

# Evaluation Brief: ICPE Lebanon

## Context

Lebanon is an upper-middle income country with a high level of human development. However, political disruption has hindered the full implementation of economic and public administration reforms, and widespread corruption and patronage remain huge challenges. Governance problems spurred spontaneous protests in 2019, which cut across social and geographical divisions in Lebanese society. Factors including challenging economic conditions, unemployment, crumbling infrastructure and huge gaps in public services such as solid waste management contributed to rising discontent, particularly among young people.

Lebanon has demonstrated exceptional commitment and solidarity to people displaced by the war in Syria, and has been a major recipient of displaced Syrian people since 2011. The country has received around 1.5 million displaced Syrians,<sup>1</sup> equal to about a quarter of the Lebanese population, in addition to the existing population of Palestinian refugees.

The refugee situation has exacerbated pre-existing political and sectarian divisions and put considerable pressure on Lebanon's public services, impacting social and economic growth. Already overstretched and weak municipal institutions are not able to effectively address the increased demand for services and resources. Deteriorating infrastructure, particularly for water, electricity and solid waste management, has become a significant burden on public resources. In addition, Lebanon has faced serious environmental challenges since the civil war, which placed the country's natural resources under severe stress.

## The UNDP Programme

The 2017-2020 UNDP programme in Lebanon is guided by the United Nations Strategic Framework (UNSF), which is itself aligned to priorities identified by the Government in the 2017-2020 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). UNDP aimed to bridge

the humanitarian-development divide by adopting a multi-pronged strategy, centred on supporting resilience-based development programming and direct support to the most affected populations. The key areas of the UNDP country programme are:

- **Conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives**, including support to enhance the engagement of youth and women in public life, foster dialogue for peace, and strengthen community policing and national-level security for improved conflict risk analysis, monitoring and response.
- **Democratic governance and institutional development**, focusing on improving institutional effectiveness, transparency and accountability for enhanced governance. UNDP emphasises inclusiveness and participation through support to elections, the refugee response, promoting access to justice, and policy advice.
- **Social and local development**, supporting stronger resilience of vulnerable communities affected by the Syrian crisis by building institutional capacity to respond to employment, basic service delivery and environmental management needs.
- **Environmental governance**, including natural resource management, biodiversity, renewable energy, and actions to promote a climate-resilient and green economy.

For 2017-2018, expenditure of the Lebanon country programme was US\$124.3 million. Of this, 44 percent (\$4.2 million) was spent in the inclusive growth and development area, 21 percent (\$26.7 million) on environmental programmes, 19 percent (\$24 million) in the governance area and 15 percent (\$19.1 million) on peace and conflict mitigation.

## Findings and Conclusions

Over the period under review, UNDP continued its support to address the most intractable development, humanitarian and peacebuilding challenges

<sup>1</sup> The 1.5 million estimate includes both registered and unregistered refugees. Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (2018 Update).

faced by Lebanon. Well established partnerships with Lebanese institutions at national and municipal levels, built over years, have strategically positioned UNDP to support the country's efforts to address institutional and structural challenges in its development and humanitarian responses.

UNDP played a key coordination role in the LCRP, together with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The LCRP approach is relevant, with an emphasis on resilience in the Syrian refugee response, but implementation has been fraught with challenges. LCRP cannot achieve its objectives of humanitarian assistance and the integration of Syrian refugees unless it also addresses underlying development challenges.

The extent to which UNDP used its comparative advantage has varied across areas of support. UNDP is a key actor in the resource-challenged energy sector, with the potential to support policy processes. However, there remain limitations in providing livelihood and employment models that combine short- and medium-to-long-term interventions, and comprehensive service delivery approaches. Given the tensions due to development challenges and overemphasis on

the humanitarian response, conflict sensitivity is yet to inform programme interventions.

UNDP is yet to engage in a concerted manner in the core governance areas critical for Lebanon's development. While support to advisory and assistance staff in government institutions contributed to timely technical and policy support, it has been counterproductive to civil service reforms and is controversial, carrying a significant reputational risk for UNDP.

UNDP support to data management for Palestinian Gatherings, as well as research and needs mapping at the municipal level, has been important in a data-challenged context. These efforts should form the basis for an institutionalized approach to development data and analysis as Lebanon moves forward with the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into its national development strategies.

While there are examples of private sector partnerships across UNDP programmes, a more structured approach is yet to be strategically pursued. This reduces the ability of UNDP to promote sustainable approaches to development.

## Recommendations

1. Building on the global mandate of UNDP, the country programme should further emphasise its core development support. The Capital Investment Plan and National Development Plan provide opportunities for engaging in key development issues.
2. Municipal-level initiatives should be consolidated to provide viable, long-term programme models. Consider promoting integrated municipal development solutions to strengthen services, improve sustainable livelihoods and bridge refugee responses and local development initiatives. There should be substantive efforts to link successful municipal models to national policy and implementation.
3. UNDP should consider long-term support to sustainable waste management solutions, beyond temporary fixes, to avert recurring crises.
4. Leverage the standing and partnership of UNDP with government institutions to engage in core governance initiatives.
5. Considering the reputational risk for UNDP and its mandate, it is important to clarify UNDP assistance to human resources and facilitation of technical staff.
6. Prioritize work on SDG sector integration, data collection and monitoring. UNDP should improve conflict sensitivity in humanitarian and development efforts and institutionalize municipal-level assessments.
7. Given the importance of financing for progress on the SDGs, UNDP should increase the pace and momentum of its private sector engagement.
8. Ongoing efforts to promote gender equality in UNDP programmes should be pursued across interventions.
9. UNDP should address constraints in pursuing a humanitarian-development nexus approach in the Syrian refugee response. As the lead agency for enabling a resilience approach, UNDP should be proactive in building momentum for long-term approaches, revisiting its programme positioning in the LCRP and reviewing its strategy based on its strengths.



