

# Evaluation Brief: ICPE Yemen

The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an Independent Country Programme Evaluation in Yemen in 2018. The evaluation focused on reviewing the programme activities since 2012, guided by two primary questions: (i) How has the Yemen country office/country programme adapted to the changing country situation and needs? (ii) How effectively have programme links between UN humanitarian and development activities materialized in Yemen?

## Findings and conclusions

Overall, UNDP successfully adapted to a rapidly and continuously changing country situation, the central theme for Yemen since late 2011. Within two months of the Executive Board's approval of the CPD in September 2011, the GCC-brokered peace and transition agreement was signed on 23 November 2011, with an implementation mechanism for "the restoration of peace and security" in Yemen. UNDP subsequently achieved a swift and effective adjustment in the programme to support Yemen's political transition. The UNDP programme has achieved important results in the 2012-2014 period in support of the political transition, institutional strengthening, and national development planning. The 2012-2014 programme, however, focused too narrowly on the national-level political transition and lacked a parallel subnational programme to integrate local peacebuilding and development. The programme was 'top-heavy' and too dependent on a scenario of conflict-free political stability, with no real contingency to fall back on if the political transition faltered. Although elements of the programme were invested in biodiversity, youth employment and mine action, when the political process collapsed and the country descended into civil war and humanitarian crisis, UNDP had no major development programmes operating to fall back on. Consequently, the country office could

not respond quickly or effectively when the crisis occurred and the programme needed to be completely redesigned and kick-started from scratch. Due to the insufficient preparation for the conflict, the country office also missed the opportunity to pre-empt donors from disengaging.

The recrudescence of violence in Yemen from 2015 impacted the country office significantly. The country's financial environment was in disarray, financial planning and budgetary execution were almost impossible, procurement activities suffered massively, and the labour market became distorted. Access to project sites, local partners, communities and beneficiaries became much more limited, and indeed impossible in areas where fighting was most intense. UNDP headquarters was slow to strengthen the country office with leadership more adept to a crisis situation. Better internal communications would have helped the country office navigate the crisis.

Despite massive disruption to the country office, and with a strong injection of SURGE corporate support, UNDP prepared the Yemen Resilience Programme, which, although slow to emerge, provided the framework and entry point for comprehensive programming at the humanitarian-development nexus. With this, despite a difficult conflict-affected humanitarian environment, the country office has evolved an important role for itself by successfully linking humanitarian and development activities under a unified and coherent resilience programme. Results from the Yemen Resilience Programme have been considerable and widespread. Through an innovative and pragmatic partnership with the World Bank, UNDP has played a critical role in supporting the resilience of institutions and communities at the height of the emergency period for Yemen. Also decisive in contributing to the country office's accomplishments were the nucleus of an operational emergency employment, economic

resilience and recovery programme focusing on short-term livelihoods stabilization that could be built upon and expanded across a range of activities, a strong network of non-government implementing partners and respected third-party monitoring arrangements; participation in post-conflict needs assessments and the early willingness of the European Union to reprogramme some of its financing towards UNDP's rural resilience and emergency crisis response projects. Despite significant ongoing risks and increased operating costs, UNDP's retained presence in Sana'a and Aden has been key to enabling UNDP to implement a programme closely aligned to both humanitarian and development objectives.

The CPD for Yemen (2012-2015) was thrice submitted to the UNDP Executive Board, each time for extension, yet it remains irrelevant to the country context. The country office also still has to report against the CPD outcomes in the results oriented annual reports (ROAR). Meanwhile, the two-year Yemen Resilience Programme – a strategic framework which virtually superseded the CPD – has not been presented to the Executive Board for information, consultation or approval. The Executive Board thereby effectively lost its oversight, and arguably its accountability role of the Yemen programme. A comprehensive and integrated medium-term vision and strategy for UNDP in Yemen has yet to emerge.

## Recommendations

- **RECOMMENDATION 1. UNDP should adopt a more flexible instrument and template in extreme or protracted crisis where the standard CPD has been temporarily suspended or is no longer relevant or appropriate.** The CPD for Yemen (2012–2015) remained valid through the first adjustment of the CO programme, since it had anticipated UNDP engagement in a process of political and democratic transition. However, the CPD was not the correct strategic planning, resource mobilization, communications and results monitoring instrument when Yemen slid tragically into civil war and humanitarian crisis in 2015. Further consideration should be given to the following:
  - What should replace CPDs when they are made irrelevant or redundant by circumstances within the country, and/or in instances where the CPD is recurrently 'extended' due to conflict or crisis, as in the case of Yemen.
- That interim (or revised) CO strategies or plans, such as the Yemen Resilience Programme, should be reported to the Executive Board "for information or consultation" so that the Board may continue to fulfil its oversight responsibilities for those countries' programmes and resources.
- Country offices affected by conflict or crisis should be permitted some flexibility in reporting to the ROAR. For example, where a CPD has effectively been superseded by an alternative temporary programme, (such as the Yemen Resilience Programme) whereby the country office is able to report against the interim strategy, rather than a CPD which is obsolete.
- UNDP should consider a designation for slow onset and protracted crises within the broader corporate crisis response system, to facilitate an elevated status for those countries requiring sustained supplementary resources and fast-track administrative measures over an extended time period.
- **RECOMMENDATION 2. Building on the success of the Yemen Resilience Programme, the country office should develop a more comprehensive and integrated programme framework for the next two to three years through which to leverage UNDP's comparative advantages.** This should entail a broad partnership extending into security and peacebuilding, which will also enable the better sharing of risks. Consultation with the United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, the UN Office of the Special Envoy, the Humanitarian Country Team and donors will be important. Core programming principles such as sustainability and gender need to feature more prominently alongside conflict prevention and strengthened UN joint programming.