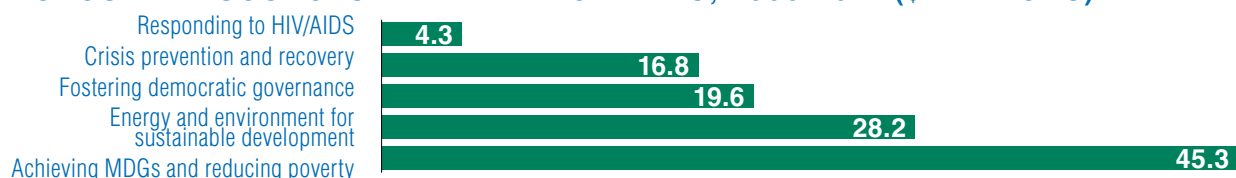
growth and poverty alleviation, democratic governance and human rights, reduction of social and economic vulnerability, sustainable environment and energy management, and promoting gender equality and the advancement of women. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2006 to 2010.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2010: \$404.7 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2010



PROPOSED RESOURCES BY THEMATIC AREAS, 2006-2011 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A period of political uncertainty under successive caretaker governments from 2006 to 2008 led to some disruptions, but UNDP still made significant contributions to a number of key development results in Bangladesh. Important and timely support to elections led to the registration of more than 81 million voters in just 11 months, for example. A partnership with the Bangladesh Election Commission entailed legislative and policy reform, the country's first biometric photo voter registration, constituency delimitation, construction of independent local electoral centres and the provision of translucent ballot boxes. National and international observers hailed the historic return to democracy with free, fair and credible elections in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

In several areas, UNDP supported efforts with the potential to be transformative. These include its contribution to placing human rights on the policy agenda and institutionalizing it in the National Human Rights Commission, the first body of its kind. Other support backed police reform, based on respect for the rule of law, human rights and equitable access to justice, and helped advance the decentralization process.

UNDP assisted one of the Government's flagship social safety net programmes, providing wages, savings, and livelihood training for the rural poor and vulner-

able people, specifically women, through links with local governments, community partnerships and service delivery. An innovative poverty alleviation graduation strategy delivered long-term improvements, providing not just safety nets but also safety ladders out of poverty. Deploying social mobilization as a tool for urban poverty reduction encouraged groups of residents of slums and low-income settlements to identify, plan and manage local infrastructure and socioeconomic projects.

In the post-conflict Chittagong Hill Tracts region, a multisectoral peacebuilding and service delivery programme pursued accelerated, sustainable socioeconomic development and poverty reduction based on principles of local participation and decentralized development. The programme built the capacities of local institutions and community groups to plan and execute small-scale income generation projects, and expanded the quality and reach of services from education to health.

Interventions to reduce social and economic vulnerability strengthened government efforts to streamline disaster management efforts and achieve a total risk reduction approach, grounded in community awareness and participation. This was a paradigm shift away from an earlier focus on emergency relief. Policy advice, technical assistance and community-level interventions

helped to improve the capacity of the Government, and local communities and institutions to prepare, respond to and ‘build back better’ from natural disasters.

Efforts to address environmental degradation seem to have lost momentum, possibly through a shift towards climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as disaster risk reduction. Climate change is a very important issue, but environmental degradation is still responsible for poverty and poor standards of living.

Although UNDP largely succeeded in mainstreaming gender in all its programmes, and made substantial contributions, many needs, especially in vulnerable communities, remained largely unaddressed. The absence of adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms means that pathways towards gender equality cannot be assessed properly.

Most interventions reflected national development priorities. UNDP also built on its comparative strengths of neutrality and closeness to the Government in helping to address difficult issues. It was invited by the Government to participate in the reform process during a critical time. Policy shifts and a lack of government support at appropriate levels, however, have undercut UNDP contributions.

A multistakeholder approach proved valuable, but more needs to be done to cement broad partnerships across all projects. The Sustainable Environment Management Programme brought together 21 partner agencies within the government and civil society. It was the first programme in Bangladesh in which so many actors sought to link environment and major development and poverty reduction strategies.

UNDP played multiple roles—in project implementation and policy advice, as a fund provider and service provider, etc.—and in some areas a more appropriate balance could have been achieved. Advocacy was important and effective in the areas of human rights, judicial reform, elections and local governance, but could have been more pronounced in socially complex projects demanding long-term improvements in governance conditions.

Programmes did not always adequately focus on ensuring sustainability through stronger institutional linkages and capacity development. The ongoing move to backing nationally implemented reforms needs to be encouraged. More attention should be paid as well to the institutional sustainability of community organizations, particularly in poor rural and urban areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To remain relevant, UNDP should continue to align its programme with national development priorities, specifically the Sixth Five-Year Plan and the framework of Joint Country Strategy.
- Appropriate exit strategies need to be built into the programmes and projects to strengthen the potential for sustainability.
- UNDP, together with national partners, should undertake periodic adjustments of innovative projects in light of experience.
- UNDP should strengthen its advocacy role, especially in areas that directly promote UN values such as human rights and gender equality.
- UNDP should try to avoid ‘fragmentation effects’ by providing adequate emphasis on both developmental and social cohesion needs within and across communities.
- The issue of shock prevention to avoid income erosion needs to be given more attention in future UNDP programmes, which currently focus mainly on income generation.
- Given its long-term commitment to Bangladesh, UNDP should build on its success in addressing practical gender needs to explicitly move to the more challenging task of supporting strategic gender needs.
- UNDP should play an important role in promoting regional cooperation on environmental and disaster management issues among South Asian countries in general, and between India and Bangladesh in particular.
- Comprehensive disaster management programmes of UNDP need to focus more on supporting the livelihoods of the poor within an asset livelihood framework (extended by rights to development of the poor) in design when it comes to the issue of revival of the local economy.
- UNDP should continue to focus on environment-related issues like pollution and degradation of natural resources to ensure sustainable development and poverty reduction.

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