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UNDP IN GEORGIA

Since the Rose Revolution in 2003, the Georgian Government has engaged in fast-paced, action-oriented reforms. The main concern has been to tackle structural problems of the past through market liberalization and deregulation. Today, Georgia is a middle-income country, albeit with a number of human development challenges related to disparities and vulnerabilities. A large share of the population still lives on subsistence levels. Conflict

has caused economic damages and internal displacement.

UNDP's contributions to development results have been in the areas of economic development and poverty reduction, democratic governance, the environment and sustainable energy, and conflict/disaster prevention and recovery. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2001 to 2009.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2008: \$57.3 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2008



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2004-2008 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Amid a rapid national reform agenda, UNDP maintained a strong partnership with the Government, providing programmatic support and policy advice when requested and when it saw the opportunity. This sometimes required a persistent approach in promoting a human development agenda or in addressing the plight of internally displaced persons. Many of these efforts have gradually been bearing fruit.

Under the reform agenda, UNDP sought new ways to effectively address income and social disparities, and the vulnerability of a population facing a newly liberalized market and global competition. The introduction of vocational training was a successful example of such an effort. Poverty and unemployment rates remain high, however. Some opportunities for the organization to play a more central role in the policy debate on poverty reduction may come from increased government willingness to adopt active measures to fight unemployment.

Support to human rights contributed to building the Public Defender's Office, one of the most respected institutions in the country. Other assistance helped elaborate a strategy and legal framework for local governance. Greater awareness on gender issues led to improved legislation on women's rights and the establishment of the Gender Equality Advisory Council within Parliament. Successful introduction of information and communica-

tions technology in key agencies supported public administration reforms towards improved services.

Some downstream projects provided valuable lessons, but sustainability depends on whether they are widely replicated or not. Examples of initiatives that have been replicated include the vocational training programme. Others require further exploration of a successful formula, such as a regional development initiative.

UNDP provided capacity development support to a number of institutions, with particular success when the institutions themselves led these efforts. In some other cases, capacity development turned out to be not very effective or premature, due to a variety of reasons. These included a narrow view of support as limited to providing materials, computer software and basic training, rather than attempting to trigger endogenous changes in institutional culture.

Innovative mechanisms such as the Capacity Building Fund and On-Demand Consultancy Services were much appreciated for assisting policy and institutional reforms, such as to improve the quality of statistics and guide agricultural development. At the same time, such responsiveness to government needs led to a perception by some observers that the organization has become a provider of technical consultancy rather than a promoter of human development. Fair or not, such a perception

is unfortunate, since it might negatively affect UNDP's fund-raising abilities in the country.

Other issues arose from a lack of attention to confidence building and conflict prevention, given that ethnic and religious tensions are underlying risks to unity and development. Some development partners and civil society actors noted UNDP's low profile in advocating its core values.

In addition to its close relationship with the Government, the organization effectively used partnerships with civil society organizations to promote the human development agenda and implement projects. An electoral support project with the Georgian Young Lawyers Association, for example, addressed a combination of short- and long-term needs through extensive training, awareness-raising among voters and the media, and support for the institutional development of the Electoral Administration.

UNDP provided opportunities for the community of donors and the Government to exchange views and gain greater awareness of respective programmes and initia-

tives. This helped foster the expectation that UNDP would be well placed to support renewed government interest in aid coordination.

As Georgia moves towards becoming a modernized European nation, there is a legitimate concern about the future of UNDP. It could still play an important role, contributing to improving the capacity and functioning of Georgia's democratic institutions, and redressing vulnerabilities related to poverty and conflict. Important environmental challenges, such as on forest and water, remain, while the risk of natural and human-made disasters calls for continued efforts to improve preparedness and mitigation.

There is no doubt about the national ownership of the development process in Georgia. While continuing to support the Government, UNDP should place at the centre of its policy advice, advocacy, capacity development and other programme activities an agenda to address remaining human development challenges, and gain recognition by all partners and stakeholders of the value that it brings to the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Given the small size of the country office's resource base and the uncertainty of future funding situation, UNDP should sharpen the role it plays in the country as a promoter of human development through its policy advice and programme activities, and be strategically selective on the areas of its interventions and support.
- UNDP should take a more results-oriented programme approach than a project-based approach, and make clear with partners what it is aiming to achieve through its policy advice and programmes. For a true results-oriented approach, UNDP should also consider delinking programmatic and organizational structures to make the most effective use of expertise in the small office with a view to achieving results. In designing its programme, UNDP should carefully select indicators that are better aligned with the intended results to be achieved.
- UNDP should also be selective in capacity development initiatives, and aim to support institutions that would engage in an endogenous process of improvement and reform.
- UNDP should continue to support the Government reform initiatives through its innovative Capacity Building Fund and On-Demand Consultancy Services. In doing so, it should try to focus on initiatives that, in its analysis, would help in making progress in human development rather than simply providing capacity supplement to the requesting agency.
- UNDP should explore more proactive ways to promote policy debate, for example, by initiating a discussion forum to address human development issues, supported by its corporate expertise and experiences from its successful projects.
- In view of potential risks posed by the multi-ethnic and multi-religious construct of the country, UNDP should consider introducing, as a cross-cutting issue, confidence-building dimensions in a broader range of projects where possible and appropriate.
- In view of the status of Georgia as a middle-income country and the uncertainty in the future landscape of development assistance, UNDP Georgia should find opportunities to reflect on its value added to the country and articulate its *raison d'être* to outside partners.

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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