

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives of the Evaluation:

The present UNDP India's country programme (2003-2007) formulated in close collaboration with the Government of India focuses on capacity building for decentralization and poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods. This outcome evaluation (OE) for UNDP's decentralized governance and livelihoods programmes is to enable stock taking and lesson learning contributing to the future country programmes that continue to focus on these thematic areas. With a sharper focus on social inclusion and disadvantaged regions, we are also expected to provide recommendations for better linkages between these two thematic areas.

The current India-UNDAF (United Nations Development Assistance Framework) which is the planning framework for the UN in India states: "The process of dialogue with Government and broad consultations with development partners helped identify two areas of key importance for India's future development: (i) promoting gender equality, and (ii) strengthening decentralization." Linking the two, promoting gender equality will certainly make decentralization more effective as "the main objectives of promoting gender equality will be to enhance women's decision-making capability, promote equal opportunities and support policy changes." (UNDAF). Conversely, decentralization is an effective mechanism to achieve these objectives of promoting gender equality.

Relevant to this OE are two Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF) goals namely, achieving the MDGs and reducing human poverty and fostering democratic governance. Each of these goals have been broken down into service lines which represent specific areas in which UNDP will contribute to development results at the country level. Pilot projects to test new approaches and operationalise philosophy of human development are being implemented by UNDP and the projects under the two goals of reducing human poverty and fostering democratic governance are being implemented in selected States of India.

1.2 Terms of Reference:

The Terms of Reference for the outcome evaluation covers two service lines for the India MYFF. These are: 1.3: Local poverty initiatives, including microfinance and 2.6: Decentralization, local governance and urban/rural development.

Service line 1.3:

- Outcome: Gender equitable and community-driven approaches to poverty elimination and sustainable livelihoods demonstrated for strengthening public policy.
- Outcome Indicator: Government policies and programs in selected livelihoods promotion themes evolved to promote greater participation by communities and

- non-traditional partners such as the corporate sector/government guidelines empowering and encouraging marginalized groups and grassroots women's groups to implement poverty eradication programmes.
- Baseline: Weakness in integration of pro-poor and local concerns in some of the broader macro-economic policies aimed at promoting sustainable livelihoods for the resource poor communities i.e. largely top-down development programming

Service Line 2.6:

- Outcome: Enhanced capacity of institutions of decentralized governance for local level planning, service delivery, and ensuring participation, transparency and accountability.
- Outcome Indicator: Allocation of plan resources to different states under development programmes increasingly linked to the empowerment of local governance structures/increase in the number of district plans prepared in collaboration with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in partner states.
- Baseline: i) Weak capacity in rural and urban local governance institutions, including PRIs with regard to strategizing, planning and delivery of efficient and good quality social services; ii) civil servants at the cutting edge not suitably oriented for effective interface with decentralized governance.

In addition to reviewing the relevant programmes of UNDP and their contribution to national priorities on decentralized governance and livelihoods, this OE also seeks to assess the extent to which UNDP outputs and implementation arrangements have been effective for strengthened linkages between the outcomes and attempts to provide recommendations for future country programme in the two outcomes, particularly for better linkages between the two.

Some caveats are in order. The outcome evaluation was commissioned by UNDP after the UNDAF (2008-2012) and Country Programme has already been prepared, although the outcome evaluation is to feed into these processes. To that extent, this evaluation will, in its conclusions and recommendations draw similarities with what is already envisaged in the new UNDAF and country program and identify areas of difference. Additionally, though the new country program is already ready, many projects evaluated by the team have not completed their course due to various delays. Hence, this evaluation is not just about outcomes but also covers "work in progress." Finally, this evaluation is more about strategic impact, processes and relevance of UNDP's work in its projects covered by the two service lines, rather than project progress and outputs per se.

1.3 Description of the Evaluation Methodology

The methodology involved included desk review of relevant documents, discussions with key staff in Delhi UNDP office concerned with the delivery of the service line outcomes, UNDP staff concerned with the individual projects, Delhi UNDP staff involved with cross cutting themes such as gender, United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) in Delhi and field areas with the concerned projects, NGO partners involved in selected individual projects and government officials, including national project directors of the projects (the

full list of people met is annexed). Field visits were made to selected projects and selected locations. The selection of locations was based on recommendations by relevant UNDP staff. It must however be stated that the sample size is by no means adequate. For instance, looking at the two projects in the Governance portfolio – namely the PRI and A2I projects, the former is being implemented in 10 States but only one site was selected for field visit. Similarly, A2I is being implemented in 28 States, but only one Administrative Training Institute (ATI) which is implementing the A2I project, could be visited by the Evaluation team. In order to avoid a misrepresentation arising due to inadequate sample size, quarterly progress reports from each project were looked into by the evaluation team. These reports do highlight the work undertaken by the implementing agencies in some detail.

The projects examined were: Social Mobilization (field visits to Udaipur and Koraput); Rajasthan Mission on Livelihoods (discussions with RMOL staff in Jaipur); Endogenous Tourism (field visits to Samode, Rajasthan and Angul, Orissa); National Strategy for the Urban Poor (project documents plus discussion in Delhi with NPD); Skills Academies (project documents only). Capacity building of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) and functionaries of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) or EWR project, for short (field visit to Angul, Orissa); rural decentralization and participatory planning for poverty deduction or decentralized planning project, for short (discussions at Bhuvaneshwar with Palli Chetana for Mayurbhanj District NIPDIT for Kandhamal district of Orissa, and CENDRAT, Xavier Institute of Management, the State level technical support agency, discussions with PEDO in Dungarpur, with DEBATE in Delhi and with NPD in the Planning Commission); capacity building for decentralized urban governance or urban governance project, for short (field visits to Puri and Cuttack in Orissa plus discussions in Delhi with the concerned officers in the Ministry); support to operationalization of the NREGA, or support to NREGA, for short (project documents plus discussion in Delhi with NPD); capacity building for access to information (field visit to HCMRIPA, Jaipur); and Public-Private Community Partnership or PPCP, for short (field visit to Dungarpur plus discussions with field officers handling the Madhya Pradesh project, the Project Officer, UNDP and the NPD at Delhi).

This report is in six parts. In the second and third chapters following this introduction we specifically look at the outcomes relating to livelihoods and decentralized governance themes respectively. In the fourth chapter we discuss the factors which in our opinion have affected the achievement of the desired outcomes under the both the themes. While chapter five summarizes our conclusions and recommendations, chapter six details the possible inter-linkages and convergence of the programme besides listing out our over all conclusions and recommendations in the context of the emerging development trends in India.

Chapter 2

LIVELIHOODS

2.1 Theme outcome and constituent projects

The stated outcome towards which efforts under the livelihoods theme of UNDP's 2003-2007 country program have been directed is the strengthening of public policies (that impinge on livelihoods) through the demonstration of gender equitable and community-driven approaches to poverty elimination and sustainable livelihoods. Clearly, while the intent is to influence public policy, there are a number of qualitative dimensions to the kind of influence that have been identified as important, including gender equity and community involvement. As such, the frame for assessing progress is multifaceted.

Six projects have been implemented towards achievement of this stated objective – the Social Mobilization project (SM), the Endogenous Tourism Project (ETP), the Rajasthan Mission on Livelihoods (RMOL), the Jal Bhagirathi Foundation project (JBF), the National Strategy for Urban Poor project (NSUP) and the SKILLS project. The NSUP has two components, the National (NSUP-N) and National Capital Region (NSUP-Delhi). These projects are the means through which UNDP has endeavored to achieve the desired ends, and in evaluating the thematic outcomes, it is important to understand how the different projects have contributed to the achievement of thematic outcomes. Projects were therefore studied (though not in detail) in the process of evaluating the thematic outcomes. However, given the number of projects, project sites/ locations and project partners, it was not possible to adopt a survey or sampling approach in the time frame of this evaluation. We therefore built our understanding of each project from the project documents, fact sheets, project review or evaluation reports (where such had been done), visits to one or more project sites and discussion with Project Directors, UNDP project and program staff and project partners, adopting a case-study approach. For the SKILLS project most of this has not been possible, so our understanding is based only on the documents provided to us by UNDP.

While our understanding of how projects work and assessment of their progress towards project outcomes has provided insights into the why's and how's, in this chapter we synthesize our findings and discuss them in the context of the overall thematic outcome. (See above). To supplement/ substantiate our observations, a brief summary of our assessment in each case has been annexed in this report (Annexure), along with short descriptions of the project design, targeted outcomes and the partners involved.

2.2 Relevance: Livelihoods in 'India Shining'

Despite decades of state and civil society effort, and accelerating growth in the last, poverty reduction remains a pressing and seemingly intractable task in India. Almost one-third of Indians still live with entitlements and incomes well below what is necessary for two square meals a day and a dignified life – and the proportion is still over 40% in many parts of the country. Globally, India has almost 20% of the world's poor, and most

ironically, the rate of poverty reduction has slowed in the last decade, a period of unprecedented high national economic growth rates. Academics and planners may quibble over the exact figures, but it is clear that this much-applauded growth has bypassed those at the bottom of the income pyramid. The challenge has been to shift to a trajectory of 'inclusive growth'; promotion and augmentation of livelihoods therefore remains one of the central concerns in development in India even today. Innovative, multifaceted initiatives, that tackle the persistent poverty in ways that mainstream the marginalized in the growing prosperity of the country are urgently required from the state, donors and civil society actors. The thematic focus on livelihoods in UNDP's 2003-2007 Country Program, was therefore contextually relevant and pertinent, and will continue to be so in the next few years.

The livelihood program objectives of one, demonstrating gender-equitable and community-driven livelihoods initiatives, two, strengthening program implementation at the district level and below and three, action-researching new and innovative initiatives are well-aimed to address some critical issues in livelihood promotion. The persistence of poverty in India is not for lack of resources, remedies or reach. All successive governments in India have devoted significant resources and attention to reducing poverty, and there are now a plethora of programs for livelihood augmentation and support (eg, SGSY, SGRY, NREGS, DPAP, DDP, Hariyali, RSVY etc). In the last two decades, NGOs and other civil society organizations have devised innovative approaches, and extended the reach of their own and government programs to almost every corner of the country. Their work and advocacy has influenced state programs and often, enabled a better fit with ground realities. Currently, most programs are good in intent, content and mandate.

However, these fairly well-designed and well-intended programs still remain ineffective. The first issue is inadequate and/or faulty implementation. Sector-segregated and dispersed implementation, lack of capacity at the local level and administrative inefficiencies persistently obstruct success. A second issue is the top-down, inflexible, standardized and sometimes, contextually inappropriate design of programs. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition in development discourses that bottom-up, participatory design and implementation is key to program effectiveness. In particular, the inclusion of women and other marginalized groups is seen to be critical, not only on grounds of equity but also for their direct dependence and engagement with basic services and local natural resources. Most government programs are, however, still neither community-driven, nor adequately gender-sensitive – they continue to be designed at the national level and delivered through local administration or local governments. They are frequently gender-inequitable in design and even more so in implementation. In the last decade or so, many programs have been (re)designed to include beneficiary/ target groups and women in implementation, but however well-intentioned the attempts, the operationalization of newer and more inclusive approaches falls far short except in rare cases. Therefore, UNDP's focus on *demonstrating* community-driven and gender-equitable approaches and building implementation capacity at local levels is very well-directed.

The object of supporting the *development of more responsive policy* also fits well with UNDP's unique capabilities. As a multilateral partnering with the Government of India, the opportunities for mutual learning and understanding are extensive, as are the possibilities of learning from the global experiences of UNDP. UNDP is also well-positioned – as most NGOs and local administration are not – to bring consolidated field-level knowledge(s) and experiences into policy-making by initiating and documenting innovative and successful approaches.

Finally, UNDP's cross-cutting and thematic emphases on *strengthening decentralized governance* and *promoting gender equity* are particularly apt in the current country context. The 15-year old 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments that set the stage for deeper democracy, stronger local governance and bottom-up planning for sustainable and contextually appropriate development are yet to be fully realized. It is now well understood that effective service delivery and much of local economic and social development is strongly correlated with decentralized planning and governance, and therefore the latter must be energized and adequate capacity developed. Simultaneously, specific attention must be paid to including and empowering currently marginalized groups, of whom women are arguably the largest. Legislation on quotas for women, SCs and STs provide mandated frameworks for inclusion, but persistent prejudices and non-democratic traditions militate against effective change without sustained and concerted action. Moreover, the current ferment of modernization processes in the country, much due to processes of liberalization and globalization, is a promising context for working towards greater inclusion and equity.

In sum, it is clear that the decision to work on livelihoods, the choice of thematic outcome for the livelihoods portfolio, and the focus on specific issues in effective livelihood promotion are well-tailored to the specifics of the Indian development context.

2.3 Progress towards the Thematic and Project Outcomes

2.3.1 Evaluating Outcome Achievement: Sufficiency of Outcome indicators

Changes in government policies, program guidelines and implementation arrangements are no doubt the most effective indicators of UNDP's progress towards achievement of the targeted outcome. However, the link between field experiences/demonstration, and policy and programmatic change are neither simple nor linear. Policy changes happen as an accumulation and intersection of various segmental pressures, events and processes. As such, to measure outcome achievement only by the extent of policy development or change may be unrealistic. It is more pertinent to examine the kind of influence, attention and policy interest that the thematic initiatives have been able to attract, and the extent of contribution to or movement towards policy or program impact. Considered here is any initiative that is *ipso facto* designed for policy level impact; any learning from the projects that has resulted in a changes in scheme design or in administrative procedure; or, has been acknowledged by government functionaries at any level with intent to act on it even if that action has not occurred at the time of this writing.

