

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The purpose of this report is to present an assessment of the contributions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to development results in Zambia in the period 2002 to 2009. It covers two programming cycles known as the second Country Cooperation Framework (CCF-II) 2002 to 2006, and the current Country Programme Document (CPD) 2007 to 2010. The evaluation was carried out between June 2009 and January 2010, and its findings were designed to contribute to the new country programme, currently being prepared by the UNDP Country Office and national stakeholders. The Assessment of Development Results (ADR) addressed two main clusters of issues:

1. An evaluation of the extent to which UNDP has achieved the outcomes foreseen in its planning documents, thereby contributing to development results; this was accomplished through the application of the following evaluation criteria to a selection of UNDP Zambia's projects: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.
2. The way in which UNDP has positioned itself in the national development context to add value in response to national needs; the evaluation criteria used were: strategic relevance, responsiveness, contribution to UN values, strategic partnerships and contribution to UN coordination.

UNDP's Country Programme is synchronized with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The UNDAF and the UNDP Country Programme in turn support the Government's Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP) and, in order to be fully in line with overall national priorities and plans, as from 2011 the UN response will be fully synchronized with the Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP).

The development challenges faced by Zambia are many. While the period under review has shown respectable economic growth rates averaging five percent per annum, poverty remains deep and widespread, although a slight reduction seems to have taken place. The economy is heavily dependent on one resource—copper; while copper prices helped spur the growth of recent years, the 2008 economic downturn led to sharp falls in copper prices, thereby seriously reducing the Government's revenue. In spite of major efforts to contain it throughout the period under review, corruption levels remain high and are recognized by the Government as a major threat to development. Zambia is ranked no. 165 out of 177 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) in the UNDP 2007 to 2008 Human Development Report (HDR).

Zambia is at the epicentre of a mature HIV/AIDS pandemic with some 15 percent of the adult population infected with HIV. This is a severe blow to economic and social development at all levels. Another major challenge is presented in terms of environmental sustainability and the effects of climate change. The Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) regularly reports on its progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and states that almost all MDGs are achievable or potentially achievable—except for MDG 7 on environmental sustainability.

The GRZ and its cooperating partners in development subscribe to the principles of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Action Plan. As a consequence, Zambia is moving forward towards aid harmonization and alignment in the framework of the mutually agreed—upon Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia (JASZ) 2007 to 2010. Within the FNDP and JASZ framework, 17 Sectoral Advisory Groups (SAGs) have been

set up, normally chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the related sectoral line ministry. In parallel with this, a Cooperating Partners' Group (CPG) has been established in order to coordinate and harmonize the external assistance. To do so, the CPG has established sectoral sub-groups mirroring the SAGs. UNDP and other UN agencies participate in the SAGs and CPG sector groups.

UNDP Zambia's mission is to build national capacity to help Zambia achieve the MDGs by focusing on:

- HIV/AIDS
- Energy and environment
- Democratic and economic governance.

The UNDP Country Office is organized into programme units according to the thematic areas mentioned above. In addition to these thematic areas gender equality has assumed prominence and become part of the programme unit on governance. Further, the Office has a Strategic Policy Unit (SPU) offering support to the GRZ in macroeconomic analysis, MDG monitoring and HDR preparation. The Country Office also has a United Nations Volunteer (UNV) Unit due to the high number of national and international UNVs employed in the Country Programme.

DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

Overall, UNDP Zambia has provided important contributions to meet the development challenges that the country is facing. These contributions, listed below, are highly relevant to development challenges faced by Zambia.

EFFECTIVENESS

Good progress has been made in the fight against HIV/AIDS as a major threat to economic, social and human development. Some progress is also notable in the field of democratic governance, although slower than expected. Innovative

approaches have been introduced in the area of energy and environment, but results are slow in coming. The MDGs have been integrated into Zambian monitoring and evaluation systems and knowledge about them is widespread. In many cases where expected results have not been met, this has been due to factors outside UNDP's control. With this proviso, UNDP has in general been effective in its contributions to development in Zambia.

EFFICIENCY

UNDP's efficiency in achieving the expected outcomes has varied; UNDP's support in the battle against HIV/AIDS has been very efficient, not least due to the combined efforts of the Joint UN AIDS Team and the operational modalities in interaction with the National Aids Council. Good progress is being made towards the outcome of a decentralized, multi-sectoral and community-based response, reaching out to all districts.

GOVERNANCE

UNDP's interventions in the governance sector include support to the Decentralization Secretariat, the National Assembly, the Electoral Commission and the Human Rights Commission. Support to the decentralization policy has, for various reasons not related to UNDP, stalled in spite of UNDP support to policy formulation and preparation of an implementation plan. UNDP support to parliament has been relatively small compared to that of other cooperating partners, making UNDP a fairly new and junior member of this group. UNDP has supported elections in 2006 and 2008. UNDP has helped the Human Rights Commission establish itself in five locations outside the capital, thereby making its services available on a wider scale. Some of UNDP's governance projects are small in terms of financing, while others, such as the elections programme, are large and very demanding in operational terms.

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

UNDP is an important player in the energy and environment thematic area, which otherwise does not have widespread support from cooperating partners. The portfolio includes, *inter alia*, cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on biodiversity and reclassification of protected areas; communicating to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); action plans for MDGs at the community level and a project on Capacity Development for Sustainable Renewable Energy Management and Utilization. UNDP involvement in the latter project is minimal as it is implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The main GRZ partners are the Ministry of Environment, Tourism and Natural Resources, the Environmental Council and the Zambia Wildlife Authority. In terms of energy and environment, UNDP has been confining itself to issues of national development priority and recording progress in the attainment of programme outcomes. Due to various delays, some of the projects will not be completed before the end of the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) period. If stopped prematurely, there is a risk that the impact of these activities will be compromised. The programme may thus fail to deliver expected development returns on investments by UNDP and the implementing partners.

