

Evaluation Brief: Turkey

A major emerging economy and a key regional power, Turkey has been at the forefront in the international arena with the presidency of the G20, and as a major humanitarian assistance provider in the wake of the Syrian crisis. In the past two decades, there has been a marked and steady improvement in most development indicators, although progress has been uneven across regions and social groups. During the country programme period, the impact of the Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTP) in Turkey, the recent currency crisis, and government structural reforms presented challenges to sustainable development.

Turkey hosts over 3.7 million registered Syrians under temporary protection as of November 2019. The influx impacted the already weaker and lesser-developed regions, particularly South-eastern Anatolia. The Turkish Government has taken a development approach to address refugee issues, and there have been important achievements in ensuring food security and basic needs and education services.

There have been improvements in environmental legislation and progress in waste management, energy efficiency, use of renewable energy and controlling industrial pollution. Despite this progress, Turkey has had the fastest-growing greenhouse gas emissions among countries reporting under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Land degradation is a major issue and the country has a high risk of natural disasters. Local capacities in environment and disaster management need further strengthening to effectively tackle the environmental challenges faced by the country.

Findings and conclusions

Building on its long-term partnerships with Turkey, UNDP simultaneously engaged in development programming as well as the Syrian crisis response and successfully consolidated its programming for strategic engagement. UNDP has demonstrated

strong partnership with its programming and operations capacities and subnational presence, complementing development efforts of the municipal, regional and national governments. Environmental conservation and protection are priority areas for Turkey, and UNDP played a catalytic role as an enabler in both policy and practice. The country programme has also put considerable thrust to engage the private sector in facilitating development support, although such efforts have primarily focused on corporate social responsibility.

UNDP provided technical support to policy formulation in areas such as productivity, environment and energy, but there remains scope for policy engagement and greater connections between strategy and well-tested programme models. UNDP support to employment and competitiveness is well-conceptualized and responds to the key challenges of Turkey's transition economy. Engagement in successive interventions has resulted in notable contributions to regional policy processes and institutional capacities in areas critical to Turkey's competitiveness. Programming models address the employment issues of both host communities and Syrian population.

Jointly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNDP was successful in providing a Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) coordination mechanism for the Syrian refugee response. 3RP was successful in mobilizing resources as well as enabling a more coherent international refugee response. 3RP provided a platform to bring a resilience perspective to humanitarian response. UNDP's Syrian crisis response was aligned with the priorities identified by the Government and aimed to address income-generation challenges of both the Syrian population and the host community. UNDP is well-positioned to build on its ongoing initiatives and partnerships at the local level to promote income-generation opportunities and improve municipal services. The

development approach to strengthening services, rather than a humanitarian approach of substituting services, with potential for positive long-term outcomes, strengthens municipal capacity. While an integrated approach to development and Syrian refugee response programming underpins UNDP's programme strategy, there is considerable scope for maximizing synergies in key themes across programme portfolios. Although there is recognition as well as ongoing efforts, the integrated approach is yet to gather momentum.

UNDP's support has been strategic in the areas of internal security governance, filling critical capacity gaps and complemented ongoing efforts in the judiciary and legal aid services. With fewer areas open for more substantive collaboration, the extent of UNDP's engagement in governance support is defined by the space available for international cooperation.

Given its strong established partnerships, there are further opportunities to pursue core governance support in areas such as local administration reforms, or e-governance/digitalization, which is comparatively more open for engagement.

Funding from multiple sources, the Government as well as the international community, gave UNDP flexibility to engage in development and Syrian crisis response support. Donor reluctance to follow earlier agreed cost recovery rates at the executive level and lack of flexibility on the UN side put UNDP in a disadvantaged position in accessing further refugee crisis funding with consequences for promoting humanitarian-development nexus.

Recommendations

- **RECOMMENDATION 1.** UNDP is strongly positioned to support resilience programme models to address Turkey's development gaps as well as the Syrian crisis response. UNDP should continue its programming emphasis to address regional inequalities and disparities in development, and drawing on its well-tested programme models, it should continue facilitating long-term solutions to the Syrian crisis.
- **RECOMMENDATION 2.** UNDP, the regional hub, and Istanbul International Centre for Private Sector in Development should have a well-coordinated strategy to support Turkey's development cooperation and the indigenization of Turkish technology and development models in least developed countries and lower middle-income countries.
- **RECOMMENDATION 3.** UNDP has taken measures to accelerate its private sector engagement beyond corporate social responsibility and use its subnational presence to facilitate private sector partnerships in development and Syrian crisis response. Such efforts should be sustained and further accelerated using a diverse set of tools to engage private sector appropriately. UNDP should prioritize development areas for a more concerted private sector engagement with commensurate resource investments to implement appropriate tools.
- **RECOMMENDATION 4.** UNDP should leverage its past work for more coherent support to local administration reform.
- **RECOMMENDATION 5.** UNDP has made considerable progress in strengthening gender mainstreaming in its programmes and operations and should sustain this momentum to enhance outcomes related to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- **RECOMMENDATION 6.** The 3RP mechanism evolved stronger over the past two years. Given the protracted nature of the crisis, UNDP should revisit the form and the purpose of the 3RP coordination mechanism for support to displaced Syrians and host communities.
- **RECOMMENDATION 7.** UNDP should clarify its Sustainable Development Goals integrator role to national actors and donors and build on the momentum of the Accelerator lab and the Business for Goals Platform to develop signature solutions in Turkey and other countries.
- **RECOMMENDATION 8.** To enable greater resource mobilization, the country office should further diversify its funding sources and UNDP headquarters should review the corporate cost-recovery policy. There is an urgent need for donor response to promote humanitarian and development linkages.