Also, the various projects under the livelihoods theme, while ultimately aimed at promotion of sustainable livelihoods, pertain to different ‘subjects’/ programs, and are aimed at policy in different sectors and different levels as can be seen in the table below. As such, assessments of thematic outcomes will be pertinent only when analyzed with respect to the various sectoral/ subject foci. That is, *the evaluation of progress towards thematic outcomes has to be differentiated in terms of the changes (or movements towards it) in policy, programs and administrative/ implementing set up in each of these areas/ sectors, and UNDP’s contribution to the process.*

<i>Projects</i>	<i>Areas/ subjects</i>	<i>Policy level</i>
RMOL, SKILLS	Comprehensive livelihood promotion strategies	State
Social Mobilization	Income generation programs, NRM	National (eg SGSY)
ETP	Tourism	National
NSUP	Urban Poverty	National, State, ULB
JBF	Drinking Water Provision	State, National

In addition, while sustainable livelihoods for the poor is accepted as a long-term goal, *potential* towards the outcome of sustainable livelihoods such as replicable methodologies for planning and processes for learning may be evident during the life of a project. In our evaluation, therefore, we also examine if and how much such potential has been demonstrated in the projects.

2.3.2 Progress Towards Outcomes and UNDP Contributions

Examined from the perspectives described above, it appears that the overall thematic outcomes have been realized in a very uneven manner. The programs in the livelihood portfolio have had sharply varying contributions towards achievement of the desired thematic outcomes. The variation is clear when seen along two dimensions - the extent of movement towards policy or programmatic changes in the targeted areas/subjects in the last four years, and the contribution of the UNDP livelihood program towards such change where it has happened (or is beginning to happen).

In the last two years, there has been rapid advancement towards the formulation – and pilot operationalization – of a promising, state-level strategy for livelihood promotion in Rajasthan. This is a new approach to dealing systematically with the issue of livelihoods at a strategic, state-wide scale, and unique in the country. An initiative such as a State Livelihood Mission, that is a single window to strategically and inclusively analyze the range of livelihood issues in a State and move forward with a strategy and plan for pilots is significant. UNDP has been a key driver in this and the contribution of the RMOL to the process of framework building and piloting initiatives for testing livelihoods approaches has been substantial. Similarly, the JNNURM set up by the Ministries of

Urban Development and Housing and Poverty Alleviation in 2006 to support slum upgradation and relocation in urban areas is a fresh and powerful program for the urban poor, also designed to reform and improve urban governance and service delivery. While the UNDP was apparently not involved in the process of program development, the implementation support extended under the NSUP (National) project is substantial. Senior officials in the implementing ministry are also enthusiastic about the capacity-building and potential learning from project activities such as development of gender-equitable city development plans and city-specific poverty alleviation strategies. There is a clear indication that learning from the project would be suitably incorporated into the Mission guidelines. Other project activities such as initiation of a process for the development of a National Strategy for Urban Poverty by way of deepening the conceptual and empirical understanding on urban poverty in the context of a range of small, medium and large towns, development of networks among ULB officials, and institution of a National Resource Center on Urban Poverty that registers and disseminates information of successful innovations in urban poverty-eradication have also set the stage for better policy and action.

In the array of ongoing GoI programs for livelihood support, there has been little major change in the last few years. Many of the more visible ones – SGSY, DPAP, Hariyali, for example – are prone to the same issues as described above in Section 2 (inflexibility, inadequate implementation etc.) and would yield better results if these could be addressed. The Social Mobilization program was initiated in this context, to provide flexible financing for livelihood support for excluded groups in backward districts—support of the kind that will not be possible in the existing SGSY scheme of the MoRD. The purpose was also to obtain models that could be incorporated into the scheme. The *idea* was to help consolidate the mobilization work of NGO partners by way of development and implementation of microplans by women's groups, convergence, networking and policy advocacy. It was intended that funds required for plan implementation would be mobilized through convergence with ongoing government schemes and other sources, with the help of UNDP-supported District Facilitation Committees (DFCs) and UN-Volunteers (UNV) at state and district levels; the project provided the human resources and travel funds for this.

Though off to a delayed start, the functioning of the DFCs in all districts has to an extent addressed the issue of separate and program-wise implementation of the various livelihood programs. In some districts, government functionaries have acknowledged models of natural resource management undertaken by NGOs as being innovative and have incorporated some of these innovations in the NREGS (such as low cost irrigation structures instead of roads, which had become the routine initiative) or have brought these to state level attention (such as the micro-hydel initiative created under the social mobilization program in Orissa). In other cases, district officials have visited partner-NGO projects where earlier they had not taken the initiative to do so. Lessons on building convergence from this project are being applied by UNDP to other livelihood initiatives (e.g. JBF and ETP), and all NGO partners have appreciated UNDP's initiative in this direction. For women's collectives strengthened and empowered in this program cycle, enforcement of the entitlements under NREGA has been significant as well, such as minimum wages and equal pay for equal work. So has the opportunity for some partner

NGOs to network for policy change e.g. for the Adivasi Policy document prepared in Orissa. Change in the government-scheme design has occurred in one case with UNDP involvement in facilitating a dialogue at the state level on mainstreaming students of bridge schools run by NGOs into regular government-run schools.

There has, however, been little impact on the SGSY program *per se*, though some livelihoods have been generated, primarily because UNDP support helped extend the ongoing work of capable NGO partners, as an additional source of funding. Fresh approaches were not introduced, since the models of intervention by these NGOs were already successfully demonstrated prior to UNDP involvement. There is little by way of learning that is, as yet, systematically documented and that can confidently be considered for incorporation into SGSY and also attributable to UNDP effort. Also not demonstrated are good planning methodologies; micro plans that were developed were not based on established or systematic planning methods. Many are wish-lists. In any case, they are not sufficiently broad-based, failing to include other stakeholders such as village panchayats, which would have been an innovative and model-building exercise in itself.

What is however, a valuable outcome of the SM project is the *affirmation (rather than demonstration)* of the success of the empowerment approach to sustainable livelihoods i.e., the mechanism of groups and federations, particularly of women, driving the advocacy and livelihoods work at the grassroots. This affirmation should help to change the way government schemes provide support to sustainable livelihoods – for gradual building of collectives at various levels and strengthening them incrementally with flexible financing. In a wider sense, UNDP's work overall has perhaps also had a diffuse but generic influence on the direction of livelihood-support programs. The recently introduced NREGA embodies a substantial conceptual shift in the role of the government vis-à-vis rural unemployment. For the first time, the state has *guaranteed* the provision of at least 100 days of wage labor, a position responding to the understanding of livelihoods as a fundamental right of citizens contained within the right to life itself. This rights-based approach to livelihoods is itself largely a consequence of the international focus on human rights, particularly championed by the UN. Since all UNDP work in India is underpinned by this rights-based approach, it has surely contributed – in some diffused ways – to this wider shift in development approaches in India. This is no doubt a fairly indirect and tenuous connection between UNDP's work in India and the launching of the NREGS, but the influence on opinion and position must be appreciated.

The Ministry of Tourism, by launching its Rural Tourism Project that supports infrastructure development in 100 rural sites of tourist interest, is in the last few years attempting to address the task of livelihoods promotion from a fresh direction. UNDP's partnership with the Ministry, under the ETP, to provide complementary software inputs in one third of these locations is intended to demonstrate successful, sustainable models for livelihood generation through rural/ endogenous tourism. Project activities like building skills for visitor handling and guiding, craft development and marketing, home-stays and cuisines, and linkages with travel agents and tour operators strengthens the livelihood-augmenting aspect of this initiative. While the extent of livelihood creation is small, this initiative has the potential to provide models. Policy and program impact is however, undercut by the project implementation structure, which bypasses the State

Tourism Department and sidelines the Panchayat in most cases. Also not demonstrated is long-term vision for livelihood initiatives as they are not held together by strategic and business plans that identify quantitative and qualitative outcomes and how they will be achieved, with how much investment and by which partners. The result is that potential is difficult to gauge, particularly of the contribution and learning among key partners, especially of the government, which is the anchor for the projects in the long term.

The issue of drinking water availability now plaguing most parts of India, and critical in the ‘drought-corridor’, has attracted widespread efforts to develop systematic policy-based approaches and the initiation of GoI programs such as Swajaldhara¹. UNDP’s involvement in this process through the JBF project to rehabilitate defunct water-storage structures in the Marwar region and engage in policy discussion and advocacy at State and National levels is well chosen. The field level interventions under this project have been impressive both in the extent of coverage, the systematic and professional implementation and in actually addressing the critical drinking-water problem in the project villages, making them less vulnerable to the recurring droughts characteristic of the area. This has however, yet to have any policy or programmatic impact. The model of intervention is not new or noticeably innovative, but it does demonstrate some systematization in implementing arrangements, which could fruitfully inform design of programmes such as Swajaldhara. But the local-level convergences and linkages necessary for such demonstration and influence are lacking. Some potential for state-level policy influence is seen in the interaction of JBF with the Government of Rajasthan and membership of the organization in the newly-formed Committee for preparation of a Water Policy for Rajasthan.

In addition to specific thematic intent of influencing the development of pro-poor and effective livelihoods policies and programs – in selected and relevant sectors – UNDP has a stated, broader focus on developing and demonstrating community-driven and gender-equitable models of livelihood support and promotion. It is therefore necessary to assess the extent to which these concerns have been addressed, and made visible for policy impact. Also, strengthening decentralized governance has been a cross-cutting focus in the country program – and will remain so in the next, under the next UNDAF. Therefore, although this last has not been a central focus of the projects, the extent and type of attention to decentralized governance in this service line is being examined to elicit lessons for the future. We discuss these dimensions below, before identifying the factors that have contributed (or hindered) outcome achievement.

2.3.3 Participation, Inclusion and Decentralized Governance

Have the portfolio of projects under the livelihoods theme demonstrated community-driven or participatory initiatives, and inclusiveness? Has decentralized governance been strengthened or promoted? We interpret ‘community-driven’ in a generic sense i.e., initiated and/ or managed by the larger client group, mainly the poor, rather than particular groupings within the community. Inclusiveness refers to involvement and meaningful participation of certain castes and religious groups that are more marginalized

¹ Apparently being discontinued, though its original version (ARWSP) continues.

and excluded than others. Strengthening decentralized governance implies working in ways that build the capacity of local governments. Considered here are processes that allow the locus of decision-making to be increasingly with PRIs (or ULBs) and wards/*Gram Sabhas* with NGOs playing a supportive role.

While projects cannot be said to be *community-driven*, they have been participatory and community-based in many places, depending on the expertise of the local implementing partner. Where community collectives have been organized, the planning and implementation of the initiative has been community centred (e.g. *Jal Sabhas* of JBF) and these have had strategic impact. Successfully implementing work under this project has encouraged the *Jal Sabha* in many instances to plan for further village development with resources marshaled from the community, PRIs and departmental programs. Community-involvement in planning and execution of projects is also significant where NGOs with such capacity have been involved, such as some NGOs in the social mobilization project. These partner NGOs have the prior knowledge and experience of involving excluded groups so they have applied this expertise under the GoI-UNDP program as well. Yet it is difficult to say that these instances are community-driven, for as yet the groups do not drive the processes – the NGO partners do. This is perhaps a function of the relatively short project timeframes, for where mobilization has been successful, it is likely that community-groups will develop the motive power once the organizational processes are set in place. Yet the danger is that unless explicit roadmaps are prepared for NGO withdrawal, the capacities of the community organization would not get developed to a point where this can happen, as has been the predominant pattern in such cases.

Inclusiveness as a principle appears not to have been internalized across all projects in the livelihoods portfolio. Community-driven and inclusion are also not coterminous. Paradoxically, in some instances of good community involvement such as in the JBF project, some features of the operational structure and processes that focus only on efficiency and tangible outputs result in practical exclusion of women and lower caste families in the decision-making processes. However, since the project addresses their practical need for water, and they are not excluded (atleast discernibly) from accessing water from the renovated structures, they do benefit directly. A complexity has also been added in practice in the intersection of caste groups with gender. For example, in JBF, *Jal Sabhas* tend to be fairly caste/ class homogenous, and despite the fact that lower-caste women who engage in wage labour do not feel as constrained by *purdah* as the upper caste women do, they are unable to voice their opinion in mixed fora where the latter have an advantage.

Inclusion has also been significant where it has been led by NGOs with prior appreciation and interest in promoting inclusion, such as bridging of the social distance between SCs and STs in Orissa. Where such experience or attention in program design to such issues is limited, inclusion has been restricted to ensuring access of particular groups involved to services e.g. skill training courses and recording these numbers in reports (BPL in RMOL); keeping PRI members ‘in the loop’ and including some excluded groups in governance collectives such as the tourism councils where the cooperation and positive support of non-beneficiaries is important to the success of an activity like tourism.

