EVALUATION BRIEF   SEPTEMBER 2007

UNDP IN COLOMBIA

Colombia has achieved rapid economic growth, at rates among the fastest in South America. Yet it faces several challenges related to inequalities among regions and among rural and urban areas. Over 49 percent of Colombia's population lives in poverty, and 14.7 percent of its people are indigent. The chronic conflict that has affected the country since the 1960s has been fueled by international drug trafficking, making peacebuilding initiatives much more complex. Colombia is among three countries in the world with the highest numbers of internally displaced persons

UNDP programmes relate to poverty reduction and the MillenniumDevelopment Goals (MDGs), democratic governance, energy and environment for sustainable development, and crisis prevention and recovery. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 1998 to 2006.

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2004-2006: $333 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 2004-2006

26%	71%	2%
		1%

■ Bilateral/multilateral   ■ Programme government   ■ Regular resources   ■ Vertical funds

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

Practice Area	$ Millions
Energy and environment for sustainable development	7
Achieving MDGs, reducing poverty	36
Crisis prevention and recovery	63
Fostering democratic governance	227

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP's interventions overall contributed to development results that strengthened Colombia's peace and development process. The organization provided valuable support related to the measurement and analysis of the MDGs at the national, departmental/subnational and municipal levels. It assisted in the elaboration of a policy document setting out targets and strategies to incorporate the goals into national development policies.

National human development reports generated a number of good practices, helping to develop analytical capacities to address sensitive aspects of human development and conflict. The reports also served as advocacy tools and played an important role in agenda setting. A participatory process in their design, production and dissemination proved key in developing national ownership and promoting their use.

Contributions to democratic governance focused primarily on improving the monitoring of government decision-making at all levels. Anti-corruption and citizens' participation' projects, implemented with the Comptroller General's Office, achieved positive results in terms of public administration reform and anti-corruption efforts. 'Citizens' Monitoring and Evaluation Committees' were institutionalized as a form of fiscal control, and 'Citizens' Agendas' became a formal mechanism for the articulation of civil society in social policy.

The persistence of conflict over the last five decades has made peacebuilding an obligatory component of UNDP governance interventions. Four projects under the Reconciliation and Development Programme (REDES) followed a basic formula of activating civil society, strengthening local governmental institutions, and building alliances among local, regional, national and international actors. While not new, the approach was promising for introducing development activities in conflict-ridden areas where the national government has a limited presence and no effective tools for fostering subnational or local development. Initial and still tentative evidence suggested that REDES is helping to reduce local conflicts and to provide alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution.

UNDP interventions involving indigenous populations were not incorporated into REDES, however. And although there are some links between REDES and activities involving landmines and unexploded ordnance, there was a dispersion of activities in this area. This was partly a consequence of UNDP's reactive approach—that is, trying to respond to multiple demands from different national and international organizations.

Towards the effective use and management of Colom-

COLOMBIA

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY
PROGRAMME EVALUATION

bia's natural resources, UNDP strategies prioritized environmental governance, climate change, and linkages between sustainable environmental management practices and other biological resources. Results were modest, with programmes largely demand-driven and more reactive than proactive. The organization in this area has been generally perceived as a resource administrator, and not as a real source of technical expertise to address major sustainable development challenges.

UNDP demonstrated leadership in its coordination of civil society, Government and the international community, helping to bring these key actors together for the G-24 London-Cartagena forum, for example, which discussed crucial peace and development issues and established a development agenda. UNDP's coordination role among UN organizations was more limited.

The excessive use of 'development support services' posed a risk to the organization's reputation. Colombia is a middle-income country, and core funds have been insufficient to meet the multidimensional challenges of peace and development. To generate additional oper-

ational resources, and to respond to the demands of government and international agencies, UNDP began expanding its role in development support services that were largely administrative rather than development-oriented, and included activities such as procurement and the payment of payrolls. While initially successful, this carried significant costs in terms of programme relevance and considerable risks to UNDP's reputation, mostly related to procurement. On the other hand, through such services, UNDP was able to facilitate the operations of several international cooperation agencies, mainly international financial institutions. A portfolio of 180 projects was developed, although many lacked focus and relevance to national development priorities.

In positioning itself for the future, UNDP should avoid spreading itself too thinly. Rather, it should concentrate its resources on areas of crucial importance such as peacebuilding. UNDP in general could also help Colombia to overcome the lack of reliable and comprehensive information required to design, implement, monitor and evaluate peace and development interventions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should disseminate and deepen the debate around the first MDG monitoring report for Colombia.
- UNDP could play a brokering role with other development agencies to bolster peace and recovery efforts through productive activities and other development projects.
- Given its neutral position, the organization should encourage a dialogue about the eventual consequences of the government's social and fiscal policy, which is currently based on a combination of transfers and subsidies, with doubtful outcomes in terms of equity, effectiveness and sustainability.
- UNDP could draw further from the expertise of its regional and/or international centres, and mobilize South-South cooperation to provide its country programmes with additional human resources, experience and support that could significantly increase their substantive added value.
- Given encouraging results, systematic evaluation, at regular intervals, of the REDES approach to peacebuilding, conflict resolution and strengthening of democratic governance at the local level should be required in the next UNDP programming cycle.
- To extend successes achieved in Bogotá to other regions and localities, UNDP should undertake investments in knowledge creation and in distilling lessons learned to facilitate their uptake by local planners and decision-makers.
- UNDP should elaborate a strategy linking natural resource management to conflict prevention.
- An analysis of the recently completed US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement should explore the implications of resulting energy and environmental regulations for Colombia's competitiveness. UNDP should also help convene a national dialogue on key environmental and energy challenges to sustainable development.
- The next UNDP programming cycle should consider expanding interventions to the country's indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. To guide such efforts, a strategy should be elaborated, with particular attention to the integration of these groups within the REDES and landmine programmes.
- The prevention strategy covering antipersonnel mines and active abandoned munitions requires more effective coordination within the UN system, and between the UN system and the Vice Presidency's Mine Observatory.

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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