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UNDP IN ZAMBIA

Zambia has achieved growth rates averaging about 5 per cent per annum and maintained a peaceful democratic environment. At the same time, serious development challenges include widespread poverty and high income disparity. Zambia is at the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that affects virtually all its citizens in a variety of ways, and places a tremendous burden on social and economic development. While being a resource-rich country, Zambia confronts serious environmental

sustainability concerns, with projections indicating that the related Millennium Development Goal (MDG) is unlikely to be achieved by 2015.

UNDP has contributed to addressing a range of development needs, particularly in the areas of democratic and economic governance, environment and energy, and HIV/AIDS. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2002 to 2010.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2008: \$50.9 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2008



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY THEMATIC AREA, 2007-2009 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, UNDP made several highly relevant contributions to development challenges in Zambia. Good progress took place in the fight against HIV/AIDS as a major threat to development, including through the combined efforts of the Joint UN AIDS Team and the National Aids Council. A decentralized, multisectoral and community-based response was developed, reaching all districts.

Some progress was notable in the area of democratic governance, although at slower rates than expected. Some governance projects were small in terms of financing, while others, such as the elections programme, were large and very demanding in operational terms. UNDP supported the Decentralization Secretariat, the National Assembly, the Electoral Commission and the Human Rights Commission. Decentralization policy, for various reasons not related to UNDP, stalled despite preparation of an implementation plan. UNDP helped the Human Rights Commission establish itself in five locations outside the capital, thereby making its services available on a wider scale.

Innovative approaches were introduced in the area of energy and environment, where UNDP was an important player. But some projects will not be completed on time, posing a risk that impacts will be compromised.

The Microfinance and Poverty Reduction Project, which duplicated the approach of the Grameen Bank, was an example of an initiative relevant to Zambia, yet with questionable sustainability.

Sustainability issues were in fact frequent across interventions, linked to capacity in implementing partner institutions. UNDP could benefit from making a systematic assessment of successes and drawbacks in transferring technical skills.

A Strategic Policy Unit worked in close cooperation with national partners, and promoted central UN products and values. The work was upstream and the services useful. The MDGs have been integrated into Zambian monitoring and evaluation systems, and knowledge about them is widespread. Implementation of gender equality as a crosscutting issue was not effective, however. Planning and implementation processes lacked a systematic framework to carry out gender analysis, which is cardinal to the monitoring of advances.

UNDP did not always have the capacity to provide the robust, professional responses necessary to handle complicated and deep-rooted challenges. It overstretched itself and spread its resources too thinly, resulting in limited impacts. Daily work was not seen as consistently applying UN standards as operational tools for the stra-

tegic achievement of development results. Conventions and resolutions were referred to in planning documentation, but were used less in policy dialogue with the Government.

The Government appreciated UNDP as a special partner, even as the extent to which departments effectively took ownership and leadership of UNDP-assisted activities varied. There was a high degree of continuity in UNDP's work, and the organization was mostly responsive to new challenges that arose. For instance, it mobilized resources with five cooperating partners at very short notice for the emergency 2008 elections, which took place on the date required by the Constitution.

Cooperating partners also had a generally positive view, given the role of UN agencies in the Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia, and the fact that sectors led or co-led by UNDP were critical development drivers. There was a perception as well, though, that UNDP is more a convenor of meetings than a dynamic leader, and that it missed important opportunities to back development progress despite its special relationship with the Government.

UN reform moved forward slowly, with a limited

number of coordinated UN activities, due to competition over resources, and different accountability systems that made pooling financial resources in joint budgets (virtually) impossible.

Partnerships with non-government and civil society organizations were weak, despite a fairly vibrant civil society movement that could contribute effectively to development results. Civil society partners recommended a specific partnership strategy to address critical emerging issues such as the devolution of powers to local governance structures.

In principle, UNDP is well placed to play a strategic role in Zambia, but more coordination and the readiness to engage actively and on a continuing basis with partners—and especially with the Government—on strategic issues would improve prospects for achieving development results.

More should be done in the planning stages to focus on areas with sufficient in-house resources and to concentrate on fewer practice areas. Ultimately, a greater willingness to invest in capacity allowing UNDP to take a dynamic leadership role in coordination would increase its strategic relevance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should concentrate its resources on fewer areas to better match the changing development cooperation architecture in Zambia. The current sectors are relevant to national needs, but a better focus within each thematic area could contribute to higher efficiency and impact.
- UNDP should build on demonstrated comparative advantages, but adapt its staff resources closely to the selected sectors and sub-sectors. It should maximize internal synergies.
- UNDP should focus on the upstream side of sector development. It should utilize its access to high-level expertise for sector policy analysis, and further develop strategies for sustainability in the various sectors, not limited to activities managed by UNDP, but also in looking at how to sustain development results over time.
- UNDP should effectively support aid coordination arrangements, and provide leadership that effectively engages all partners in areas where UNDP has a clear and demonstrated advantage.
- UNDP should take the initiative towards increased integration and collaboration within the UN country team. It is especially recommended that the organization, in close cooperation with other UN agencies, prepare proposals for a One UN Fund to pool financial and technical resources, thereby providing more effective responses to development challenges.
- UNDP should work more closely with stakeholders from Zambian civil society, not least with women's organizations in the human rights area, and in the areas of energy and environment.
- UNDP should strengthen its capacity in developing evaluable results frameworks, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation of development results within an outcomes-based approach.
- UNDP should develop a systematic and operational approach to capacity development at the institutional, organizational and human resource levels that is commensurate with results-based management and suited to Zambian conditions. The system should include a plan for capacity development as an integral part of all project documents and workplans, and incorporate operational and measurable indicators of progress.

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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