Yet whether these inclusive instances are visible enough to influence other government or civil society initiatives is not clear. Some efforts have been made to identify, through a detailed analysis of what has worked and continuing gaps in government and NGO support, livelihood initiatives for particularly disadvantaged and excluded groups such as the Sahariyas in Baran, Rajasthan (RMOL). Since RMOL is a government institution, if these findings do get incorporated in implementation, then impact would be seen. The disabled have also been included as a category for support in RMOL and this could become a strategic advance *if* the government of Rajasthan takes it to the next level of support across several government programs. Admittedly, UNDP support to RMOL was limited to funding their Secretariat to prepare a livelihood strategy for Rajasthan, and it is the additional funding they received from the government of Rajasthan that has been used by RMOL to undertake their pilot activities. Nevertheless, comments being made in this outcome evaluation on the pilot activities of RMOL, have relevance for UNDP strategic outcomes and future requirements, since *potential* of initiatives to contribute in identified ways is also being examined in this evaluation in addition to direct results.

The design of some projects such as the NSUP directly support the decentralization objective i.e. the strengthening of urban local bodies. Where partners have a track record and women are elected or participate meaningfully in the *Gram Sabha* the move towards decentralized governance is apparent also in the rural projects. Some of the projects (such as ETP and Social Mobilization), working as they do through NGO partners and sections of the community such as women (SM) or direct stakeholders (ETP) ultimately result in the marginalization of community bodies such as PRIs and *Gram Sabhas*. Having been bypassed, the PRIs have not been much involved in the projects in most instances so have not been able to drive the agenda at a community-wide level or at the district level. Projects where such strengthening of constitutionally mandated institutions is integral to the design of the project is not evident. PPCP initiatives, for example, are not part of the overall district planning framework with the result that there is less appreciation of these initiatives among the PRIs or even the district officials than there should be.

The bypassing of PRIs actually presents a larger issue than just the weakening of such elected bodies. Most projects involve sections of the community in formations that are actually user-groups. Such formations are not problematic *per se*, since building capacities to organize for self-help, or around specific needs, is a valuable exercise. But when the issues are ‘public’ in nature – village or natural resource planning, for example – or deal with resources that are community or publicly owned, it inevitably amounts to private appropriation of public resources to a questionable extent. The PRIs are the only community-wide, representative organization at the village level, and only by working through/ with them can one credibly say that it is a *community-centered* exercise.

2.3.4 Gender Equity

Gender equality is defined in this evaluation as equality of opportunity not only for food security but to have new skills, to participate, to hold positions of power, to influence. So it is both about including processes that will lead to women having voice and being heard and also about concrete results of such processes. It is also about ensuring that program

design and monitoring practices, even when they do not have direct gender equality outcomes, are consistent with the spirit of promoting gender equality.

In the gender mainstreaming report commissioned by UNDP, the author outlines what she believes to be key goals for gender equality in the UNDP context. They are: women develop the capacity to address their needs and formulate critical questions related to gender equality (and get data that will throw light on these issues); programmatic assistance results in lasting removal gender-related impediments to the meeting of their needs, alters gender-based roles, responsibilities, power and access to resources, develops expertise on gender in relation to particular sectoral or multi-sectoral initiatives, shifts more effectively from a focus on women, as beneficiaries or target populations, to approaches that promote gender equality and includes specific M&E on gender equality in programs and policy and gender audits, perhaps with UN system collaboration e.g. UNDP-UNIFEM gender connection with UNIFEM involved in gender audits.

The results on this front have been mixed. Gender equity has been demonstrated in women's involvement in new formations. These have been significant where UNDP partners already had such an expertise prior to their involvement in the UNDP program i.e., some of NGOs in the social mobilization program. During this cycle some these NGOs have been able to utilize the funding to take further steps towards gender equity and collective strength by federating the SHGs or by implementing a new model of collectives (*mahila mandals* consisting of all women in a village rather than SHGs which are consist of selected women in a village).

Improvement in the overall availability of natural resource has also helped women's access to such resources as in the case of water where this has helped to reduce their drudgery and time spent in getting water (JBF).

Overall, women's advocacy skills have been furthered in the last programming cycle though there is stereotyping in technical skill development for women and absence of women in financial and management skill support. Women have become been involved in significant ways in monitoring the NREGS muster rolls, have directly linked up with panchayats and taken up work that panchayats were funding; they have raised issues in the panchayats relating to their needs such as drinking water, irrigation wells, roads and job cards in the NREGS and been able to enforce the principle of equal pay for equal work not just in the NREGS but also in work on private lands. Where partners have the right understanding and interest, they have also been involved in non-traditional agricultural operations.

Improvement in women's capacity to access information using their Right to Information is not seen in any project. The training institutions have not identified a strategy for such a purpose. Also not demonstrated are lessons and models incorporated in government programs or cross-learning on gender among programs, which was possible within the 4 years. We were informed that the Administrative Training Institutes, the implementing agency in the A2I project, while selecting their training participants did make an effort to ensure equal participation of women officials in these trainings. However, the experience

has been that the representation of officials is less; but in trainings imparted to civil society organizations, representation of women participants is better.

Chapter 3

DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE

3.1 *Relevance of the Outcome*

Kautilya, in his “Arthashastra”, while elaborating the traits of good governance states: “in the happiness of his subjects, lies his happiness; in their welfare his welfare; whatever pleases himself, he shall not consider as good but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good”. According to the Oxford dictionary, governance is an act or a manner of governing or the way of control. Pai Pannadiker broadly defines governance as the management of the affairs of the State and basically delivering to the citizen the rights and other provisions enshrined in the Constitution of each country which makes political, economic and social life of the citizen rich in its quality. Good governance therefore implies that the affairs of the State are so managed that the material and the social well being of the citizens is effectively looked after within a system of properly organized institutions of governance.

The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments recognize the role of local governments which are closer to the people, as the key institutions of governance especially in the context of local development and social justice. In fact, in the Indian context the local governments owe their origin to the following recommendation made by the Balwantrai Mehta Study Team in 1959: “so long as we do not discover or create a representative and democratic institution which will supply the local interest, supervision and care necessary to ensure that expenditure of money upon local objects conforms with the needs and wishes of the locality, invest it with adequate power and assign to it appropriate finances, we will never be able to evoke local interest and excite local initiative in the field of development”. The PRIs which came into existence as a consequence of this report did not then have the Constitutional sanction. Now that these institutions have become an integral part of the Indian federal structure, they have a constitutionally assigned role to play in preparing plans for local development and social justice. Their capacities need to be strengthened not only for planning for development but also for implementing the schemes designed by them as well as the higher level governments within the federal structure.

Decentralization of State functions has several implications in terms of democratization, people’s participation and management efficiency. Decentralized institutions of local governance are definitely in a better position than a national Government to cater to the day-to-day needs of the local people and to use local resources more effectively. They can also improve the capacity of the people particularly the poor to influence decisions. Institutions like the gramsabha not only make decisions more transparent but also provide a forum for participative democracy as well as accountability of the elected representatives to their electorate. An effective system of decentralization coupled with adequate devolution of financial and administrative powers to the local bodies can lead to better delivery of development benefits as well as governance.

As decentralization will remain an effective means to improve service delivery, address poverty, identify and use locally appropriate solutions in the Indian context, it deserved the continued focus in MYFF 2008-2012 of the UNDP. Gender equality through empowerment of women is an equally important area which has been consciously promoted through the Constitutional amendments. It will therefore be appropriate to keep decentralized governance and enhancing gender equality at the base of all UNDP development initiatives, right from the livelihoods promotion to better NREGA implementation or local Natural Resource Management.

3.2 *The constituent projects*

The expected theme outcome of enhancing capacity of institutions of decentralized governance for local level planning, service delivery and ensuring, participation, transparency and accountability is sought to be achieved through effective implementation of five major projects. They are : (i) rural decentralization and participatory planning for poverty reduction (including PPCP); (ii) capacity building for elected women representatives, (iii) capacity building for decentralized urban governance; (iv) capacity building for access to information; and (v) support to operationalisation of the NREGA. Though these projects got started at different points of time, all of them are expected to contribute towards achieving the desired goal of fostering democratic governance. Since these projects are the means through which the UNDP intended to achieve the desired ends, it becomes necessary to understand how these projects have contributed to the achievement of thematic outcomes which are evaluated in this report. In the following section we first summarize our observations on each one of these projects and then discuss their contribution to the overall thematic outcomes.

3.3 *Contributions of the projects to the outcomes:*

3.3.1 *THE PROJECTS:-*

1.0 3.3.1.1 *Rural Decentralization and Participatory Planning for Poverty Reduction.*

The aim of this project is to strengthen decentralized participatory decision-making and pro-poor development planning in eight poorest districts (in four States); to strengthen the fiscal 'domain' of PRIs, to develop the GramSabhas as oversight institutions and provide support for devolution policy. In addition, innovative Public Private Community Partnerships (PPCPs) are facilitated in a few districts.

The main government counterpart is the Planning Commission and a large range of partners is involved in the implementation. The district level support is provided by NGOs that have been contracted and State level institutions have been engaged for technical backstopping and facilitation of policy relevant analysis of the pilot experiences and discussions on strategies. Important strengths of this project include:

- (i) piloting a robust and inclusive process of participatory local planning starting within the Gram (ward/cluster) level and
- (ii) providing continuous training and developing the organizational capacity of the PRIs to plan.

By design, the projects on decentralized planning and the PPCP are essentially community driven. The decentralized planning process attempted under the project starts from the GramSabhas, who are expected to prepare a micro-level village plan for consideration and approval by the Zilla Panchayats. Some untied funds provided by the UNDP are then allocated by the ZPs to the GPs keeping in view the approved micro-plans. The project does not however pilot a system of devolved service delivery where the local government has discretionary resources on which basis it can plan and be accountable to the citizens for delivery of agreed services. This kind of an outcome no doubt requires the pro-active support of the district administration, which may not be uniformly available across the project States. In such cases, the NGO involved in the project will have to be pro-active and enlist the support of the district administration, particularly the elected representatives of the ZPs through relevant capacity building.

Though the design of the project envisages two equal implementing agencies in each district namely the ZP and the NGO, the ZPs for various reasons have been largely inactive which has resulted in the NGO leading the project. A close look at the micro-plans drawn up under this project in Orissa gives an impression that they were more a consolidation of wish-lists of the village communities and are not budget based. The capacity building programmes undertaken for the GP members and the Standing Committee members for resource mobilization have not apparently resulted in providing them enough skills to prepare a plan on the basis of not only the felt needs of the people but also the availability of resources. Unless this is done, the village plans cannot be integrated with the existing plans and programmes of the government departments without which formulation of a comprehensive plan for that panchayat is not possible. Keeping in view the backwardness of the districts in which this project is implemented, it may not perhaps be fair to expect best quality plans in the first few years of implementation. Hopefully, the implementing agencies will be able to ensure, with a concentrated capacity building programme, inclusion of the marginalized communities in the decentralized planning process during the coming years.

On the other hand, in Dungarpur of Rajasthan, the process has been based on a well thought out idea of decentralized planning, wherein the process was considered to be within the panchayat's responsibility and proprietorship. The NGO was working through the PRIs helping them undertake the ward level and village level planning processes in a participative manner. The variety of programmes and departmental funds were also converged to implement them in a phased manner. Livelihood promotion was attempted along with the CII local office which was implementing the PPCP. It was clear that the local partners were well tuned to decentralized planning through local governments as embodied in the Constitution Amendments. The content of the plans look more comprehensive and fairly integrated. Dissemination of experience gained in undertaking the decentralized planning process in Dungarpur can lead to a positive impact elsewhere. The key element to ensure community driven decentralized planning process under the

UNDP project thus appears to be the capacity building of the selected NGO in the process of decentralized planning.

Similarly, even though the PPCP has a strong element of community participation in it, in actual practice the entire project as of now appears to be corporate led. There seems to be little attempt to constitute planning committees at the district level to first identify the felt needs of the people, decide on priorities and then evolve methods to meet them. At present, not only the local communities, even the elected panchayats do not appear to play any role in this project. (We have been told that this has been rectified now, by developing a new approach, when this component of PPCP was extended to three more States in October, 2006).

2.0 *3.3.1.2 Capacity Building of Elected Women Representatives of PRIs.*

This project aims at developing capacities of women in local governance and strengthening women's networks and advocacy through interface with planners and policy makers. Expected outcomes of the project are the following:

- Systems created for improved ability of women members in PRIs and women's groups to negotiate their entitlements in decision-making and resources of PRIs
- Gender sensitive environment for women to function in public spaces
- Women's forum created in the project States for implementation of gender sensitive policies especially related to Panchayat functioning
- Gender orientation of government capacity building plans for PRIs
- Elected women and women's groups asserting their rights and demanding for implementation of various legislations meant for protecting their interests
- Improvement in the number of women getting elected in the general category against unreserved seats
- Improved access to services by women and men in the community
- "Status of women" reports (with gender disaggregated data) in selected panchayats as advocacy tools.

Equality of opportunity to participate, to influence and to hold positions of power is an essential ingredient of gender equality. The EWR project thus directly contributes to enhancing measures for gender equality. Glimpses of increasing gender equality, emanating as a successful break through of this project are visible in the field. For instance, the women fora mobilized as outcomes of this project have already started constituting similar fora at the panchayat level to ensure greater participation of women in palli sabhas and gram sabhas. In Orissa, a State level campaign was carried out by the members of the District Mahila Chetna Manch (DMCM) to repeal the two children norm prescribed for contesting elections to the PRIs. There have also been instances of women standing up against male resistance as in the case of allotment of construction works, timely release of payments, etc. Women have also facilitated the process of identifying promising women candidates for panchayat elections held in February 2007 with the result around 42 per cent of the candidates were women. This resulted in around 40 per cent of the seats in the panchayats going to women as against the 1/3rd seats reserved for

them under the Constitution. In addition, the convener of DMCM has been elected for the post of Zilla Parishad President meant for the general category defeating her male opponent. Gender studies in selected villages and panchayats have also been carried out for mainstreaming gender concerns in the planning process. In brief, the project for capacity building of EWRs which has already completed 4½ years have clearly established benchmarks of women's empowerment that can be up-scaled for replication elsewhere. However, this project does not specifically address the needs of the women chairpersons including those from the SC/ST and the minority communities.

