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## UNDP IN AFGHANISTAN

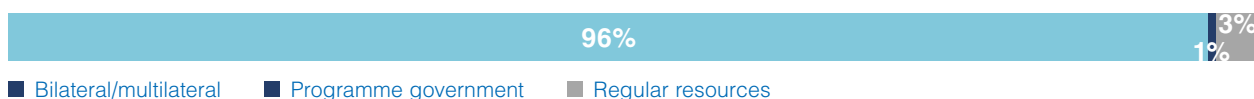
After the Bonn Agreement of 2002, Afghanistan went through a period of hope and positive expectations, with a peak at the time of the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005. From 2006 to 2007, the scenario changed with a deteriorating security situation, and the return of the Taliban and other insurgents.

The UNDP programme in Afghanistan is among its largest in terms of financial volume. Programmes have

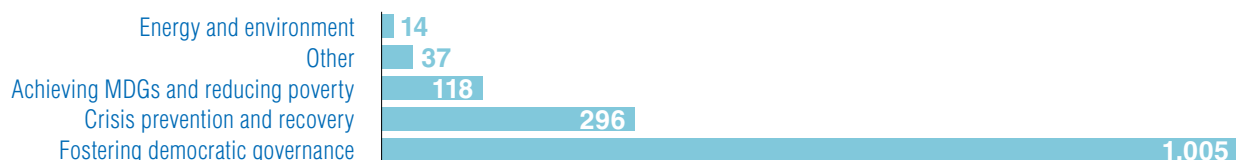
encompassed democracy and participation, rule of law and security sector reform, state-building, sustainable livelihoods, coordination and development management, and gender mainstreaming. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2002 to 2008.

### TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2008: \$1,469 MILLION

#### FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2008



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



## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In Afghanistan, international cooperation, including provided by UNDP, almost uniformly adopted a phased approach to reconstruction. An exclusive initial focus was on restoring security, early recovery and humanitarian activities. UNDP claimed a limited niche in 'early recovery' as the administrator of last resort for donor funds for sensitive tasks. After 2004, at the insistence of the Minister of Finance, UNDP was repositioned to strengthen the institutions of state.

UNDP contributions included support in preparing and passing a new Constitution; and the holding of Presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections. The organization and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) encouraged the establishment of an Independent Electoral Commission for managing ongoing voter registration and future elections with UNDP in an advisory role.

Other assistance aided in establishing key institutions within Parliament; demobilizing and disarming militias; strengthening capacity in state institutions at the central, provincial and district levels; and reforming the civil service. The Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission has devised a comprehensive strategy for civil service reform that included the introduction of a merit-based appointment and promotions system.

UNDP supported the functioning of the Afghan

police force by managing the payment of salaries and developing national capacity to make the payments over time. It paid the salaries of civil servants and effectively developed the capacity of the Ministry of Finance to prepare the national budget, track most foreign funding, and manage expenditures under the national budget.

Support to the justice sector and other areas related to the rule of law included fostering accountability and transparency. Unlike any other actor in the justice sector, UNDP had projects at the national, regional, provincial, and district levels. But operating in the sector was not easy, and it was not clear that UNDP could provide significant value despite the obvious importance of having a multilateral agency in such a politically sensitive sector.

A common feature of international cooperation and UNDP in Afghanistan was a geographical focus on provinces with more pronounced security problems. This type of prioritization may fail to create strong incentives to reduce armed conflict, however.

Although the absence of jobs and sustainable livelihoods was a major factor behind insurgency, UNDP came to these issues relatively late. The National Area Based Development Programme aimed to create capacity for the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development to implement multisectoral development projects at the local level. Significant capacity was created in provin-

cial governments, with a programme presence in all 34 provinces. As many as 900 projects took place, mostly in the form of small-scale infrastructure and physical facilities. In 2007, the 'Kandahar Model' was developed for operations in conditions of extreme insecurity. It placed community leaders at the centre and prompted significant deconcentration of responsibility on a pilot basis.

A major effort to encourage gender equality and strengthen the role of women covered a wide range of areas. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was rehabilitated and equipped, its staff trained, and two sets of gender training manuals developed. But activities were not buttressed with a training strategy or followed with monitoring and evaluation.

One universal criticism of UNDP was the inefficiency of its bureaucratic procedures. Much ill will was created as a result of massive delays in procurement, payments and other basic administrative tasks. Steps have been taken to improve administration, but the fundamental problem of inefficiency and procedural complexity is systemic.

Almost total dependence on external funding for the

development budget renders it very difficult to ensure that once infrastructure and other projects are completed their recurrent budget burden can be accommodated from domestic revenue. In the rush to maintain deadlines, donors have succumbed to paying salaries and salary supplements. This results in a skewing of priorities towards those of the largest donors, competition for staff between projects, and a loss of capacity once external assistance ends. Some UNDP projects have sought to address this problem by phasing out the payment of salaries and salary supplements with a clearly defined exit strategy that builds on the systematic recruitment and training of new graduates.

Broad national development and poverty reduction strategies with a very wide agenda have been developed for Afghanistan in the recent years. Yet no comprehensive strategy with a strong focus on peace-building and conflict analysis has been devised by the United Nations or through international cooperation. Upon reflection, this could have been a major contribution of UNDP, particularly in an integrated mission setting.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should reorient its principal focus to secure provinces, with a view to demonstrating a development dividend. It should encourage bilateral donors to do the same.
- The duration of future country programmes in Afghanistan as well as of capacity-building programmes should be commensurate with their longer term objectives. UNDP should also undertake a systematic review of its existing projects to eliminate or reorient those not focused on the achievement of UNAMA objectives.
- UNDP should widen its emphasis in governance from 'state building' to 'nation building', developing the role of civil society organizations alongside those of the institutions of state.
- Experience gained in other post-conflict settings and in nation building by UNDP and other organizations should be brought to bear, particularly on economic growth, pro-poor development and sustainable livelihoods; and development of civil society as an integral part of a broader governance strategy for Afghanistan.
- UNDP should create a technical advisory team to provide regular support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Deputy SRSGs.
- Building on the Kandahar Model, UNDP should promote gradual decentralization of decision-making, budget management and service delivery by all institutions of the Government.
- If UNDP is to continue to perform an administrative role on behalf of bilateral donors, it urgently needs to increase its flexibility, responsiveness and effectiveness.
- There is an urgent need for a coordinated effort to develop a coordinated policy on paying government salaries, moving away from cash incentives to civil servants, and moving away from project implementation units.
- Greater use should be made of UN specialized organization execution in the area of sustainable livelihoods.
- UNDP should better integrate with, and support UNAMA in development coordination, governance and peacebuilding, in particular establishing at least one regional liaison officer in each region.
- UNDP should help establish a programme to build country-level monitoring and evaluation capacity geared to identifying credible outcome indicators for UNDP interventions. This programme should have sufficient resources to collect and analyse such data on an ongoing basis.

## 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)