

Evaluation Brief: Uzbekistan

UNDP has been supporting the Government of Uzbekistan since 1993 in pursuing economic and social reforms and facilitating the country's development amid the challenges emerging during the nation's transition period. Over the years, UNDP's programme has been shaped by Uzbekistan's development priorities and challenges. During the programme cycle under review (2016-2020), the

UNDP country programme focused on supporting the Government in advancing economic and democratic reforms and strengthening and fostering civil society participation in development processes at the national and local levels. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an Independent Country Programme Evaluation of Uzbekistan in 2019.

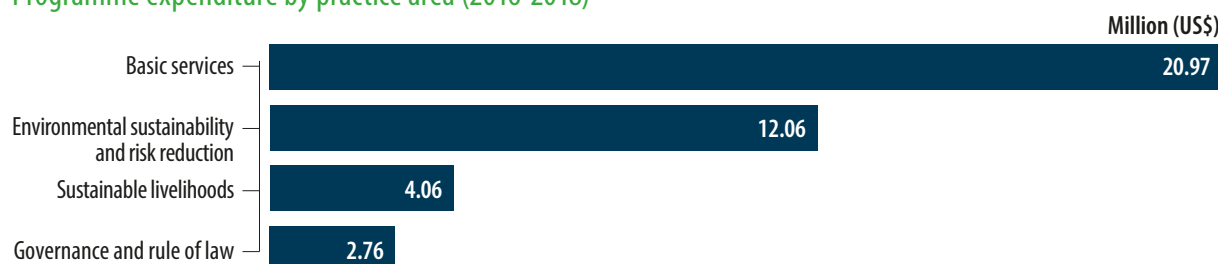
Total programme expenditure (2016-2018)

US\$39,851,451

Funding sources, 2016-2018



Programme expenditure by practice area (2016-2018)



Key findings and conclusions

UNDP's current country programme operated in a period of significant political changes that presented considerable opportunities but also implementation challenges. The broad nature of the country programme document allowed UNDP to respond to frequently changing government priorities and needs, but also affected the consolidation of efforts and synergies across its portfolio, leading to fragmentation of assistance in the absence of a clear programme theory. These challenges have had

direct implications for the achievement of country programme objectives and impact in areas of UNDP's engagement.

UNDP's results-based management (RBM) practices are weak, particularly in terms of the quality of its monitoring and evaluation systems, procedures and practices and its results frameworks. These challenges represent a weakness of the CO in practising sound RBM approaches, which also compromise the visibility of UNDP's achievements in the country.

UNDP has played a catalytic role in promoting sustainable economic growth, nationalizing the Sustainable Development Goals and facilitating a coordinated response to the Aral Sea disaster with significant contributions towards ensuring a coherent joint response through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund. Much of the work is still at an early stage to ensure stronger donor engagement in the MDTF. However, the support of the Government and UN agencies has brought significant leverage in recognizing the problem and its response.

UNDP support in the justice sector and public administration reform has been diverse and varied, with notable contributions in improving access to justice and public services and more transparency and participation in policymaking

processes. However, the sustainability of these results is still fragile and depends on many political factors beyond UNDP's control.

UNDP support within the environment and climate change reform agenda has made important contributions towards protection, mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity conservation. However, the sustainability of its work is partly hampered by the lack of most-needed regulatory frameworks, which also compromise the results of the efforts. UNDP and the UN Environment Programme's recent joint efforts in securing Global Climate Fund support have opened doors to accelerate climate financing, potentially leading to tangible environmental benefits.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1. UNDP needs to consolidate its portfolio of support. UNDP should invest time and effort to ensure that the country programme is based on a strong theory of change for each consolidated area of intervention and cumulatively at the level of the country programme. This process will provide a strategic focus to the programme and a coherent approach with synergies across projects and thematic portfolios. In doing so, UNDP should focus on substantial upstream engagement to ensure that the Government is receiving adequate support to push the reforms forward, while maintaining its strategic position.

RECOMMENDATION 2. UNDP's country programme should be backed up by a strong monitoring and evaluation framework and a mechanism for systematic reflection on outcome-level results.

RECOMMENDATION 3. UNDP should continue to support the justice sector reform

process by building on the lessons learned and best practices from its engagement with the civic courts and develop a replicable model that can be adapted and scaled up across the entire court system in Uzbekistan. This support should be ingrained in strong programme theory, to enable adequate tracking of outputs-outcomes-impacts of the assistance for citizens.

RECOMMENDATION 4. UNDP should use the Government's momentum and readiness to invest in strengthening the human rights framework and mechanisms for ensuring access to and protection of rights of most vulnerable groups, in particular, women and people with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION 5. Given the wide scope and appetite of the Government for public administration reforms, UNDP needs to ensure that its support within the sector is well targeted and defined to ensure clear focus and desired outcomes

of assistance in a limited number of areas of UNDP's comparative advantage. UNDP's public administration portfolio needs to be consolidated to ensure that it does not fall into the trap of doing too little of everything.

RECOMMENDATION 6. Building on the foundations of its existing work, UNDP should deepen its engagement in the areas tackled under environmental sustainability and risk reduction portfolio, working closely with the Government and in line with the government priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 7. UNDP should strengthen its value proposition and develop a long-term resource mobilization strategy based on a well-articulated plan of engagement with partners and clear targets to diversify its funding base and pursue it more forcefully.