3.0 *3.3.1.3 Capacity Building for Decentralized Urban Governance:*

This project aims to 'provide support to the financial and administrative empowerment of ULBs'. In concrete terms, it will work with ULBs in sixteen major cities to develop their financial management systems in order to obtain better credit rating for them and help them reengineer their business processes. It will also train staff in areas of financial management, development of project proposals, analyzing budgets with gender, poverty and environment perspectives, and help the ULBs prepare city development plans (CDP) through citizen-government interaction. The programme is closely tied to the two new major urban development schemes namely UIDSSMT and JN-NURM. The success of the programme will be measured by the cities' ability to become 'bankable' (obtain credit rating), prepare proposals that will attract funding, and manage implementation with good financial management and some degree of citizen participation.

Under this programme, UNDP will assist the Government of India and the ULBs in implementing the urban development schemes. The City Development Plans under preparation in this programme are closely linked to improved service delivery for all citizens with a special emphasis on poor. The devolution study commissioned under the urban governance project is being done for the first time in the country, to capture the link between devolution of functions to the ULBs and improvement of service delivery. The project also embarks upon supporting the accounting reform agenda of JNNURM, that strengthens ULBs in having a better financial management which will help them to prepare gender-sensitive and pro-poor budgets.

Unlike the rural decentralization project, the design of this project builds on a continuation of the predominant system of programme funding for local bodies and not a system of devolution in which the local governments are allowed discretionary funding. The programme places limited emphasis on comprehensive planning, financing and management of service delivery that will support the achievement of the MDGs within the areas of responsibilities assigned to the ULBs. While there is a provision for the programme to strengthen citizen-government interaction, including through social audits, there is only limited focus on the democratic dimension on local governance through representation as well as direct participation. Specific attempts may have to be made in the design of the project itself to involve the citizens in ascertaining the needs of the area, the strategies to meet those needs and the processes through which such strategies can be put into practice.

This project had a delayed start (November 2006 instead of mid-2005) and it may not be fair to assess the impact without even letting the project complete at least one year of existence. However, the comprehensive CDPs already prepared and approved under the JNNURM do not appear to have been appraised through either the gender lens or from poverty and environment perspectives. In this scenario, gender advocacy coupled with more targeted and participatory selection of councillors for capacity building will be necessary to bring adequate focus into the city development plans to be prepared under this project. (We have however been informed by the UNDP Governance Unit that several initiatives are underway to mainstream gender concerns in this project.)

4.0 *3.3.1.4 Capacity Building for Access to Information;*

This project builds on the experiences of a previous project, “Improving Citizens’ Access to Information” which ran during 2001-2002. Since the Right to Information (RTI) Act has been enacted by the GOI in 2005 and as there is clearly a need for a framework to operationalize that Act, this project focuses on increasing awareness and enhancing the capacities of government officials as information providers and the citizens as information seekers, and a range of other actors to facilitate the sharing of information.

The main objectives of this project are:

- Building capabilities of government officials to meet citizens needs for improved service delivery;
- Developing capabilities of citizens and civil society to demand information and creating awareness;
- Establishing institutional mechanisms at the national level for improved citizen interface; and
- Facilitating research, documentation, communications and advocacy, sharing global best practices and networking of practitioners.

24 districts in 12 States are included in the project. In its first phase, this project was implemented in 24 districts in 12 states. In June 2006, its budget was doubled from 1.5 million US \$ to 3.0 million US \$ and was extended to include additional 36 districts in 18 states. At present the project is being implemented in 56 districts in 28 states. The project has started in October, 2005, with a view to effectively start implementing the RTI Act. The focus of this project is on capacity building rather than information provision. While the project has a top-down approach when it comes to institutional capacity building and training of government officials and sensitization of public information officers, it has a bottom up approach when it comes to addressing the demand side by enhancing the knowledge of entitlements and rights at the grassroots level. However, there appears to be a lack of systematic thoughts on information delivery mechanisms. While the project is strong on training and capacity building of public information officers and government officials, it has done precious little in building the capacities of the PRI functionaries, CSOs/NGOs, media, etc. It is true that the project has limited access to PRI functionaries but its reach to CSOs/ NGOs appear satisfactory as found in several review meetings. Under this project, for the first time Government officials and NGOs / CSOs are sharing a common platform to discuss RTI Act. Our discussions in the field indicate that the

capacity building for right to information does not specifically target information dissemination to women so as to protect their rights and entitlements and there needs to be special mechanisms to reach out to women. No doubt, mandate of this project is to sensitize both the demand and supply side so that one is aware of the RTI Act. However, it does raise concerns when enough women participants are not there in training programmes. Though the project plans to prepare flip books / flash cards exclusively for the benefit of women, these efforts have still not taken off. As of now, the project is not also concerned with developing information services that would start addressing and fulfilling the existing information gap beyond awareness raising about RTI. What is perhaps needed in a subsequent phase is to move away from a purely capacity building approach towards a balance between needs driven information service provision and capacity building in usage among the broad range of various stakeholders.

5.0 *3.3.1.5 Support to Operationalization of the NREGA*

This project supports the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) in operationalizing the NREG Programme in a manner that ensures equitable outreach to the target population. Thus, the focus of GOI-UNDP collaboration is on pro-poor communication and advocacy strategies, and on capacity building at the Central and State levels in areas such as social audit, local planning and ICT-based MIS and M&E systems. Some of the significant achievements under this project include: (i) distributing NREGA operational guidelines throughout the country, (ii) disseminating suitable communication material targeted at different stakeholders through TV, Radio and print media, (iii) preparing work manuals on watershed development, integrated natural resources management, etc., (iv) monitoring and evaluation of progress in implementing NREG Programme through commissioning of research studies in selected States across the country and (v) a comprehensive social audit involving NGOs. It is also acknowledged that the monitoring and evaluation support extended by this project has resulted in identifying several implementation issues for which suitable remedial measures were initiated by the Government of India.

Though several reports from the field suggest that in the public hearings for social audit organized under this project, large presence of women is noticeable, there has been no evidence of active involvement of women in the actual implementation of the scheme. There is therefore a need to achieve appropriate gender balance in the implementation of NREGA. This is important because of the twin considerations of casualization of labour and feminization of poverty. (We however agree with the UNDP governance unit's view that it takes a considerable amount of effort and time to enhance the capacities of women to undertake such activities as noticed in certain locations where UNDP's other projects are on. This cannot be helped). As the scheme has been introduced just a year ago and the project is still in the design phase, steps have to be taken to actively involve women in NREGA so that the scheme becomes an important means for empowering women and mainstreaming gender in development.

Even the field studies undertaken with support from UNDP indicate that several female headed households and separated / widowed / abandoned women living in natal homes are not recognized as independent households and either excluded completely or included

in their natal family's job cards in most States. Given this backdrop, it would have been more appropriate to have a conscious gender bias in the communication and advocacy strategies adopted under this project. The important interventions for women to be highlighted in the advocacy programme must include the payment of minimum wages and equal payment for equal work; part payment of wages in grains, provision of worksite facilities including crèches for the children; selecting women friendly projects and labour processes etc. (We have been informed by the governance unit that there were some hurdles in implementing this project as the project implementation team was not yet in place. However, training materials such as primers and films with a clear focus on women participation in NREGS have been commissioned).

In addition, in a vast country like India, well-known for its diversities, having a common set of guidelines for the entire country may perhaps hinder and not facilitate the implementation of any scheme. The guidelines have to be area specific and should be disseminated in the local language. Capacity building programmes for the stakeholders should also conform to this requirement.

6.0 *3.3.1.6 Response from the UNDP Governance Unit*

During the evaluation we had several interactions with the staff of the governance unit of the UNDP. Our discussions revealed that the UNDP is aware of some of the issues mentioned by us earlier in this section and is already addressing them internally. We have been specifically informed that based on the experiences from the projects undertaken in the current country programme (CP), UNDP in its next CP is consolidating its work under the decentralization portfolio. For instance in the next CP, "access to information" is being integrated in the project on decentralization and will be used as a tool for ensuring accountability and flow of information to the marginalized groups especially women and SC/ST. Secondly, even though building capacities of EWRs coming from minority communities has not been the focus of the current project, this aspect is being given special attention in the next CP. Thirdly, even though the governance unit feels that expecting women involvement in the initial stages of implementation of NREGS, without the support of the CSOs for sensitization is too early an anticipation, they are hopeful that the next stage of the design phase will ensure active participation of women in NREGS.

3.3.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME:

3.3.2.1 Enhancing Capacity

The key outcome expected under service line 2.6 is the enhanced capacity of the institutions of decentralized governance for local level planning and service delivery. In the EWR project attempts have been made to build the capacity among EWRs to understand the concepts of local planning. The women fora at the cluster level do plan strategies for strengthening SHGs and service delivery under various government run programmes. Attempts are also being made to build citizen capacities in the ULBs though the results are yet to be seen.

Under the decentralized planning project, preparation of micro plans has been attempted in 100 gram panchayats spread over 18 pilot districts with technical assistance from NGOs. However, in most cases these plans could not be integrated with the district planning process. Also very little attempt has been made in these plans to identify the resources available which alone can determine the priorities in implementation, perhaps with the exception of Dungarpur where PPCP to some extent has contributed to local level planning.

A noteworthy outcome of this project has been the acceptance of decentralized planning finally as public policy by the Govt. of India which has resulted in the Planning Commission issuing detailed guidelines for decentralized planning throughout the country. While the project has reasonably succeeded in enhancing the capacities for local level planning at least in the pilot districts, it should be noted that no significant capacities have been built for service delivery either among the PRI representatives or in the ULBs. Hopefully the cluster and block level networks of EWRs in the pilot districts and the CDPs to be prepared under the Urban Governance project help in enhancing the capacities for service delivery.

3.3.2.2 Participation.

While enhancing the capacity for local level planning and service delivery, participation of the stakeholders has to be ensured. This has been achieved to a significant extent in most of the projects discussed earlier in this chapter. While participatory planning process has been initiated in several GPs under the decentralized planning project, women partnership networks established through the EWR project do participate actively in decision making cutting across age, caste, class and political consideration. There is substantial scope for community participation in urban areas through the CDPs which are being prepared under the urban governance project. The PPCPs also show signs of becoming models for active community participation.

3.3.2.3 Transparency and accountability.

The projects on capacity building for access to information and support to operationalization of the NREGA specifically aim at ensuring transparency of schemes and accountability to the stakeholders. While serious attempts have been made to build the capacities among the government officials and other stakeholders for better implementation of the RTI Act, which should serve the cause of transparency, the social audit under NREGA undertaken with support from NGOs do provide significant fora for accountability. In the Decentralized Planning project and also EWR project, the project implementing agencies have seriously attempted to ensure that marginalized sections of the community especially ST in the former project and the EWRs in the latter project are being sensitized and trained to use RTI Act for free flow of information. The women networks organized under the EWR project have in several cases ensured transparency in the implementation of government programmes. In addition, improving the financial systems in urban areas under the urban governance project can also improve the accountability of the ULB functionaries. Both the decentralized planning process and

the CDP have the capacities to enhance transparency in the preparation of plans for local development.

3.3.2.4 Outcome indicator.

Allocation of plan resources to different States under development programmes getting increasingly linked to the empowerment of local government structures has been identified as the outcome indicator in this service line. Unfortunately this does not appear to be taking place in most parts of India as the local government structures continue to be weak in those States. However, an attempt is being made by the Ministry of Panchayatiraj, Government of India by making allocations to the States under backward regions grant fund linking it with the level of empowerment of the local governance structures on the basis of a decentralization index.

Chapter 4

FACTORS AFFECTING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OUTCOMES

Several factors combine to support and hinder the achievement of desired outcomes. Some of them are internal to UNDP while others are external factors over which UNDP has little or no influence. We discuss the various pertinent factors that we have identified, below. However, it must be understood that while they individually affect progress, their combined effect is sometimes more or less than the sum of individual impact. Therefore, the uneven progress towards the outcomes is also a product of the way these factors intersect.

4.1 Choice of Projects

The selection of the various projects, as means to achieving the desired thematic outcome of policy impact through demonstration of innovative/ new models, is somewhat puzzling. While projects such as NSUP and RMOL (and to an extent, SKILLS) are clearly aimed at policy change, others such as Social Mobilization and the JBF project are surprising choices for the objective of policy or program influence. Additionally, in JBF which no doubt yields critical life-support outputs, activities for generating sustainable livelihoods are not part of the design of the project. (The only contribution is one-time wage labor). In themselves, they are important and relevant to the situation in the country, but as vehicles for strategic impact, they are unsuitable. They do not involve new or innovative models that can attract policy attention (except ETP), and there is no roadmap as to how any village-level improvements in the model or implementation effectiveness that is seen (in some cases) would be linked to policy or program advocacy. As a whole, therefore, the progress under the livelihoods portfolio is weakened.

