

## UNDP IN GUATEMALA

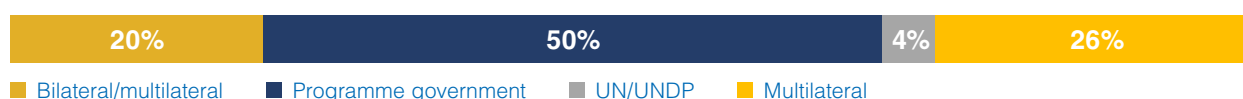
From the 1960s to the mid-1990s, Guatemala was devastated by an armed conflict between leftist guerrilla forces and militarized governments, whose main victims were indigenous people. A peace process was finally concluded at the end of 1996. While the country is now classified as middle income, over half the population lives in poverty. The peace process addressed a wide range of issues, including poverty and inequality, yet much remains to

be done to achieve its goals. Various commitments are behind schedule.

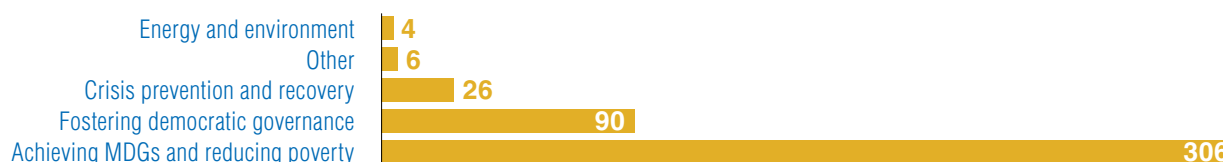
UNDP has provided programmes related to governance, crisis prevention and recovery, poverty reduction, and energy and the environment. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2001 to 2008.

### TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2008: \$431 MILLION

#### FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2008



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



## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP has made substantial contributions to human development in Guatemala, but its strategy has not been sufficiently cogent to avoid a dispersion of activities. Strong positioning resulting from its peace-building role in the 1990s is increasingly challenged by emerging development issues.

Guatemala has been one of the not-so-frequent cases in which the United Nations closely combined the peacebuilding mandate of the General Assembly with post-conflict development. The United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) supported peacebuilding efforts aimed at implementing the peace agreements and healing the wounds of three decades of internal armed conflict and human rights violations.

Along with MINUGUA, UNDP provided ample technical assistance and project management services related to many aspects of the peace process. This was appreciated by both the Guatemalan authorities and donors, who recognized UNDP as a neutral agency, broker, facilitator and promoter of dialogue on sensitive issues and between opposite groups. It gained substantial reputation, visibility and credibility.

UNDP has continued to generate considerable value in the areas of governance and crisis prevention and recovery. One of its most notable achievements was

in supporting survivors of armed conflict, including through psychosocial assistance, anthropological forensic investigations, and political and technical conditions for establishing historical clarity and ensuring justice. UNDP also aided the creation of strategic plans and relevant institutions to address the agrarian conflict, helping to establish the Registry of Cadastral Information and the Secretariat of Agricultural Affairs. Yet ensuring legal recognition of property rights, especially for rural and indigenous peoples, is still a challenge.

UNDP's record was not as strong on poverty reduction, energy and the environment. The outbreak of the global economic crisis has rendered these areas critically important, which may require a revision of past priorities. While the organization has had little experience in Guatemala in promoting economic-productive programmes for poverty reduction, it does offer strong analytical capacity and experience in the social sectors. It was relatively successful in supporting the implementation of social programmes, but less so in helping to shape related policies and providing high-level advisory support to decision makers. This was the case with cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Education, which primarily focused on extending the coverage of primary schools and basic sanitation services,

including in areas with high concentrations of indigenous people. Environmental programmes were driven by external funding, mainly from the Global Environment Facility, and had limited visibility.

Efforts to introduce strategic planning have fallen short in terms of orienting and improving programmes. This is partly due to the complexities of the political and socioeconomic context of Guatemala, and partly attributable to a number of systemic and organizational factors within UNDP. Guatemala contends with deep divisions reflected in a shifting political party spectrum, and high variability in policies and directions within and between governments. Overall tax collection has traditionally been very low, and the legal framework for public administration is complicated, impairing effective government action.

On UNDP's side, the strong dependence on external resources provided incentives to respond to shifting external demands for its services, which were not always in accordance with its substantive mandate. In responding to Government requirements, the organization has not always balanced short-term requests and long-term development goals, nor consistently contributed to longer term capacity building in national institutions. Perceived

as an institution in permanent change, UNDP has also undergone regular shifts in senior management and priorities. In the second programming cycle evaluated, a portfolio of activities emerged characterized by smaller projects of shorter duration across a broader spectrum of areas, mostly without a defined exit strategy.

The effectiveness of international cooperation and UNDP in terms of the development and security agenda of the peace agreements was moderate; 12 years after they were signed, a sobering recognition of limited advances in attaining their objectives prevailed. UNDP, like other sources of international cooperation, has provided support in many areas, but with limited results in terms of more equitable development, particularly for indigenous peoples. Overly spread-out support in the area of security has not reversed a continuously worsening situation of violence and insecurity.

For both the development and the security agenda, there is an urgent need to better align and harmonize international development cooperation with government policies and local efforts, and to strengthen national professional coordination capacities. UNDP could support this process, at the request of the Government, to a greater extent than has been the case.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should establish priorities between and within its thematic areas and prepare a specific strategy in each thematic area, highlighting synergies.
- The two cross-cutting issues of gender and indigenous people require increased attention at the strategic level.
- UNDP should rebalance its support to the Government in favour of increased high-level advisory services to the executive, legislative and judicial powers, reducing the emphasis on programme administration services. At the same time, the focus on the regional level should be increased.
- UNDP should accompany its project management services with an insistence on an improvement in public administration capacities through stronger support for the modernization of the State.
- Although UNDP acts upon requests from the Government, development objectives should be expressed through long-term strategic plans (from six to eight years).
- Projects and programmes should be established with longer duration, larger volume and defined exit strategies.
- External shocks and multiple influences on programme decisions require a strengthening of reflection and periodic review of the strategic orientation of the UN system and UNDP during programme cycles.
- Reinforce communication and strategic leadership within and between the country office programmatic teams by strengthening integration at an intermediate management level.
- Reinforce monitoring and evaluation at UNDP while also supporting Government capacities.
- Reinforce UNDP as a neutral, transparent and professional coordinator in external development cooperation.
- Support a process of greater harmonization among UN agencies, including through a comparison of annual project portfolios already at the planning stage and acting with one voice where pertinent.
- Increase opportunities for collaboration with the private sector on corporate social responsibility.

## 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)

