

UNDP IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Republic of the Congo has been engaged in a transition towards multiparty democracy and a market economy. Repeated civil conflicts ended in 2000 with a reconciliation and rebuilding process that has made progress but is still not completed. Despite booming income from oil resources, there is a disconnect between modern and traditional economies. Relatively good standing in

per capita gross domestic product combines with acute poverty and low levels of human development.

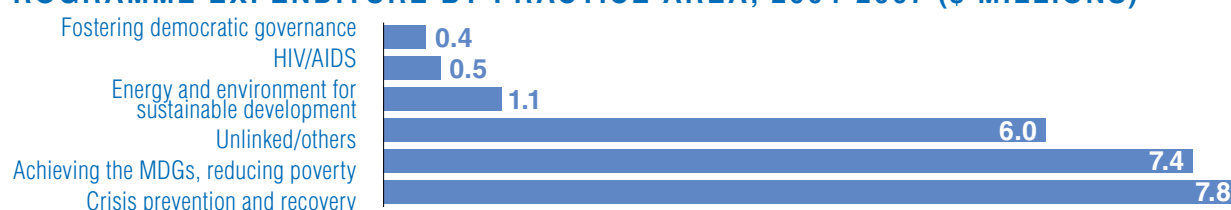
UNDP has addressed good governance, poverty reduction, and environmental and natural resource management issue. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2004 to 2007.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2007: \$23.2 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2007



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



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

During and immediately after the civil conflicts in the Republic of the Congo, UNDP operated on an ad hoc, project-by-project basis, transitioning to a four-year country programme in 2003. Generally, the programme was relevant to national priorities, and addressed needs important for sustaining efforts to move towards democracy, a free-market economy and social justice.

Surprisingly, the country programme did not define conflict prevention and recovery as a separate category of support. Although a number of activities fell under this theme, they were subsumed under poverty reduction work. Programmes would have been more coherent had conflict prevention and recovery been addressed either directly or through an approach that emphasized peace consolidation in all areas of intervention, particularly in governance. In early 2007, UNDP established a dedicated Governance and Peace Consolidation Unit with responsibility for governance and post-conflict projects.

A number of UNDP interventions were particularly relevant and built on the organization's comparative advantages. These included support to the formulation of key national documents related to poverty reduction, such as two National Human Development Reports and, in close partnership with The World Bank, the interim and final Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

Support to parliamentary institutions opened doors for effective advocacy on a number of cross-cutting issues, such as gender, HIV/AIDS and the environment. One example was the development of legislation on political parties and the role of women in politics, accompanied by training for party members and support to help establish networks promoting women in politics.

Limited UNDP core resources made it difficult to provide seed money to attract contributions for important but underfunded activities, particularly the environment programme. In response, the office developed an aggressive and successful fund mobilization strategy. Some donors and partners within the Government considered the emphasis on funding excessive, however.

UNDP judiciously used high-visibility initiatives, such as the public burning of collected weapons to signal a return to normalcy across the country, including in more troubled areas. An effective advocacy campaign drew together the media, civil society, and key institutions, such as Parliament, to promote a pro-poor agenda.

A sound and balanced approach to programmes combined upstream and downstream interventions. Operational synergies were particularly apparent in support provided to parliamentary institutions, which, in turn, became powerful advocacy vehicles.

Some evident weaknesses comprised limited mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues into programming. This was often apparent in the initial design of projects, although corrective action was generally taken at a later stage. Local perceptions of UNDP were unfavourable, because despite important efforts to improve programme delivery, it was viewed as slow to disburse funds, deficient in reporting quality and heavily bureaucratic in management style. Another concern related to a lack of clarity among outcomes and indicators, and insufficient financial and human resources for monitoring. This weakened the capacity to illustrate results and justify donor trust.

Programme sustainability remained the major weakness of UNDP operations. Numerous projects achieved generally positive results and produced predefined material outputs, but many also failed to produce intended outcomes or develop mechanisms for long-term viability.

In many cases, upstream support was successful in putting in place strategy and policy frameworks. Since expected outcomes will materialize over time, these interventions may be considered 'dormant successes'. In contrast, the sustainability of downstream projects often depended on dedicated national or local budgets,

the capacity of managers and beneficiaries to develop independent sources of income, and the capacity to manage projects to maintain initial results. Most often, such resources and capacities were absent. A number of projects, particularly those dealing with infrastructure rehabilitation, were destined for rapid deterioration.

UNDP needs to address sustainability through a persistent and structured effort to foster national ownership. Concrete measures are needed to ensure that institutions and community groups have the willingness and capacity to take over programmes. New initiatives are required to cultivate a higher level of government commitment through increased cost-sharing.

UNDP has made judicious decisions in selecting programme interventions. Now it is time to move forward and adapt to the changing reality of the country. New interventions should focus on major challenges a decade after the end of active conflict. Peace consolidation represents a key requirement to move beyond the post-conflict period and the current stabilization phase. To support this, UNDP needs to be more forceful in building on its comparative advantages in the areas of community development and governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The next Country Programme should build on UNDP comparative advantages in good governance, pro-poor and community development, a regional approach to environmental issues and strong advocacy.
- Peace consolidation should become the central focus and underlying theme for most UNDP activities.
- UNDP should continue to emphasize the linkages between upstream and downstream approaches, intervening at both political and operational levels in all programmes.
- Based on experience in other countries, UNDP should engage the Government in negotiations aimed at increasing national cost-sharing contributions to at least equal the resources allocated by UNDP.
- Particular attention needs to be devoted to fostering national ownership and ensuring sustainability. This could include greater attention to exit strategies and national capacity-building, a continued gradual and prudent approach to increasing national execution, and a clear demonstration of the political will of national authorities.
- With all partners, UNDP should reflect on ways to improve coordination among development actors. This is of particular importance for good governance initiatives.
- UNDP should vigorously pursue improved programme delivery. Measures of rewarding staff efficiency should be established, and the new Centre for Project Execution and Support evaluated after two years of operation.
- The formulation of outcomes, indicators and means of verification should be improved. Sufficient financial and human resources should be devoted to monitoring outcomes as well as outputs.
- UNDP should engage partners in discussions geared towards improving the performance and efficiency of project review and steering committees.
- UNDP offices outside Brazzaville need to develop their services for the benefit of both UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. This should include creating open and inclusive local coordination hubs.
- More attention should be given to mainstreaming gender and HIV/AIDS considerations.
- The intent to treat direct environmental interventions as cross-cutting should be encouraged.

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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