4.2 *Project Design*

Design is an issue in many projects, the most important being a roadmap or plan for translating project outputs into policy change. Even in cases where the project was designed for direct policy impact, e.g., NSUP, which addresses a visible and politically important concern, works on multiple fronts (conceptual, practical and strategic), at multiple levels (national, state and ULB) and with multiple stakeholders (government, NGOs, communities, academic, research and training institutions, among others), the opportunity has not been fully realized. The issue is the lack of adequate attention to last-mile activities that would ensure wider learning, suitable opinion-making and policy influence. While there have been excellent outputs in the form of research products, documentation, networks, etc, it is not clear that there is systematic and widest possible publicity and dissemination of knowledge products.

In the NCR component of the NSUP, the project as implemented has veered from the direction set by the objectives of policy review and administrative reform. To an extent this has resulted from partnership imperatives where the Delhi government had specific suggestions and preferences.

While giving prominence to social audit under the NREGA project is commendable, the emphasis has to be on getting it done through the Gramsabhas rather than through the NGOs as that would ensure sustainability of the process.

In some projects (eg. ETP, SM), while partners from projects in various locations are brought together by UNDP frequently for sharing, there appear to be no institutionalized mechanisms for such sharing with government, and where the mandate to impact positive change in government programs is made explicit. Such sharing, where it is happening, is by partner volition or UNV initiative. A related issue is the lack of effectiveness of district level and state level coordination mechanisms where they exist. The district planning committees and district facilitation committees are not functioning as they should and this has also been commented upon in the review of the SM project. Much more change could have been possible if these mechanisms had been strengthened. The coordination for policy dialogue and impact at the district level has also depended primarily on the UNVs, their initiatives and capacity to raise the level and quality of interaction, learning and change.

Capacity-building programs that were needed for good planning (such as for micro plans including a variety of stakeholders in SM and ETP, or village plans including the whole community) were apparently not part of the design of the projects.

Many partner NGO initiatives, some of which pre-dated the involvement of the GoI-UNDP and were demonstrated during the current projects have not been upscaled or facilitated for discussion at state or national levels. These are principally those with advocacy implications such as the threat to tribal livelihoods from indiscriminate corporate or MNC activity in the districts (as in Koraput, Orissa). On a separate trajectory outside the Livelihoods portfolio, such advocacy has been very successful, in the case of the Rehabilitation & Resettlement policy in Orissa.

Monitoring and documentation of ground level work in many projects to obtain the policy gaps and address them during the life of the projects is also absent. Hence, the gap remained even when it could have been addressed, such as the inability of women's collectives to enforce the entitlement in NREGA of guaranteed 100 days employment. (However, we have been informed by the governance unit that process documentation and documenting best practices is one of their priority areas and in each project in the initial stage itself support agencies have been hired to monitor and document the process and lessons emerging from the project to feed into the policy gaps. Though we could not see any of these documents, we hope that UNDP will pursue this and make the best use of the documentation at the appropriate time). The fact that in some cases, as in JBF, the exclusion of certain groups is more consistent than in others, reveals that inclusion was not a variable that was being monitored closely or if it was, the partners were apparently not made accountable for it. All these point to project design and monitoring system problems.

4.3 *Inadequate Strategies*

The strategies adopted to achieve the pre-determined outcomes through the projects appear inadequate in some cases. For instance, the EWR project no doubt contributes significantly to enhancing measures for gender equality. It also enhances the capabilities of an ordinary women member to take decisions. However, this project does not specifically address the needs of the women chairpersons particularly at the GP level. In a typical Indian district there can be about 30 women GP chairpersons, and about 3 Chairpersons in the intermediate panchayats. There can also be a women chairperson in some ZPs. These people will have to work not only with the elected representatives but also with the usually male dominated bureaucracy in the process of delivering development benefits particularly to the rural poor. The governance unit of UNDP also acknowledges that the project has not specifically arranged any training programmes or other activities for women panchayat heads even though all programme activities under the project have witnessed active participation of these heads. In their view, the indirect benefits through such participation have improved their capacities to perform their functions better. Specific needs of women from the dalits / minority communities may also have to be addressed under this project.

Similarly, the decentralized plan to be prepared by the panchayats with technical support from the NGOs should have to take into consideration both the sector plans prepared by departments at higher levels of governance and also efforts like the NREGP and the PPCP and dovetail them with the relevant plans at the appropriate level. This is possible only if the coverage of the decentralized planning project is extended at least to a block if not to the entire district.

4.4 *Time Frame*

Where effective livelihoods promotion is part of the design, the time frame of the projects is too short for any models to emerge. For natural resource management (in SM), it is optimistic to expect results for livelihood generation in a short span of five years. In most

locations, the project began late so the average time the project has been under implementation is 3 years. Similar is the case in the ETP. Nevertheless, some good practices could have been shared with government at the district and state level. Certainly, in the social mobilization program, the intent of the government was apparently to use flexible financing such as that available with UNDP to demonstrate models for reaching underserved communities, which government programs could then incorporate. But the time frame for such demonstration was short and partner capacity was uneven.

4.5 *Partner capacity/ understanding*

The most critical factor in the achievement of project outcomes is, clearly, the capacity of the partners. The success of the projects of the RMOL lies in the operations being outsourced to an organization like BASIX which has a track record in livelihood promotion. It also has created its own partnerships with dormant or ineffective training institutions in the state, trying to strengthen them in the process. It has undertaken a number of pilot activities, e.g in skill training, to test the approach it has adopted for partnerships. Course, curricula, guest faculty and skill training programs are the main initiatives to strengthen the institutions and these were apparently successful in attracting large numbers of trainees.

Among local NGO partners, there appears to be a lack of clarity on what is expected of community-driven initiatives and who constitute the “community”. Is it the beneficiaries, the PRIs, or all members of a village? Lack of capacity of some partners to place a value on community-driven and inclusive initiatives and lack of capacity of others to actually operationalize the concepts could be reasons for the lack of substantial and demonstrable movement forward on this front across all the projects/locations/initiatives. Culture and class issues play a role here and proactive initiative to engage with PRIs is sometimes missing among partner NGOs – PRIs are too often viewed as ineffective and ‘politicized’ bodies – apart from the lack of knowledge of the ‘how to’.

The concept of decentralized planning needs to be understood by the NGOs who are selected to implement the Rural Decentralized Planning project. The micro level planning process consists of identification of people’s needs and local resources, formulating local development projects by matching these two, prioritizing projects for implementation in the light of resource constraints, linking the projects with various schemes and finally locating and sequencing these projects in the integrated area development framework for the district. The planning should start right from the village level. The gram sabhas have to be motivated to prepare and promote a development scheme for the village in their open meetings. These plans are to be considered by the gram panchayats and a plan for the GP will then have to be prepared accommodating the requirements of individual villages as far as possible, keeping in view the available resources for implementing these projects. These resources may include the funds receivable from the Central and State governments both tied and untied, their own resource generation as well as the UNDP project funds meant for this purpose. The plans formulated by the GPs are to be passed on to the intermediate panchayat which after incorporating GP plans into its own must send it to the ZP for similar action, before the

ZP plan is integrated into the district plan by the district planning committee. Only then this process can ensure that, in some way or the other, every local aspiration starting from the village level is taken note of. The capabilities of the NGOs to understand and implement this process will have a major influence on the outcome of decentralized planning.

Where there has been learning and/ or policy influence, it has been because of visibility of the NGOs increasing due to UNDP involvement in the program, the quality of the NGOs to begin with and their earlier good relationship with government at the district and state level (JBF, WIDA). Where there has not been learning, it is often because the stake of government officials at the state and district levels in these projects is low (eg, ETP). This stake has been affected also because of changes in government personnel during the course of the projects and the absence of the original 'promoter.'

The uptake capacity of local or community structures is sometimes an issue in itself. There is not enough capacity or understanding of their roles and responsibilities nor are PRIs empowered to seek their entitlement to decision making processes at their level.

4.6 Factors Influencing Gender Equitable Outcomes

The primary factor in determining the extent to which gender-equitable approaches have been used or demonstrated is partner capacity. Working towards equity is a slow and difficult task at best, but when undermined by lack of conceptual clarity or commitment to the task, even reasonable efforts can be misplaced. Women have no doubt benefited to an extent in every field-based project in the livelihoods portfolio. Despite these gains, there is overall a gender role stereotyping such as women being trained in cuisines and appropriate housekeeping in home-stay initiatives in tourism rather than in planning and management of the homestay as a whole. Other examples are women being a small percentage in skill training programs on the whole or 'gravitating' towards traditional tailoring and stitching courses promoted in livelihood skill development because they have not been proactively encouraged to look at non-traditional options. Similarly, in *Jal Sabhas* (or village water collectives), women's participation is negligible in quantity and quality and they are not encouraged to participate in the village assembly where decisions are taken, or to challenge the status quo. Here, because of the partner's (JBF) focus on efficiency, women are not part of the Jal Sabha executive committee, or the block-level Jal Mandal. Their substantive involvement is nowhere visible in the main activity of water provision, but in separate activities like SHGs for savings and credit.

The main reason for this lack of innovativeness and proactiveness on gender is the lack of orientation/capacity of key partners to design and monitor their projects appropriately. For instance, the government of Rajasthan in the work of RMOL, has looked at gender as special initiatives such as women and livelihoods in Baran district, which is important and relevant. However, it would have been better if they had been able to identify gender aspects to be included and monitored in specific ways in all their activities. Similarly, they have monitored the numbers of participants in skill programs but not looked at gender disaggregation, specific targeting of some categories of vulnerable women, quality of women's involvement in skill programs, their employment or job intake.

NGOs, such as FES in Udaipur, saw the partnership with UNDP as an opportunity to *begin* their work on gender in livelihood promotion so no demonstration on this front was likely during this programming cycle. The Jal Bhagirathi Foundation is focused on being a professional organization but has not promoted conceptual and operational understanding of gender issues among its own personnel.

The gender focal point in UNDP – Delhi Office – has, apparently, also not been able to go far enough ahead in mainstreaming gender concerns in UNDP projects. This is mainly because the position has just been created and she has not had time to make an impact

4.7 External factors.

There have also been a few factors, over which the UNDP has very little control, but which have contributed to the achievement levels of the desired outcomes. Prominent among them are:

- a) The establishment of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in the Govt. of India with the sole responsibility of developing and implementing policies and practices for decentralization.
- b) The creation of a fund for backward districts under the MoPR to be routed through the PRIs and allocated for their programme implementation on the basis of a devolution index.
- c) The bifurcation of the Urban Development Ministry with one dealing with urban development and the other with urban poverty eradication.
- d) The establishment of two major urban schemes (JNNURM and UIDSSMT) providing substantial funding to the ULBs.
- e) Increasing acceptance of PPPs by the Central and State Governments not only for urban infrastructure but also for general economic growth, and
- f) The limited progress made in several States in operationalizing decentralization brought about through the Constitution Amendments. For example, several States are yet to constitute their district planning committees even though they were constitutionally mandated 15 years ago.

While the contributions of some of these factors to the desired outcomes have been positive, some others have in reality posed more challenges than opportunities. No doubt, UNDP has taken a pro-active interest in supporting and strengthening the activities of the newly created ministries such as the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and in strengthening and operationalising new programmes and schemes of the government such as the NREGA, RTI Act, Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan and BRGF. However, UNDP has to be vigilant and come out with suitable responses whenever such environmental changes occur so as to further the interests of the programmes and also their outcomes.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

UNDP's focus on livelihoods, its intent of catalyzing appropriate and effective policy and programming that can strategically impact poverty in India on a significant scale, and specific attention to two key dimensions in democratic and sustainable development – gender equity and effective decentralized governance – have been perfectly aligned to the development context in India, and will remain so in the near future. The relevance of the priorities and conceptual framework within which these are chosen are unquestionable. There has also been substantial progress towards outcomes in some areas such as through the RMOL, EWR and the NSUP. Where this has been more modest, it is due to some gaps and misalignments in strategically adopting a portfolio of projects and structuring implementation so as to most effectively achieve the desired outcomes. Some are due to circumstances and events beyond UNDP's sphere of influence, but analysis of the trajectory of different interventions and the factors that have aided or hindered progress does suggest a number of lessons and opportunities for course correction and future programming. We discuss these below, relating them to UNDP's key strengths and comparative advantages.

5.1 Capitalize on Key Strengths, Unique Position: Strategize Interventions

UNDP enjoys organization high credibility with a variety of state and non-state actors; it is considered neutral as opposed to bilaterals and other multilaterals such as the World Bank, and the GoI pays attention because its long association and close relationship. Therefore it can raise key issues at national and international levels raising the visibility and outcomes. Nationally, UNDP has a unique standing and extensive access to policy makers in a way that even respected NGOs and many donors do not. It would be most effective if UNDP were to capitalize on these strengths. UNDP's location and competencies are best suited to work directly at knowledge-gathering and dissemination, wider opinion-building and policy change, *tasks which also have the most extensive multiplier effects*. With its comparatively modest funds, the key strategy is to consolidate and focus its work rather than spread it across grassroots initiatives.– therefore, focusing on *identifying, documenting, and disseminating innovations, best practices and successful methodologies, and using these as the bases for advocating policy development/ change would yield best results* .

