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UNDP IN NICARAGUA

Nicaragua, after Haiti, is the poorest country in Latin America. Since 1990, four presidential and legislative elections have been held and their results respected. But amid ongoing polarization, various surveys show the continued loss of confidence in political parties and public institutions. Poverty, lack of opportunities, weapons and the penetration of organized crime networks contribute to high levels of violence. Environmental deterioration is worrying, and the country has been affected by a variety of natural disasters that have exposed its social

vulnerability.

UNDP has prioritized four lines of service: sustainable economic development and the reduction of poverty, in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); democratic governance; energy and environmental sustainability; and the prevention of natural disasters. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 1998 to 2005.

TOTAL PROGRAMME RESOURCES, 1998-2007: \$140 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2006



PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY PRACTICE AREA, 2004-2006 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP has played diverse roles within the framework of its mandate. It has facilitated dialogue processes between different social actors and politicians, as well as among international cooperation entities. It advocated and advised on public policies and provided fund management services for development projects. Important and innovative efforts went into strengthening institutions in three of the four branches of State, and building capacities to advance sustainable human development.

In the area of democratic governance, support focused on strengthening the rule of law, the modernization of public administration and citizen participation. Work with the legislature and political parties aimed at the proper functioning of the National Assembly and the modernization of political parties as vital elements for good democratic governance. Other accomplishments entailed engaging with civil society to negotiate and present demands to state institutions.

UNDP assisted with preparations for decentralization and the strengthening of a strategy for municipalities. These issues need more momentum and attention, however. It may be important to have a coordination process involving a variety of organization to address local governance issues and the MDGs.

UNDP helped put the complex and critical reality

of the Atlantic Coast region on the national agenda, building on its neutrality, respect for diverse social actors and politicians, concentration on substantive issues, and efficiency and transparency. Work in this area is novel and strategic, and might be reproduced in other parts of Latin America where territories have little state presence, low rates of human development, rich biodiversity and resources, and a variety of traditional and new actors.

In the area of poverty reduction and MDG advancement, UNDP aided the generation of statistics to underpin effective public policies aimed at human development, including through disaggregation by gender, locality and sector. The organization helped bolster the national statistics institute and validate its role.

Other poverty reduction programmes sought to attract foreign direct investment, strengthen local production and invest in infrastructure. Pro-Nicaragua, the investment promotion agency of Nicaragua, was assisted with attracting a significant volume of external investment that can generate jobs. The Productive Transformation Programme attempted to support small local producers to access markets, but results were less positive. This was due to programme design deficiencies, including a lack of strong connection with local development processes.

Towards contributing to gender equality and the empowerment of women, UNDP participated in a regional project, “Economic Agenda for women”. But a gender perspective was not consistently integrated in all interventions.

Work on the environment focused on the protection of biodiversity, climate change and desertification. Technical capabilities were built to bring together environmental policy with development plans that prioritize improvements in the living conditions of the poorest. Energy programmes saw increased energy coverage in rural areas through the use of renewable energy.

In preventing natural disasters, UNDP backed a crucial dialogue that led to the adoption of law 337, which provides for the decentralization of disaster prevention efforts and risk reduction. The law defines responsibilities and tasks for line ministries as well as the main municipalities.

Both the government and international cooperation actors were looking for new modalities of work that produce better development results. Some proposals moved away from the traditional practice of project financing, privileging sectoral and budgetary support. It is still early to appreciate results or significant changes in develop-

ment conditions, but assistance provided by UNDP to the process of alignment and harmonization was recognized and valued.

UNDP programmes were highly relevant, but variable in their effectiveness. They have been efficiently managed. In some situations, they have not generated enough national capacities to be continued or to offer appropriate benefits once the support is finished UNDP should seek to improve sustainability and have clearly defined exit strategies. Institutional risks that should be considered include those related to the lack of a financing strategy with a clear identification of value added in terms of development assistance.

UNDP should maintain its position as a strategic ally for the development of Nicaragua, tightening its relationship with the powers of the State, based on a firm position in favour of the poorest and the strengthening of democratic governance. It should continue exercising its role as a facilitator and dialogue coordinator among diverse actors of international cooperation, the Government and civil society, putting at the centre of the discussions the conditions of life and the future of the most excluded groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP must continue to preserve the normative framework of the United Nations system and the commitment to promote sustainable human development.
- UNDP should strengthen its planning capacity, and monitoring and evaluation. Evaluations should be used to provide more coherence to interventions, and synergies should be explored among thematic areas.
- Efforts should be made to reduce high turnover of staff, balance substantive tasks and administration of services, and align the internal capabilities of the office with support needs identified by national counterparts.
- UNDP should play a more active role in the coordination of United Nations agencies, and promote an open dialogue with national actors on the implications of new financing modalities.
- UNDP should support decentralization for local development, including in terms of fiscal transfers to municipalities and in the strengthening of municipal administrations.
- UNDP ensure that all programmes include gender equity in all phases of design, execution and evaluation.
- UNDP should continue to raise awareness about the need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
- UNDP technical assistance could be improved to help generate greater capacities at the national and local levels, and facilitate compliance with international agreements.
- In disaster prevention, UNDP needs to work on risk management in an intersectoral manner. It can help structure indicators to measure the human development impact and repercussions of disasters.
- Given positive results, UNDP needs to continue its presence and interventions at the local level, particularly on the Atlantic Coast, including through more coordination with other actors of international cooperation.
- UNDP could strengthen advocacy for public policies that promote development within the framework of national government priorities.

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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