

## UNDP IN UZBEKISTAN

Since its independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has been implementing reform policies to move it away from structures inherited from the former Soviet Union. Dismantling the systems, structures and ways of thinking accumulated during 70 years has been an enormous challenge. Remarkable economic performance has accompanied declining poverty rates, but with little change in rural areas. Like many ex-Soviet countries, Uzbekistan

inherited a terrible environmental legacy and environmental issues remain a major concern

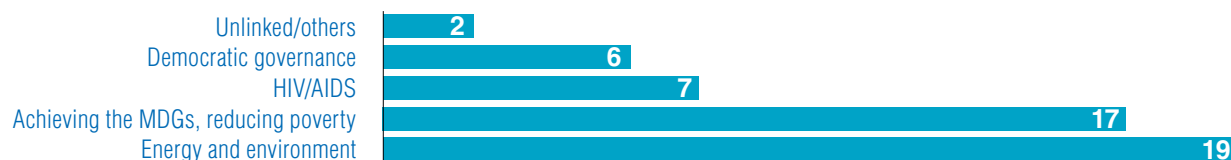
UNDP has supported programmes in the areas of poverty reduction, democratic governance, energy and the environment, and HIV/AIDS. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2000 to 2008.

### TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2000-2008: \$107.4 MILLION

#### FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2008



#### PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY PRACTICE AREA, 2004-2007 (\$ MILLIONS)



## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

During a time of rapid change, including the implementation of key reforms, fast economic growth and a change in Uzbekistan's relationship with the international community, UNDP negotiated a complex environment and remained committed to providing a sound programme.

Interventions towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and reducing human poverty made important contributions. In fostering democratic governance, advances were more limited, partly due to a change in the direction of this group of activities. In the area of energy and environment for sustainable development, UNDP helped to improve environmental data and define ecological priorities, and supported preparation of a national integrated water resources management and efficiency plan.

Given strong national ownership of development processes, UNDP's close cooperation with government authorities proved to be an efficient method of jointly developing effective programmes and projects. Undertaking a participatory approach was relevant at all activity levels, from the central Government and Parliament to local projects. Problems identified and prioritized by local people and their groups—and solved based on joint preparations—led to sustainable results, such as in the provision of water, gas and heating.

UNDP may have missed some opportunities for engagement in areas where its neutrality and long-term commitment to Uzbekistan's development could have played an important role. For the Welfare Improvement Strategy, UNDP did not capitalize on some of its expertise (e.g., environment and energy issues) and did not conduct an adequate analysis of implementation risks.

Although UNDP has been responsive to emerging government needs, especially in providing technical support to policy formulation, in some cases, it lost sight of the need to focus on projects with long-term strategic linkages. Important and high-priority projects have been implemented in democratic governance, but not conducted strategically. In work on energy, national priorities were unclear and projects were typically scattered. Approaches were occasionally heavily influenced by resource mobilization concerns.

The combination of policy support in the capital with direct interventions at the local level has been balanced, especially after declining engagement of international development partners since 2004. Maintaining the appropriate balance between the two, and ensuring strong linkages between lessons learned at the local level and central policy-making, will remain a major challenge.

Quality partnerships with international development

actors have included managing projects for The World Bank, such as the Water and Sanitation project. In a partnership with the European Commission, UNDP added value through its expertise in working with local communities and drawing on global best practices. While cooperation is likely to continue, it will be within a different environment as many partners intensify engagement.

The UNDP role is likely to change from overall programme management to implementation of either select programme elements or areas where UNDP has a strong presence. Closer collaboration with donors and international financial institutions should focus on incorporating human development approaches and priorities within investment programmes. Such linkages are required particularly in the fields of environment, energy, water resources and agricultural sector development.

While capacity development has been at the centre of many UNDP interventions, limited use has been made of global tools and approaches. Inadequate use of capacity assessments has reduced effectiveness and limited sustainability. Project design has sometimes undercut efficiency. For example, instead of UNDP and its partners repeatedly conducting training, appropriate institutes

at local, regional and national levels could have been strengthened to produce local specialists to take over subsequent capacity development activities. Where UNDP has used this approach, it has been successful.

The organization needs to increase its learning from experience and facilitate greater opportunities for national learning. Greater effort could be made to link lessons learned to national policy development, and to build on successes in scaling-up, as was done in interventions in four regions that showed how strengthening local governance can address the concentration of poverty in rural areas. More could be done as well to extend the scope of knowledge exchange across Central Asia. With its global network, UNDP is in a position to facilitate this kind of collaboration.

In moving forward amid evolving expectations for development cooperation, UNDP can build on many strengths, but do more in defining how it can be most strategic and aligned with national priorities. Given the significance of environmental concerns in Uzbekistan, one initial emphasis might be a drive to integrate both comprehensive environmental concerns and risk analysis into national development planning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- In agreement with the Government, focus the programme on a smaller number of strategic interventions where UNDP has clear comparative strengths, is able to offer a long-term commitment and, through relevant partnerships, is able to address the underlying issue in a comprehensive manner. Where there is national demand for interventions outside these areas, UNDP should facilitate the development of partnerships between national and appropriate international organizations with relevant expertise—for example, through joint programming.
- Build on existing partnerships with international development partners, but ensure that UNDP adds value beyond purely management arrangements. Incorporate human development approaches, building on the UNDP focus and comparative strengths in promoting human development, especially at the local level. UNDP can play a role in ensuring that the most vulnerable and marginalized groups benefit from interventions.
- Build on existing experience and relationships with local government and communities as a base to comprehensively strengthen and expand existing frameworks to address rural issues.
- Expand the UNDP role in supporting government efforts at aid coordination.
- Strengthen UNDP support to capacity development through a more rigorous and systematic application of corporate capacity development tools and approaches. Use needs and institutional assessments in all project preparations while ensuring that corporate tools are adapted to the specific context of Uzbekistan. Anchor UNDP capacity development interventions in existing institutions.
- Ensure that mechanisms are in place to facilitate linkages between all direct interventions and decision makers. Lessons learned should feed into policy-making, and, where necessary, mechanisms should be put in place to facilitate such linkages. It is necessary to strengthen evaluation mechanisms to facilitate the learning process.
- Undertake annual Country Programme Action Plan reviews to increase transparency and facilitate greater stakeholder accountability.

## 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)