UNDP's strategy in the ongoing Country Program, of dotting the development landscape with various small and discrete initiatives spread across States and districts, with varying durations, without a connection among them and a clearly defined trajectory towards a finite and logical conclusion has not done justice to UNDP's strategic capacity and influence. UNDP has been involved in support directly at the village level with outputs which it is not well-positioned to design or monitor and which has affected outcomes. A plethora of models for grassroots work already exist, and other donors are supporting further innovations by NGOs. What is missing is quality documentation, dissemination and elucidation through workshops organized to help government understand how these

models work and how they can be incorporated in government programs, and *most significantly, systematic advocacy for specific program or policy change*. It would be the most productive for UNDP to focus on these, more so on building skills and competencies for advocacy by organizations, building on the documented experience of grassroots work².

UNDP is well-placed to be an effective facilitator of dialogue and policy action at the National and State levels. This facilitation role has to be planned strategically and be issue-based with a road map for policy change on those issues. The availability of flexible financing notwithstanding, no new pilot projects were required or should be attempted in the future where models exist. However, where projects are innovative, as in ETP, support can be continued but UNDP's comparative advantage is provision of *technical assistance for sound strategic and business planning*. In ETP, for example, since the government is developing a large number of tourism sites, UNDP's support becomes strategic only when certain methodologies are developed for planning, inclusiveness, and collaborative partnerships. This can be carried further when there are institutionalized mechanisms for sharing and learning through facilitated workshops at the State and district level.

UNDP can also help support GoI (and State governments) develop flexible and credible methodologies for identifying technical assistance partners (rather than the rigid tender route presently adopted) enabling for example, enough time for a consortium to be put in place where single institutions do not have the requisite capacity. The negative results of this rigidity relating to partner selection are already evident in the PPCP initiatives in the new sites of Mandla, Chattisgarh and Orissa.

5.2 Project Selection – include an externally facilitated strategic planning exercise.

There is substantial scope for strengthening the portfolio of projects in terms of their efficacy in leading towards the targeted outcomes. Projects are the means/ vehicles through which UNDP hopes to achieve the desired ends, and the critical task is to identify which are most effective from among a range of possible alternatives. Given the extensive development needs in a diverse and developing country like India, very few project interventions are redundant or irrelevant. However, the question is not whether selected projects would contribute to meeting development needs of the country in some measure, but of those that will best help achievement of the – very relevant and strategic – outcomes identified by UNDP.

We are informed that there is a systematic process for project selection that includes extensive stakeholder consultations, and review and decision by UNDP's PMRB. Partner priorities, particularly in the case of government partners are also a decisive factor in this process; this is only appropriate. However, it is suggested that this process be *augmented*

² Advocacy in India is primarily by groups that are organized to lobby for resources, concessions and promotion of self-interest, such as business and professional associations – such advocacy is well-strategized and systematic. Public advocacy however, happens more randomly and much less intensively, through social and professional interaction of academic and other elites with political and policy-making elites. Skills and dedicated professional investment in this area is sorely lacking.

by an externally facilitated strategic planning exercise that would help identify the most effective and suitable options from within the set of possibilities defined by stakeholders, partners, UNDP's mandate, and the UNDAF framework.

5.3 *Implementation Strategy: Rely on Higher-level Institutional Partnerships*

In this program cycle, in investing in pilots and field interventions, UNDP's progress towards outcomes has hinged to a very great extent on partner capacities. While the partnership approach is desirable and must be continued, any process of identifying capable local-level partners can be unreliable to say the least. The risks can be avoided, if UNDP capitalizes on its strengths and selects projects that rely more on national and State-level institutional partners with proven capacities. Also the choice of NGOs as local implementing partner, while well-suited to community mobilization, is less conducive to local ownership, detailed business planning and external linkages with industry (e.g. in ETP or PPCP), all of which are central to the success of many projects. The overall contribution of UNDP to developing new models has been limited because NGO partners with demonstrated capacity, already had some flexible financing from other donors and were capable of accessing more.

5.4 *Levels of Intervention- focus on State and district levels*

Focusing on strategic and policy levels also implies primarily working at the State Level for most effectiveness. Most of UNDP focus areas fall within the purview of State governments (figuring in the State list) or jointly with the GoI (Concurrent List). Both decentralization and Livelihoods programs of the GoI are implemented at the district level, but are channeled through State governments. UNDP would therefore be most effective if it *focuses its energies on policy at the State level and implementation arrangements at the local (district) level*. The strategic levels for effecting change are the state and district levels since the officials there are closest to the ground. This has already been demonstrated through the leveraging of support for the RMOL from the state government of Rajasthan where an entire committee headed by the Chief Minister is helping RMOL with money and expertise. While scheme changes occur at the national level, interim learning and support is best furthered at the state and district levels. This is strategic because the views and experience of district and state level officials of practices by other partners on the ground carries more weight as far as the national government is concerned and they are likely to be listened to more rather than the NGOs directly. Hence policy change at national levels is more likely to take place through changed perceptions and experiences at the district and state levels, manifested in their interface with PRIs, NGOs etc. Apart from strengthening consultative and planning mechanisms, UNDP support could be in the form of quality UNV presence and operations in the district to provide the critical interface. It should consider partnering with State governments and work through State-level offices. Reform of implementation structures and local governance arrangements at district-level and below also depends on successful advocacy at the State government level, therefore it emerges as the best focal point. One person (UNV) *can be stationed at the district level* for developing adequate understanding of implementation bottlenecks at local levels and supporting capacity-building and convergence processes.

5.5 *Design of projects: More detailed project design, realistic timeframes and appropriate monitoring*

Along with augmenting project selection processes, *project design, timeframes and monitoring arrangements also need more detailed attention*. Roadmaps must include the last-mile activities which are often the most critical for outcomes to be realized. The most common lacuna in the current portfolio of projects has been the lack of a strategy for policy influence. Even where intended, this gap, together with inadequate timeframes that do not leave much time for much additional reflection, strategizing and planning once implementation has begun, hinder the achievement of desired project outcomes (e.g., SM, ETP); in designing future projects, timeframes must be realistic. Rather, it might be more appropriate if projects are suitably tailored to fit the UNDP program cycle, with realistic floats for unforeseen delays. More modest but well- mapped projects can deliver better results than ambitious ones that have to be scaled down or curtailed due to delays from factors beyond UNDP control. Additionally, fairly detailed roadmaps must be incorporated for gender-equitable and inclusive implementation, which include description of activities and processes as well as appropriate indicators for monitoring.

5.6 *Policy Road Map: Carry forward emergent issues;*

Before the next MYFF cycle begins, GoI with UNDP's support should develop the road map for policy support proactively. *Certain issues that have emerged through work over the last 3 years in empowerment and social mobilization should be carried forward in a different way*. Specifically, critical issues that have come to the fore in certain locations should be taken up for more strategic work that can build on the partnerships forged and understandings developed in the current cycle. For example, given the policy baseline of inadequate support and mechanisms for tribal communities to be part of new industrial policies affecting their livelihoods, it is important to consider how to take further the gains of the last MYFF cycle to secure tribal livelihoods (since there were many tribal dominated locations in Rajasthan, Jharkand and Orissa where the social mobilization program was implemented). This can be undertaken through policy level workshops at the state level involving NGO partners already involved in the projects so far as well as others. The adivasi policy document drafted by these NGOs mentioned earlier and the constitutional safeguards provided under the Panchayats (extension to the scheduled areas) Act, 1996, could be the base documents for discussion at these workshops with government. *The MLA forum developed in Orissa (outside the livelihoods theme), which is a very promising platform, should be replicated in other focal states to prepare the ground for such advocacy work*.

For the next MYFF, the pilot initiatives should be stakeholder consultations to identify policy gaps and have a 'project' to develop a road map for solution and this "Tribal Livelihoods Policy Development and Implementation Project" should be monitored and documented for learning. This project should include, in particular, PPCP requirements and safeguards that the corporate or private sector should adhere to and which can be monitored by affected groups. PPCP and tribal livelihoods can also be assisted if there

are forums for dialogue created where all the partnering agencies can sit together and develop a strategic ‘compact’ agreement for each initiative. Here the baseline clearly is inadequate understanding of pro-poor partnerships and absence of regulatory mechanisms that safeguard the interests of the poor in a rapidly growing economy.

5.7 Gender Roadmap: additional focus on specific initiatives and sectors

To improve the gender equity aspects of the work, the proactive identification of strategic gender requirements as part of a framework for the initiative would be more effective in particular initiatives/sectors rather than only vetting individual projects from a gender lens *after* they have been designed in draft. For example, identification of particular categories of vulnerable women such as women-headed households should be done for appropriate support particularly under NREGA. More detailed planning and focused effort must be applied to including women in decision-making positions in the PRIs and non-traditional work. This can be done through developing incentives for women to opt for non-traditional skills, which can be built into the design of skill training initiatives regardless of location or project. Building awareness among parents of girls of non-traditional skill benefits will be needed (to encourage them to support girls to opt for training in non-traditional skills) and should be built where necessary. Where single-window opportunities for capacity exist, strategic programs for gender sensitization should be devised e.g. for the RMOL staff and the members of the RMOL committee. In the first instance, the committee, which, at present, consists of all male members barring the woman Chief Minister, should, include at least one or two additional relevantly qualified women. For advancement of strategic gender objectives, one or two members with expertise on gender should also be included. This has to be done before the next MYFF cycle begins, since many pilot projects by RMOL have already begun or are on the anvil.

5.8 Partnerships: clarity on roles and modalities; building capacities

While GOI and selected State governments through UNDP has engaged in strategic partnerships with NGOs and the private sector, these need to be built on. NGO partners consider UNDP assistance valuable to raise their visibility vis a vis government and CII has acknowledged the importance of UNDP in encouraging them to think of meaningful involvement of the corporate sector in creating wealth at the bottom of the pyramid and in not looking for short term gains. RMOL has also linked up with the private sector in various livelihood initiatives in Rajasthan and their experience in building relationships with the private sector is mixed. *In the light of this, the documentation of the Dungarpur experience of PPCP and the RMOL experience with other types of private players should be done followed with a stakeholder workshop at the state level in Rajasthan BEFORE embarking on new PPCP initiatives in other states. Much more conceptual clarity needs to be developed about the desirable and effective roles of various actors, the nature of corporate investment in the area (as a CSR initiative or business proposition?) and the modalities of the partnerships.* The experience of Dungarpur and RMOL has many important lessons, not the least of which is the commitment of the private sector to creating employment for the local poor (an important poverty alleviating outcome which seems to be absent in Dungarpur). Other lessons are the need for private sector plans to

be part of the decentralised planning exercise to be undertaken at the district level, since PPCP is *only one* mechanism for implementation and not an end in itself, and the need to choose the right partner for the work with appraisal of their plans (preferably with the extensive inclusion of elected local bodies) for their business activities in the district. As already mentioned, safeguards and regulatory mechanisms to ensure that plans are adhered to and the investments of the government, PRIs and local communities are appropriately recognized and rewarded cannot be overemphasized. UNDP's comparative advantage also lies in working with State governments to identify non-corporate private sector players as well to give a boost to the wealth creation of smaller players at the State level. This can be doubly effective with those operating at the district level since they have a locational advantage and are likely to have a bigger stake in working things out with partners at the operational level, which is less likely in the case of large national and multi-national companies who may have better options.

5.9 *Local-level Partnerships: Build Capacities*

Though we recommend that the main thrust of the next country program should be on knowledge-building and sharing and policy influence, wherein partnering with reputed knowledge institutions and NGOs at state and national-level would be most productive, there are areas where additionally, UNDP support for village-level interventions would be most strategic and useful. One of these is building capacities of PRI and NGO partners in comprehensive perspective and action planning at the Panchayat (and higher levels). One of the weakest links in project operationalization has been that village planning processes (in SM, ETP, and also the decentralized planning project) and outputs have been very weak. Capacity building on this front is very necessary and urgent, and along with technical training, action research and guided application of learnt skills is also necessary at the village level.

The necessity for this also emerges from the larger trends in development action in the country. The most significant – and particularly relevant for local livelihood generation – is *strengthening decentralized governance by developing methodologies and capacities for bottom-up district planning*. Decentralized planning has for decades been recognized and advocated by development theorists and practitioners alike, as being the most effective means to address development needs, including basic services and livelihood generation. With the PRI and Municipal legislations, it has also been constitutionally mandated since 1992-93. Yet operationalization is notable by its absence. However, increasing GoI pressures on State governments are forcing steps towards it, and this promises to be the single most exciting and fruitful movement towards effective development in the next five years. It is also the area where the most support is required, and the promise can only be realized if (a) there is continuing advocacy and attention to it from all corners, (b) if adequate capacities and robust methodologies can be developed. The latter is the more critical, for despite by-now-extensive pilots and microplanning exercises (many of which are misplaced attempts), there is as yet very little conceptual or practical clarity on the process. And without some methodological understanding, capacities can hardly be developed.

UNDP can be a significant driver in this process – in supporting the development of methodological knowledge, capacity-building and advocacy – because of its unique positioning and capacities that we have noted earlier. Most important in this context is the ability to marshal the best technical expertise and international experience for the task. At the core, effective planning (participatory or otherwise) is a technical exercise, and in our opinion extensive efforts so far in the country have not succeeded because of a lack of appreciation and competence in this core. While community mobilization and discussion is effectively done by the NGOs and others involved in the task, for that is their *forte*, they have not been able to bring the skills necessary to the task of actual plan preparation. While a detailed picture of what UNDP could do, and how and why is beyond the scope of this evaluation, *it is our strong recommendation that UNDP should focus intensively and extensively on building technical and administrative capacity in decentralized planning in the next country program*, for that is the single greatest effort currently necessary for sustained livelihood generation at the local level.

