

Evaluation Brief: ICPE Georgia

Despite the many challenges it has encountered since independence, Georgia is now an upper-middle-income country, whose performance has improved on a number of development indicators thanks to wide-ranging institutional and economic reforms. The desire to become an integral part of the European and Euro-Atlantic space has driven reforms in many areas of public policy, including elections, decentralization and civil service reform. Georgia's sustainable development, however, remains challenged by an unequal distribution of income, unresolved conflict, as well as the unsustainable use of natural resources.

UNDP's Country Programme 2016-2020 was grounded in the concept of sustainable human and economic development "as a reflection of the degree to which people are empowered to participate in pluralistic decision-making through strong institutions, balance of power, and the rule of law, free from discrimination and with equal opportunity to contribute to, and share in, sustainable economic growth." UNDP identified four priority areas for its assistance to the country: democratic governance; jobs and livelihoods; human security and community resilience; and disaster risk reduction and environment.

Findings and conclusions

In the area of democratic governance, UNDP has contributed to improving the country's system of checks and balances by working on different accountability streams. It strengthened the role and functioning of the Parliament, enhanced the role of civil society in governance, and improved the transparency, accountability and functioning of the Government. UNDP also contributed effectively to further promoting the decentralization of government functions by supporting the approval of the Decentralization Strategy and Action Plan. UNDP has shown flexibility in the delivery of interventions, adapting its support to the country's changing needs and priorities. It has played an important role in promoting the protection

of human rights and supported the institutional strengthening of national stakeholders. UNDP's contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women achieved important changes at the institutional level. Its efforts to promote the advancement of women in politics, however, did not produce the expected results.

Limited national commitment at the top level and cultural resistance have partly affected the effectiveness of UNDP's interventions.

UNDP effectively supported the authorities' efforts to promote rural development through policy and organizational capacity development interventions and contributed to the creation of employment opportunities in rural areas. UNDP supported the establishment of a modern vocational education and training system in agriculture, addressing knowledge gaps through agricultural extension or consultation services. Initial results appear promising in terms of employment and enhanced agricultural productivity.

In the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, UNDP reinforced the capacity of civil society organizations to deliver services, responding to important health and education needs. UNDP also played an important coordination role among development partners and helped maintain dialogue between the Georgian Government and Abkhaz de facto authorities. Anecdotal evidence points to enhanced social cohesion contributing to peace and stability, although work has been constrained by the political context and the limitations placed on the country office's ability to work with de facto authorities.

UNDP substantially increased the environmental data collection and management capacities of government institutions. Collected data and information are being used to a varying degree for reporting and evidence-based decision-making. UNDP contributed to reducing greenhouse gas and hydrochlorofluorocarbon emissions by supporting

government policies and measures across various economic sectors. The results of the pilot projects will need to be scaled up in order to promote a significant change, within the framework of a national policy on energy efficiency and renewable energy. In the area of disaster risk management, UNDP contributed to enhancing flood resistance in the Rioni River Basin, enlarged the surface area covered under the protected area regime, and promoted alternative opportunities for people whose livelihoods depended on natural resources in protected areas.

Overall, UNDP has implemented a number of complementary projects, within and across thematic areas of intervention. There are some good examples of cooperation among projects that have enabled the country

office to generate synergies and efficiencies. Room for stronger collaboration exists, especially at the subnational level, where UNDP has put significant effort.

UNDP has played a leading role in the promotion and nationalization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), although significant gaps remain in the availability of data and use of evidence for policymaking. In areas where it has had significant engagement, UNDP supported national counterparts in establishing coordination structures and promoted the development of plans for action-oriented coordination. While some bilateral stakeholders advocated for UNDP to play a more active role in coordination, United Nations partners stressed the importance of a clear division of labour based on respective mandates.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. UNDP should ensure alignment of its next country programme document (CPD) with Georgia's SDG commitments and focus on the areas identified by the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support mission as lagging behind. In particular, UNDP should:

- a) Deepen and broaden its engagement in the area of human rights and gender equality, including in new areas such as the care economy.
- b) Deepen its engagement at the local level with a focus on addressing rural-urban disparities and invest in the human capital development of youth, strengthening the integration of its portfolios.
- c) Reinforce its engagement in the areas of green energy and sustainable cities at the policy level.

Recommendation 2. In preparing the next CPD, and in consultation with stakeholders, UNDP should develop issue-based theories of change against which it could map current and planned interventions.

Recommendation 3. With the approval of the Decentralization Strategy, UNDP should enhance its efforts to build the capacity of municipalities for the delivery of services at the local level and promote further integration of its portfolios.

Recommendation 4. In agreement with Georgian Government and Abkhaz de facto authorities, UNDP should extend the dialogue across the administrative boundary line beyond professionals to include decision-makers at the local level and communities.

Recommendation 5. UNDP should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation practices by adopting the following measures:

- a) Establish outcome-level indicators that reflect behaviour change.
- b) Consider expanding the population survey.
- c) Assess the effectiveness of results in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia in terms of enhanced social cohesion.
- d) Carry out more thematic or outcome-level evaluations.
- e) Continue tracking the implementation of pilots beyond the end of a project's lifetime.

Recommendation 6. UNDP should develop a long-term resource mobilization strategy and minimize over-reliance on funding from the European Union.