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UNDP IN ARGENTINA

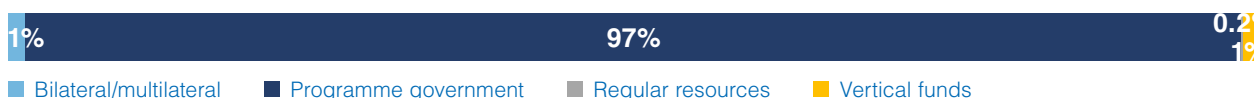
Since the early 20th century, Argentina has had the highest per capita income in Latin America and one of the lowest levels of poverty in the region. Notwithstanding its relatively low rates of growth in recent decades, and the transitory reversals in social conditions and poverty levels, the country has been able to maintain its high ranking on the Human Development Index. Argentina faces significant development challenges, however, as the result of income and regional disparities.

UNDP has provided support in the areas of foster-

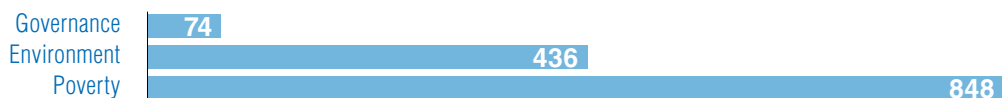
ing democratic governance, achieving the Millennium Development Goals and reducing poverty under a human development perspective, and ensuring environmental sustainability. The country programme is one of the largest at UNDP, drawing particularly on funds from the Government of Argentina. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 2002 to 2008.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2000-2008: \$1,665 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2007



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY PRACTICE AREA, 2002-2008 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP’s programme in Argentina was aligned to national priorities and demonstrated good capacity to adapt to changing priorities. After the crisis of 2001, the organization played a key role in convening the Argentinean Dialogue, where the most important development actors, including political parties, diverse faith-based groups, civil society organizations, academics and the media, gathered to deliberate and find solutions to the country’s political, institutional and economic crises. A new culture of dialogue flourished as a result, and later permeated discussions at the national, provincial and municipal levels, supported by various UNDP projects reaffirming democratic values.

Through an alliance with the Human Rights Secretary, UNDP supported the placement of economic, social and cultural rights on the public agenda. The creation of the Sub-Secretary for the Promotion of Human Rights demonstrated new importance given to human rights education. UNDP’s contribution to results in the design and implementation of political reforms was limited, however, mainly because of changes in government’s priorities and restricted conditions for putting new proposals into effect.

The country office forged partnerships with the Government, religious groups and civil society organi-

zations to develop and implement key social projects as an immediate response to the 2001 crisis. The Remediar programme, for example, sought to provide basic medications for public health centres nationwide, using national government funds. In some cases, projects had unexpected benefits, as was the case with the medicine supply project in the municipality of La Matanza. New information on optimizing health-related services led to a lowering of “transaction costs” throughout the procurement lines and health services chain.

Two National Human Development Reports were produced. The first, in 2002, was prepared as the crisis was evolving, and focused on poverty reduction, cooperative federalism and sustainable competitiveness. An extended Human Development Index provided social measurements, at the provincial level, that did not previously exist. This innovation revealed large interprovince disparities in the quality of life and competitive conditions across the country, and had an impact on the design and implementation of policies and strategies for local development. The second National Human Development Report continued to expand on decentralization themes.

Support for mainstreaming environmental approaches, risk management and natural disaster prevention into public policies contributed to planning to prevent natural

disasters and new policy to preserve and manage forests. In general, however, the scale of resources allocated to environmental projects is insufficient for tackling Argentinean challenges.

UNDP's Development Support Services portfolio has decreased significantly as part of a shift towards a more value-added concentration on technical assistance. This began in 2005, when many government emergency programmes to respond to the crisis had ended. The "giro estrategico" or strategic turn has encompassed an institutional and capacity-building strategy, a focus on the articulation of demands for a greater and better quality social bond and human development, strengthening citizens' capacities for action and participation in a more complex and uncertain context, and deepening a territorial presence in provinces and municipalities with the lowest human development and greater disparities.

These new orientations combine with more emphasis on designing exit strategies for new projects, a recognition that more attention needs to be paid to the sustainability of the results of UNDP-supported interventions. In some cases, benefits have ceased after the conclusion of projects. Particularly for those with an administrative nature, the strengthening of institutional capacities was often limited to UNDP project execution, without clear exit strategies.

The technical and analytical capacity of UNDP staff has been widely valued and recognized. Engaging in a

policy dialogue in Argentina, a country with a sophisticated professional and intellectual capacity, is challenging. Having a well-qualified technical staff has been of immense importance in understanding the needs and development challenges of the country and being able to provide sound policy advice. Although this is not a full guarantee of relevance and developmental effectiveness, its absence is close to a guarantee of lacklustre performance. UNDP not only established a reputation for efficient project administration but also for significant contributions to the analysis of development challenges from a human development perspective.

While UNDP was acknowledged as a prestigious organization with the potential to bring legitimacy, neutrality, credibility and knowledge into the development process, some partners expressed concern about its concentration on the administration of government resources. This poses potential risks since it may limit UNDP's advocacy of public policies with a human development perspective.

Against this backdrop, UNDP's move towards a strategic role as an advisory and knowledge organization was viewed positively. It works with a wide variety of partners at the central, provincial and local levels, and has strengthened its partnership with local and provincial governments. Overall it is well poised to continue to nurture and expand a more strategic role in Argentina.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support institutional capacity development with a long-term perspective of recovering the strategic role of the state in promoting inclusive and sustainable human development.
- Continue supporting dialogue and deliberative mechanisms among different levels of government and society (national, provincial and municipal) to reach agreements on how to reduce regional and local disparities under the MDG conceptual framework.
- Continue developing and fostering intersector initiatives, such as the ones recommended in National Human Development Reports and MDG reports, based on new diagnoses and empirical evidence about the development constraints faced by Argentina.
- Deepen the "giro estrategico" and the policy advice and technical cooperation role played by UNDP in the formulation of public policies with a human development perspective.
- Ensure the sustainability of the benefits of UNDP interventions once they are finished by properly considering exit strategies.
- Support the systematization and lessons learned from good practices undertaken by the Argentinean Government in the framework of South-South cooperation.
- Ensure the capacity response of UNDP to emerging consequences of global recession and its impact on Argentina by adopting a flexible approach to programming.

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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