

Evaluation Brief: ICPE Paraguay

Over the last 15 years, Paraguay has experienced one of the fastest rates of economic and productivity growth in Latin America. The country has made important progress in reducing levels of poverty and inequality, and fostering greater prosperity for its people. As an upper middle-income country with a medium human development ranking, Paraguay faces the challenge of advancing structural transformations for sustained economic growth and poverty reduction.

In its 2015-2019 programme, UNDP committed to support Paraguay in the areas of inclusive sustainable development, democratic governance and disaster risk reduction. Major resource partners included the Government of Paraguay, the Global Environment Facility and the European Union. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation that covered UNDP work in Paraguay from 2015 to 2018.

Findings and Conclusions

UNDP has sustained a solid relationship with the Government of Paraguay, positioning itself as a reliable partner for the provision of management support services to the Government, and an impartial and trusted convener and broker for the private sector and civil society organizations. Its leadership and policy advisory

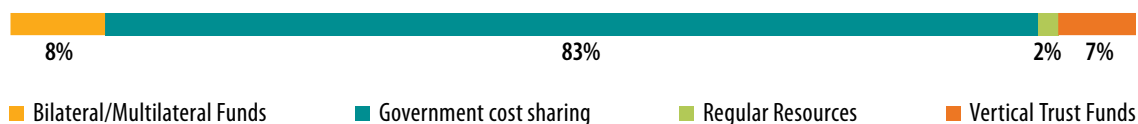
role, particularly in the democratic governance area, declined during the evaluation period, limiting its effectiveness in some areas. A declining relationship and linkages with the donor community hampered the strategic positioning and visibility of UNDP.

UNDP demonstrated a strong capacity to respond and adapt to emerging needs, reflected in a shift in its programmatic focus. This was due to the programme's dependence on funding from the Government of Paraguay, and the Government's increasing demand for administrative support services.

The programme lacked a clear and coherent theory of change, a focus on strategic results rather than operational contributions, and the systematic monitoring of output and outcome level results. Significant contributions were found in the empowerment of a women's network for greater participation and influence in democratic processes, a result with the potential to become gender transformative, and in the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at national level. UNDP was partially effective in improving citizen access to justice and had limited or no interventions focused on strengthening the Superior Court of Electoral Justice or Congress, or improving anticorruption measures across sectors.

Funding Sources, 2015-2017

TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE, 2015-2017: \$83 MILLION



Programme Expenditure by Thematic Area, 2015-2017 (\$ Millions)



Support for the implementation of the SDGs in Paraguay, an area in which UNDP has a comparative advantage, has led to important advancements: the inclusion of the SDGs in the National Development Plan, the establishment of an Interinstitutional Commission, the adoption of the SIGOB and SIMORE Plus systems to monitor progress towards the SDGs, and increasing private sector pro-SDG engagement. These efforts, if continued, have a high potential for impact.

Through its environmental portfolio, UNDP has closely supported the Environment Secretariat (SEAM) in its institutional strengthening efforts. Continued support was provided for the development of a legislative and institutional climate change framework, important instruments to meet the country's international climate change commitments. Their dissemination and implementation at national and subnational levels remain a challenge, considering national institutional weaknesses.

UNDP played a catalytic role in promoting an institutional shift from emergency response to disaster risk reduction. There was an assertive strategy to focus its limited resources on strengthening the National Emergency Secretariat and the National System for Risk and Disaster Management. The scope of these contributions is limited due to resource constraints and

changes in the political environment. The systems and mechanisms set up with UNDP support have not managed to systematically reach community level, and the capacity of decentralized governments is still weak.

Through the establishment of tripartite dialogue platforms for Paraguay's main value chains, UNDP contributed to establishing a building block for effective agreements towards more environmentally sustainable and socially responsible production models. The private sector, Government and civil society organizations now converge in a neutral space of trust for dialogue. This pilot experience is being replicated in another region, though without validation of its effectiveness and impact.

Gender mainstreaming in the programme was weak. Projects reflect a low gender marker with no systematic integration of gender issues in their design and implementation. A gender equality strategy and action plan were still not in place to address this situation.

UNDP was not successful in working closely with development partners and donors in the country. Insufficient attention was given to the identification of synergies and the promotion of integration and coordination with other UN agencies.

Recommendations

- Reposition itself as a leading agency in democratic governance. Given its reduced core resources, UNDP should strategically focus its interventions on substantive upstream engagement and policy advisory support for the Government to achieve its desired structural transformation. Interventions should focus on fostering active civil society participation and engagement with the Government, particularly for the SDG implementation process.
- Continue to support SEAM and the institutions that compose the Social Protection System in their institutional strengthening efforts, offering tools and instruments that enhance the targeting, coverage and quality of social services and focusing the engagement with SEAM on consolidating ongoing capacity development efforts.
- Reinforce its disaster risk reduction programme to consolidate the paradigm shift; and support the Government in expanding the National System for Risk and Disaster Management at subnational level. Engagement and advocacy at a high political level should be strengthened to ensure the necessary political support and resources.
- Foster greater alliances and linkages within and across its different areas of intervention for more integrated approaches and solutions. South-South cooperation modalities should be increased to benefit Paraguay's development needs and results.
- Strengthen its gender mainstreaming capacity to improve the programme's gender-related results. The gender strategy and action plan should be finalized and implemented to ensure the systematic integration of gender issues and strategies in the programme.
- Improve its strategic planning and results-based management to enhance its contribution to development results, particularly in the SDG framework. A clear theory of change for the programme, and a consistent results framework with realistic indicators, should be developed.