

UNDP IN YEMEN

The declaration of a new State, the Republic of Yemen, in 1990 merged two economically depressed territories with distinct political orientations. Yemen is a least developed country, but despite a pressing need for aid, it is neglected by development partners. Daunting problems include high population growth, low levels of literacy, pronounced gender inequalities and severe constraints on water supplies. Amid a bleak employment picture, about half the population is poor. Political stability is very high on the national agenda, requiring action in the

areas of democratization, rule of law, conflict resolution and power sharing with local councils. Diversification of the economy also demands urgent attention.

UNDP has provided programmes linked to key dimensions of governance, poverty reduction and sustainable natural resource development. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work from 1997 to 2004.

TOTAL PROGRAMME DELIVERY, 1997-2003: \$72 MILLION

FUNDING SOURCES, 1997-2003



TOTAL DELIVERY BY PROGRAMME AREA, 1997-2003 (\$ MILLIONS)



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP had a high profile in both Yemens before their unification, giving it a position of advantage despite a resource squeeze in the 1990s. Priority concerns of the Government coincided with areas of UNDP support. The trust, respect and neutrality commanded by the organization and the access it enjoyed among government officials as well as civil society groups enabled it to take on an advocacy role and pioneer new initiatives. Other strengths included its ability to help build institutions and capacity.

UNDP electoral assistance in 2003 increased voter registration, encouraged more women to vote and prevented incidents of voter-related violence. The Supreme Commission for Elections and Referenda has become a stronger, more professional organization, and has set up offices in the governorates. In the justice system, UNDP helped establish various legal codes, and train judges and lawyers. A national mine action programme achieved reasonable success in raising awareness and clearing about 20 percent of critically mined areas.

UNDP and the UN Capital Development Fund partnered with the Government to develop an overall strategy for decentralization and build necessary capacity for implementation. Local leaders as well as government officials have been trained, phased planning was

underway to strengthen local infrastructure, and pilot projects were launched in selected districts. UNDP acted as a bridge-builder between central and local authorities, and between local authorities and the local population. It successfully drew more development partners into the programme and secured increased financial allocations for local government from the Ministry of Finance. While the decentralization programme is very promising for both empowering people at the grass-roots and attacking the vicious cycle of poverty, however, many challenges lie ahead, including in ensuring eventual government takeover.

UNDP played a vital role in supporting the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), in addition to activities relating to poverty policies, monitoring and evaluation. Databases and information systems, including a consolidated database of socioeconomic indicators, enabled the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation to set up a special unit to monitor poverty. The ministry issued the first report on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and produced a progress report on the PRSP.

Starting in 1998, UNDP supported a community-based regional development initiative that successfully organized community development organizations

and developed community-based financial services. The Social Fund for Development, set up in 1997, is now taking over responsibility for these programmes. The Fund is involved in developing social and economic infrastructure in communities; building the capacity of community development organizations, NGOs, consultants, contractors and government agencies; and promoting microenterprises and financial services.

Early on, UNDP responded to environmental challenges in Yemen, and its efforts in the 1990s increased national awareness of environmental issues. A National Water Resources Authority was created in 1995/1996, and in 2003, a Ministry of Water and Environment was set up. A National Environment Action Plan was finalized in 2002, and a Water Strategy and Investment Plan approved in December 2004. Funds from the Global Environment Facility were allocated for the protection of the marine ecosystem of the Red Sea, but results were limited, mainly because the project failed to focus on the loss of marine biodiversity. With Yemen threatened by a variety of natural disasters, UNDP is currently involved in assisting with disaster management plans.

Strategic partnerships forged by the organization

have been of great benefit, including in strengthening the Government's leadership role in the PRSP process. A number of South-South technical cooperation activities included exchanges between Yemeni and Jordanian microfinance institutions. Besides technical cooperation, however, Yemen needs a substantial injection of capital investment, however, which has not been forthcoming from either donors or foreign direct investment. UNDP in the past has been a substantial mobilizer of resources. It is still viewed as a significant player in supporting the Government in aid mobilization and coordination.

While a few programmes supported by UNDP have done relatively well, follow-up action is still needed; in others, improvements can be made and new opportunities exploited. There is still potential to exploit the knowledge resources at UNDP's disposal and fresh attention should be directed there.

Success depends largely on combining upstream and downstream activities. UNDP should sustain a long-term commitment to its objectives, even as it remains flexible enough to respond to emerging issues and keeps a clear focus due to resource limitations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNDP should continue to focus on the overarching issue in Yemen's development, namely poverty alleviation. Key points for future emphasis include deepening and expanding the consultative and participatory process in the preparation of the 2006-2010 PRSP; ensuring that microfinance operations are sustainable, reach the rural poor, and provide models for well-functioning microfinance institutions; and accelerating social investment.
- In governance, UNDP's influence could be more far-reaching, not so much through programme funding but by bringing in other actors, such as the UN Department for Political Affairs and its Electoral Assistance Division, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other development partners. Three areas of focus can be readily identified: the second phase of the decentralization programme; special initiatives on human rights, reforms in the justice system, election reforms and mine action, with the objective of developing national capacity; and the further consolidation of central national authority, which could be achieved by combining advocacy, international attention and conflict resolution mechanisms.
- A new programme on gender should be initiated, incorporating advocacy, partnership development and affirmative action as well as corrective measures for gender equality.
- In the area of the environment, UNDP's contribution need not necessarily involve financial resources or technical expertise. Rather, its most important role may be flagging the importance of the environment for the country as whole. Areas of focus should include resource mobilization, capacity development, partnership-building, and programme coordination and monitoring.
- External resource accounting and coordination should be given added emphasis. This is a traditional area of aid coordination that needs to be re-engineered. Aid accounting should be comprehensive, financial transactions should be transparent, budget allocations should reflect planning priorities, and technical and capital assistance should be matched.

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