Chapter 6

INTERLINKAGES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 *Interlinkages and Convergence of Programs*

Adoption of multisectoral approaches and convergence in project implementation is an important dimension identified in UNDP's 2003- 2007 Country Program and reflected in project documents under the Sustainable Livelihoods and Decentralized Governance themes. This is a dimension that has been weak in the development interventions in India, particularly in the larger government programs³. Development programs and projects continue to remain sectorally – therefore departmentally – separate, though paradoxically, convergence and multi-sectoral approaches are emphasized in most GoI program documents and approach papers (including those for the 11th Plan). The intention in UNDP's Country Program, of demonstrating how programs and projects can be interlinked and converged atleast at local levels, so that they work synergistically and yield better outcomes than they could independently, is therefore particularly commendable. If it can be successfully demonstrated and program implementation at the district level and below can be influenced, there is a potential for a significant increase in effectiveness.

6.1.1 *Understanding Inter-linkages and Convergence*

For this evaluation, we interpret inter-linkages to mean relationships between the conceptual bases, stated objectives/ outcomes or operational designs of different projects or thematic programs. Where such exist, and are capitalized upon, efficiencies and effectiveness can both be increased. With this understanding, it was productive to examine whether in projects/ programs that are related conceptually or in their objectives, first, this relationship was taken into account in the project designs, and second, if it evolved during implementation, whether designed or not. The intent is to assess if the project or thematic outcomes were strengthened where such linkages were capitalized upon, or the opportunity was missed though the potential existed, to draw lessons for the next round of programming.

We interpret convergence to mean the pooling or bringing together of interlinked projects or programs (i.e., those with the same, related or mutually supportive objectives or implementation trajectories) to build synergy. Converging interlinked programs can dramatically strengthen the desired outcomes. In the context of this evaluation, three kinds of convergence can be examined – convergence and coordination between related UNDP projects under each theme or between the two themes, convergence with

³ Many of the more successful NGOs have, on the other hand, adopted such approaches in their geographical areas of operation, and been able to demonstrate transformation of the local conditions in a timeframe.

government (or other donor) programs with same or related objectives in the project locations and convergence of various related and complementary UNDP initiatives/projects in the same geographical area or administrative jurisdiction, for maximising visibility.

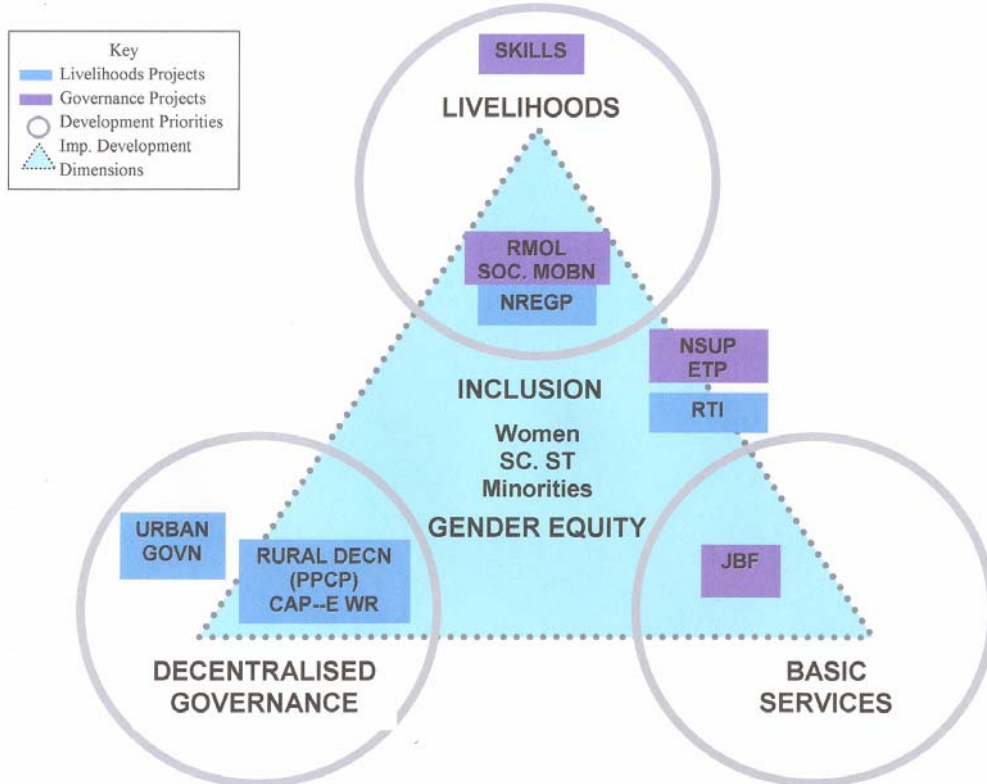
6.1.2 Conceptual and Practical Interlinkages

The inter-linkages between the two themes under evaluation, both conceptual and operational, are particularly striking, and convergence would be exceptionally fruitful, for their objectives (and components) are inextricably linked and mutually synergistic. It is now widely understood that decentralizing governance is the most effective way of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery and poverty alleviation, and making development processes institutionally and environmentally sustainable. This is in addition to its intrinsic promise of deeper democracy. It is both a means – for basic services and livelihoods improvement, better NRM, greater inclusion, participatory and context-appropriate planning, reducing corruption, increasing transparency and accountability, etc – and an end in itself, for its democratic and participatory potential. All these desirable outcomes are premised on including local citizens in planning and governance, so that their local knowledge is brought into planning and program design, their needs are appropriately and effectively addressed and the poor are better targeted. The inclusion of marginalized groups such as women, SCs and STs, is particularly important as their involvement is essential to prevent perverse outcomes of localization, such as increased corruption, persistence of discriminatory practices and capture of public resources and decision-making processes by local elites. In fact the degree of inclusion of marginalized groups can serve as an excellent indicator of successful decentralization, particularly in the less developed parts of India where social and economic inequities and multiple and complex dependence relationships in localities severely limit informed citizen participation.

The constitutional mandate of decentralized planning and stronger local governments in India rests on this understanding. However, appropriate methodologies, administrative arrangements, governance systems and capacities at various levels militate against an easy transition to local self-governance and multi-tier, bottom-up planning as is envisioned. On the other hand, *the portfolio of projects under these two UNDP themes, and the outcomes they are directed to, accord excellently with this vision. This is evident in the multifaceted and multisectoral approach embodied in the selection of themes and projects; all the projects under the two themes are closely aligned with this framework, interwoven and mutually reinforcing (see figure 1). Therefore, UNDP's efforts have exceptional potential to aid the process.*

We comment on the realization of this potential in the two themes in the subsequent sections.

FIGURE 1: Relationship between the Themes, Development Priorities and Projects under both Themes.



6.1.3 Inter-linkages and Convergence in Design and Implementation

While we find the two themes and the portfolio of projects under them strongly interlinked and complementary, this does not appear to have been factored into the project designs. However, it has evolved during implementation in one instance – the Decentralized Planning and PPCP initiatives in Dungarpur. This is somewhat puzzling given the clear complementarities and strong interconnections between some projects – ETP, RMOL and SKILLS; NSUP and Urban Governance; Decentralized Planning and Capacity-building for EWRs for example. While we recognize the impediments beyond UNDP’s influence – some of which we outline below – that would have obstructed integration or a high level of coordination between themes/ projects, even a low measure of such would have helped resource savings, improved efficiencies, had more extensive impact and stronger outcomes. Most importantly, it would have demonstrated the positive yields from such coordination to government functionaries.

On the other hand, there is a clear intent expressed in some project documents or implementation designs for convergence of the project with related or supporting government programs in the same location (eg, the SM project, ETP, Decentralized Planning and PPCP in Dungarpur). In such projects, efforts have been extensively made in this direction across project locations though the degree of success has varied. Also, the platforms/ modalities that have been developed in this process, for bringing together

government officials of various departments (with or without NGOs) at district levels are a good demonstration of how processes to converge government programs can be built, and the impact they could have on outcomes. These efforts have the potential to influence administrative/ implementation arrangements of programs at district level and below if ways can be identified to institutionalize them.

Convergence of government programs have also resulted from ‘demand-side’ efforts by the community or local level organizations that have been crafted in some projects, and this is the more significant and valuable outcomes of these projects. The cluster-level women forums formed in the Capacity Building for EWRs for example, plan strategies for strengthening SHGs and service delivery under various government run development programmes. They also function as centers for women members, PRIs and development functionaries to exchange information on new Guidelines, Government Orders, circulars and notifications for PRIs and various government programs. In many ETP locations, the Village Tourism Councils (with NGO partner support) have mobilized resources from different departments or programs to build necessary infrastructure. *Jal Sabhas* of the JBF project are doing the same for extending the water harvesting and storage possibilities in their villages.

Yet in many instances where it could have been very productive, such convergence is neither planned nor attempted. For example, the demonstration effect of the EWR capacity building project would have been multiplied and a strong influence on policy could have been made, if it had been linked or converged with the State training programs for EWRs or MoPR's Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan program. (We are happy to learn that action has already been initiated by the UNDP in this regard, with a brain storming workshop in April 2006 in collaboration with MoPR to work out these linkages.) In the JBF and SM projects, convergence of the village microplanning exercises with the Panchayat allocation process (since there are as yet no real ‘planning’ processes undertaken in Panchayats) would have had led to enormous learning towards comprehensive village planning.

Convergence of coterminous projects in the two portfolios, even those which are exceptionally complementary (e.g., NSUP and Urban Governance) is almost completely missing, save for the Dungarpur experiment. This lacuna has seriously undermined the achievement of desired outcomes in such areas. For example, the capacity of the selected ULBs would be made far stronger, and a much more visibly demonstrated model for ULB functioning could have been achieved if the NSUP and Urban Governance projects were coordinated, and implemented in the same locations. In Dungarpur, the only instance where such convergence has been attempted (between the Decentralized Planning and the PPCP projects) it evolved during the project implementation, and has provided some demonstration of partnership possibilities to the district government, and valuable lessons for future UNDP programming.

This last kind of convergence – ‘area convergence’ of complementary projects in one location – is the most desirable, given the close conceptual and practical linkages between the two themes and almost all the constituent projects under them. Yet this is sadly lacking across the board, except in the Dungarpur case. As such, opportunities to

effect visible change in the 4 years of project time so that the demonstration effect – and potentially, policy impact – is substantial, have been bypassed.

6.1.4 Issues in Achieving Convergence and Recommendations

We can perceive that at least three things militate against project convergence and coordination, and therefore ideal situations cannot be easily achieved in this respect. One, the various subjects of project intervention fall within the purview of different Ministries, who are (and have to be) the nodal partners at the Centre. Two, responsibility for project coordination within UNDP is spread across different groups/ divisions. Convergence with government or donor programs in project areas is difficult to achieve when most projects are administered and monitored from the Delhi UNDP Office, under which arrangement the information base and continuous follow-up action required at the state/district/local levels cannot be appropriately provided. And converging various related projects within a selected jurisdiction – say, districts – may be affected by political priorities.

However, we still see fairly robust possibilities for convergence at the local level, if one, UNDP could restructure the internal project-handling arrangements, and two, take a multi-sectoral, area-development approach to implementation. Having to work through different nodal ministries/departments does not necessitate that internally; it may not also be possible for UNDP to redesign its organizational structure just to facilitate better project implementation. But even in the absence of this, it would still be possible to converge related programs in UNDP's focal States within selected administrative jurisdictions. *Even if fund flows, policy directives and implementation channels are separate, the related projects can all be implemented in one area.* We therefore recommend the following, to capitalize on inter-linkages and build the convergences necessary for more successful achievement of outcomes.

6.1.4.1 Area-development approach: Converge all related programs/ projects in selected districts.

For the next country program, we recommend that UNDP should select 2-4 districts in each of the seven focal states, so that a visible difference can be demonstrated in the areas of its concern within the 4 years of the next Country Program cycle. To do this, the best way is to implement all appropriate projects within selected districts. The approach should be multi-sectoral, integrative and *convergent at the district level and below*, though it may be sectorally split in various departments./ ministries at the State or national level. It would be most useful to select districts in each State with different economic and social profiles so that both generic and contextually differentiated methodologies/ systems could be identified.

6.1.4.2 Decentralize project administration : Set up State Coordination Cells/ Offices and District Facilitation Cells

Program and area convergence may be best achieved by setting up State-level Coordination Offices, and a Facilitation Cell – at least one UNV – at the district level, in selected districts, perhaps in the office of the Zilla Parishad or District Planning

Committee. We are aware that DPCs are not yet operational in most states, but the process has been energized by the recent Planning Commission directive, and can be expected to develop in the very near future. In fact, we suggest that the UNDP should advocate and support the formation of this important body, in dialogue with the governments in its focal States.

We have pointed out before (see Chapter 2) that UNDP is best positioned to work towards making governments more responsive, through documentation of successful models (of which there are plenty in many of the sectors the projects relate to), and identifying obstructions and contentious issues for resolution at the policy level. The suggested structure will be most productive for this process, as most of the relevant subjects are in the State (or Concurrent) list⁴. We have also suggested that in the projects which are to be implemented at the village/ Panchayat level, the appropriate PRI should be the prime partner, and the district level (UNDP) cell would be best placed in the ZP to provide technical support and handholding. This will also enable better information and knowledge of ground level realities that will support policy advocacy as well as help in selecting appropriate partners at the local level.

6.2 Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

In the earlier chapters we have discussed our conclusions and set out recommendations for future UNDP programming in India, that emerge from the efforts under the Sustainable Livelihoods and Decentralized Governance themes. Above in this chapter we have discussed the same in the context of inter-linkages and convergence of themes and projects. We now draw together our recommendations, setting them in the context of the emerging development trends in India and strategic opportunities for intervention by UNDP:

6.2.1 Emerging Trends and Priorities

It is estimated that by 2030, developing countries' share of global output will rise from a fifth today to a third. Factories in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu will be manufacturing for the planet. Average per capita income in the developing world will treble to \$11,000. Incomes in developing countries will still be a quarter of the levels in rich countries, but the gap will be narrower than ever in history. By 2030, the absolute number of people living in deep poverty – surviving on less than \$ 1 a day – will fall to 550 million from today's 1.1 billion. This will happen despite the world adding 1.5 billion people to its population in the next 25 years.

Lurking in the population data is India's reality check. A fifth of all those born between now and 2030 will be Indian – a full 320 million people. They will live in the world's most populous country, a somewhat prosperous one no doubt, but also one marked by extreme inequalities. By 2030, without intervening government policies, India may experience an increase in inequality because of the skill-intensive nature of its growth

⁴ These are the lists in The Constitution of India that mention subjects that are within the purview of the Central, State, or both Governments.

path. Much of this can be attributed to new technology, the rising demand for skilled workers, and a disinclination to employ unskilled people.⁵

The PM's recent pronouncements are on agriculture and skills as well as inclusive growth so that benefits of growth are more equitably distributed. More responsibility for this is placed on the private sector (CII Speech).

“Indian industry must, therefore, rise to the challenge of making our growth processes both efficient and inclusive. This is our endeavor in Government. It will have to be yours too and I seek your partnership in making a success of this giant national enterprise. If those who are better off do not act in a more socially responsible manner, our growth process may be at risk, our polity may become anarchic and our society may get further divided. We cannot afford these luxuries. I invite corporate India to be a partner in making ours a more humane and just society. We need a new Partnership for Inclusive Growth based on, as what I would describe as, a Ten-Point Social Charter.”⁶

Making growth more inclusive requires actions in three areas: expanding opportunities and the capacity to participate on fair terms in a thriving economic environment; improving the effectiveness and coverage of social programs to protect the vulnerable; and reducing civil and political conflict by using rapid growth to tackle the underlying disparities that put marginalized minorities or political factions in deep conflict⁷.

Among approaches to development intervention, partnerships with NGOs that are concerned with some of the negative impacts of growth as well as with helping the poor to take advantage of growth opportunities, are planned to be strengthened. A recent document released by the Planning Commission states:

“The country faces a number of complex problems that require adaptive, multi-sectoral solutions where sustained social mobilization is particularly important. These include poverty alleviation, skill promotion, entrepreneurship development, empowerment of women, population stabilization, combating HIV/AIDS, managing water resources, elementary education and forest management, to name a few. Such areas urgently require strategic collaboration between the Government and Voluntary Organizations (VOs), through national level programmes that are long-term in duration, and utilize multiple strategies, methodologies and activities to achieve their objectives. The Government will identify national collaborative programmes to be implemented in partnership with VOs. Each national collaborative programme will involve a finite set of reputed, medium or large VOs with a proven track record, and the ability to work on a reasonably large scale. The Government will ensure that such national collaborative programmes are given due importance in Plan documents”⁸.

⁵ India: Today's Policies Decide the India of 2030 By Shantayanan Devarajan and Richard Newfarmer, The World Bank Group, Oped Special to the Economic Times India , December 18, 2006.

⁶ Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's address at the Confederation of Indian Industries Annual General Meeting – 2007 “Inclusive Growth – Challenges for Corporate India”, May 24, 2007, New Delhi.

⁷ Can South Asia end poverty in a generation? World Bank, September 2006

⁸ Voluntary Action Cell, Planning Commission, GOI, National Policy on the Voluntary Sector, May 2007

6.2.2 UNDP frameworks and priorities

The following key statements from the new India UNDAF 2008-2012 show the UNDP priorities in the coming years.

“The new UNDAF “carries over” the emphasis on **gender** and **decentralization** from the previous framework – as this is work in progress and requires continued and further attention. It also attempts to address **inclusion, effective implementation and emerging issues** as priorities. It recognizes the **district as a special unit or level of governance** that presents a challenge as well as an opportunity.”⁹ (Emphases ours)

The UNDAF defines the framework and directions for UNDP’s work in India as well. This could not accord better with the GoI priorities, development needs of the country, and the lessons from the two themes that we have evaluated. We have emphasized the need for continued focus on strengthening decentralized governance, addressing inclusion (of women and other marginalized sections) and influencing policy and program development and district-level administrative reform for better implementation. Our evaluation of thematic progress also indicated the need for focusing on the district as a unit, and converging related programs to strengthen local self-governance and decentralized planning. We have also explained the close coherence and interdependence between decentralized planning and local livelihoods promotion, and the need for convergence.

We summarize our specific recommendations that emerge from UNDP’s unique strengths, the evaluation of both themes and the need to capitalize on interlinkages and build convergence, below.

6.2.3 *The Way Forward : Overall Approaches, Implementation Strategies, Challenges and how to address them*

In respect of the overall approach of UNDP’s interventions in Sustainable Livelihoods and Decentralized Governance, we suggest that

- UNDP should work primarily on identifying, documenting, disseminating and elucidating appropriate methodologies and innovative approaches in traditional sectors, and support advocacy for policy and program review and change by facilitating dialogue among stakeholders. UNDP’s comparative advantage lies in helping national, state and district governments to improve the ground-level impact of pathbreaking and key legislation such as for decentralized governance, employment guarantee and right to information. It also lies in working with governments to identify issues emerging from the economic growth process not fully in tune with equity. Potential areas of conflict and confrontation among stakeholders resulting from such inequity (often accompanied by violence) should be anticipated and measures undertaken for discussion and resolution *before they arise*. In crafting

⁹ UNDP, New India UNDAF (2008-12), December 2006

a road map for implementation, problem identification and solution, it would be useful to engage qualified technical experts (including policy and legal experts) in a substantive way, including those with negotiation and consensus-building skills among diverse stakeholders.

- In areas/issues which are emerging – eg ETP, HIV-Aids, Decentralized Planning–action-research projects to develop methodologies and technical understanding may be supported at local level. More issues that are emerging and are not ‘sector-based’, such as responsible and ethical public-private partnerships, especially for the protection of excluded groups such as tribals, should be included here and, indeed, should be sought out for support by the governments and UNDP in the focus states. However, grassroots initiatives should NOT be the norm, and should only be supported/ piloted if they are methodologically innovative or new.
- UNDP should decentralize most of its actual program administration to State and district levels, targeting State-level policy and district-level implementation structures. The results of policy-support will be more directly measurable at these levels.
- UNDP should converge all its related projects in selected districts in its seven focal states. It would be useful to select districts with different economic and social profiles so that both generic and contextually appropriate methodologies/ systems could be identified.
- Identifying and reviewing existing/ ongoing government programs in the relevant sector/ subject, and, to reiterate, developing a roadmap for policy/ program influence must precede implementation of projects.
- The programming and project selection process should be augmented with an externally facilitated strategic-planning exercise.
- Greater proportion of partnerships should be with larger/ higher-level institutional partners with proven track record.

6.2.4 Recommendations for the Sustainable Livelihoods theme:

In evaluating the Sustainable Livelihoods theme, these specific suggestions emerge for strengthening outcomes –

- Project design, timeframes and monitoring arrangements need more detailed attention. Roadmaps must include last-mile activities, and strategies and action-plans for policy influence. This is particularly urgent for those projects in the 2003-2007 cycle that have had a delayed start and are to be extended beyond their original time-lines.
- Issues that have emerged through work over the last 3 years in empowerment and social mobilization should be carried forward to policy levels (e.g. the Adivasi Policy in Orissa) building on partnerships already forged. These partnerships could also be extended to PRIs (since such advocacy-based partnerships are now mostly limited to NGOs) to build their capacity and stake in policy advocacy. This is easier

said since PRI-NGO collaboration is the exception rather than the rule in most parts of India. However, NGOs need to be encouraged and assisted (perhaps with appropriate external expertise) in forging relationships with PRIs for such advocacy, which is likely to be more effective and strategic in the long run since PRIs enjoy constitutional backing.¹⁰

- The MLA Forum developed in Orissa should be replicated in all focus States.
- Development of State-level Livelihood Strategies – on the RMOL model – should be supported in all focus States.
- Building technical capacity-building of PRIs and NGOs working on village microplans to integrate the variety of sectoral microplans developed under different schemes (NREGS, BRGF, WDP, etc) is a priority area, as it also addresses the need to build capacities for decentralized planning.
- Identification of strategic gender requirements and qualitative indicators (in addition to quantitative) proactively as a part of the project framework and design should be done rather than only vetting individual projects from a gender lens *after* they have been designed in draft.
- Capacity- building of local NGO partners to develop their understanding and skills in gender-equitable and inclusive approaches must be undertaken.
- Processes to develop more conceptual clarity and practical understanding of the roles of different partners – such as documentation and analysis of lessons from pilots, and reflection workshops – must be completed *before* the pilots are extended to other locations. (eg., in PPCP).

6.2.5 Recommendations for the Decentralized Governance Theme

While most of the above recommendations will *mutatis mutandis* apply to the decentralized governance theme also, some more recommendations that have emerged from the OE of the Decentralized Governance theme are listed below –

- a) Dissemination of experience gained under the EWR project among other districts within the States where this project is under implementation, through the SIRDs which in the normal course have the responsibility of building the capacities of the EWRs throughout the State. This will ensure the sustainability of UNDP efforts even beyond the project period.
- b) Separate capacity building programmes may have to be designed for the chairpersons among the EWRs with special focus on the dalit and the marginalized groups among them.

¹⁰ Under the social mobilization project, NGO-PRI dialogue happened only in cases where NGO partners were predisposed towards such collaboration and worked with community members who had been elected members of PRIs. Empowerment of the community by the NGOs was an enabling factor for members to stand for election.

- c) Schemes may have to be designed to strengthen the capacities of the gramshabhas as they constitute the bedrock of the entire PRI structure. This can be done by suitably expanding the scope of the EWR and the decentralized planning projects.
- d) Even though the UNDP plays only a supportive role in operationalising the NREGA as well as RTI Act, the emphasis in both these projects should shift to the State and local levels which have the specific responsibility of implementation. The materials for dissemination should always be in the local language and capacity building programmes for the stake holders should also conform to this requirement. (We have been informed by the governance unit that this project is now fully operational at the district level in the States and all materials now produced under the project are in the local languages). Once the advocacy programmes are put in place, they can as well be implemented through the State and local governments and the need to continue these projects with UNDP assistance at the central level can perhaps be revisited.
- e) It may perhaps be desirable to link the support to NREGA and RTI projects with the decentralized planning project so that provision of needed employment and access to information get integrated with the panchayat plans at the local level.
- f) Both the projects on PPCP as well as on urban governance do hold a lot of promise. They are in their initial stages of implementation. Both of them can be linked to the decentralized planning project, so that besides ensuring convergence in the implementation of the projects, the much needed urban-rural linkages can also be provided for. The composite district plan so prepared can be the basic document for planning under PPCP.
- g) Linking the SKILLS project with PPCP and the decentralized planning project also has a great potential for uplifting the rural poor particularly in rain fed areas. Several studies have indicated that dry land agriculture is not a viable activity in most parts of India. In fact, in many areas the youth in the villages do not want to work in dry land agriculture as income from this source is risky, seasonal and inadequate. Providing opportunities to these youth to learn non-farm technical skills can be a positive response to this problem. The skills academies promoted under SKILLS project do impart skill training to the rural youth but absorbing them in areas relevant to their newly acquired skills will pose a problem once the numbers increase. Linking this programme with PPCP and the decentralized planning projects will help first in identifying the resource availability of the area, the enterprises that can be set up, the skills required for establishment of these enterprises and in the recruitment of skilled local man power.
- h) While the Central and State governments plan for the sectors, at the ZP level plans have to be prepared for a geographical area. Integrating sector plans to meet the overall needs of an area is both a challenge and an opportunity. The decentralized plan to be prepared by the panchayats with the assistance and technical support from the NGO should take into consideration both the sector plans prepared at higher levels of governance and also efforts like the PPCP and

dovetail them with the relevant plans at the appropriate level. Special attention has to be paid to ensure gender equality as well as inclusiveness both in the preparation of the plan as well as in the processes adopted.

- i) The decentralized planning project should thus become the key project under the decentralized governance theme. It must also encompass livelihood promotion activities as well as delivery of basic services, as the current project design does not appear to specifically focus on these issues.
- j) Benefits of utilizing parallel efforts like the Solution Exchange for mid-course correction and quality enhancement in the implementation of projects need to be recognized and integrated within the project designs.

6.2.6 Recommendations for continuation of Projects under both themes :

The following table identifies the projects that need to be retained, revised or discontinued.

<i>To be retained (minor refinements)</i>	<i>To be retained (with substantial revision)</i>	<i>To be discontinued</i>
RMOL	Decentralised Planning/ PPCP	
Capacity-Building of EWRs	ETP	Social Mobilization
NSUP (National component)	JBF	
Urban Governance	Support to NREGA	
	Capacity building for RTI (optional)	

The Skills Academies project looks very promising particularly if converged with other programs but as of now we have too little information to comment further.