GENDER EQUALITY

UNDP's implementation of gender equality as a crosscutting issue within its main thematic areas has not been effective. Planning and implementation processes have lacked a systematic framework to carry out gender analysis, which is cardinal to the monitoring of progress. In the CCF-II, gender was treated as a crosscutting issue, but was not found to achieve the anticipated results, and women's empowerment reappeared as a favoured approach. However, in the CPG, gender remained an area of low status.

MICROFINANCE

Outside the thematic areas are projects such as the Microfinance and Poverty Reduction Project, which has duplicated the approach of the Grameen Bank in Zambia. The approach is relevant to Zambian conditions and its implementation has been efficient, but the scope for sustaining it without external assistance is questionable, as is the extent to which it can be up-scaled.

SPU

The SPU works in close cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and National Planning as well as other partners, and promotes central UN products and values such as the HDR and MDGs. The work is upstream and the services are useful.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability issues were found in most of the evaluated projects, only some of which may be resolved. These issues are all linked to capacity in the implementing partner institutions, often related to high personnel turnover, and to the extensive use of UNVs as technical advisers whose expertise is not easily transferred into a ministry or district administration, or to a microfinance institution. The problems associated with transfer of technical assistance-generated capacity are well-known, and UNDP could benefit from making a systematic assessment of the successes and drawbacks in this area over say, the last five years.

RELEVANCE

The selection of thematic areas has been relevant to national needs. However, UNDP has not always had the capacity to provide the robust, professional responses necessary to handle complicated and deep-rooted challenges such as, for example, gender inequality. UNDP has thus overstretched itself and spread its resources too thinly, resulting in limited impact. The pressure on UNDP capacity relates partly to the large number of small projects.

UNDP'S STRATEGIC POSITIONING

RESPONSIVENESS TO NEW CHALLENGES

There is a high degree of continuity in UNDP's work throughout the period under review. In fact, UNDP's involvement in HIV/AIDS, governance and the environment dates back to the 1990s. UNDP has mostly been responsive to new challenges that have arisen. In its support of the electoral process, for instance, UNDP was able to mobilize resources with five cooperating partners at very short notice for the emergency October 2008 elections following the death of the then President. Though challenges were met in the shape of long and bureaucratic procurement procedures, UNDP was able to support the Electoral Commission of Zambia in the coordination of the project. As a result, elections were held on the date required by the constitution.

UNDP's ability to respond to new demands or to changes in the development situation depends on available resources in terms of knowledge, funding and human capacity. Country Office staffing has remained at basically the same levels throughout the period under review, although the CPD and CPAP emphasize the need for adjustments to meet the challenges and opportunities of the changing situation in the delivery of aid to Zambia. Little adjustment, however, could be noted at the time of the ADR.

CONTRIBUTION TO UN VALUES

In its contributions to UN values, UNDP is committed to promoting the realization of human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Charter, and also to championing the MDGs. UNDP has successfully worked to spread awareness of the MDGs in Zambia, as well as to make them operational in various development programmes. However, in the day-to-day work within the thematic areas, UN standards are not considered to be widely applied as operational tools for the strategic achievement of development results. While conventions and resolutions are referred to in the planning documentation, they are used less in the policy dialogue with the GRZ.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

With regard to UNDP strategic partnerships, GRZ appreciates UNDP as a special partner. The extent to which the GRZ departments effectively take ownership and leadership of UNDP-assisted activities varies.

The JASZ, which is the CP strategy for supporting the FNDP, provides the framework within which development assistance is now coordinated. UNDP participates in the GRZ-SAG framework as well as in the CPG sectoral groups. UNDP is the lead CP in the gender group and co-lead in the governance and environmental groups. Some cooperating partners feel the cooperation mechanism within the SAGs is not working well. Some SAGs rarely meet and many meetings are inconclusive and more for exchange of information than for decision-making, which could be a reflection of the relatively junior level of attendants. Participants maintained that these meetings were not productive, and that valuable time was spent debating process issues rather than in discussing those of strategic concern. This applies also to CPG sector groups where UNDP was lead or co-lead.

It should be emphasized that the general view of UNDP by cooperating partners is a positive one. They recognize the role that UN agencies can play and want them to assume a strong position in the JASZ framework. This is especially the case in sectors where UNDP is lead or co-lead, as these are seen as critical development drivers. This raises the question of leadership within UNDP's positioning, both within and outside the JASZ sectors.

Partners tend to see UNDP more as a convenor of meetings than as a dynamic leader who takes initiatives in consultation with the group, delegates tasks, synthesizes results and engages effectively with the GRZ at the appropriate levels on the implementation of agreed-upon interventions. They think UNDP has a unique position in this regard due to its special relationship with the GRZ, and they see important opportunities as being missed. UNDP for its part prefers

to see itself as the honest broker devoid of any political agendas beyond those laid down in the UN values and conventions. In order to play that role, UNDP is cautious as to how far it can go in pursuing political or delicate matters, lest it risk ruining its good relationship with the GRZ and in so doing, lose any potential influence.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS) AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (CBOS)

UNDP partnership with NGOs and CBOs were found to be weak due to the major focus on government programmes. Zambia has a fairly vibrant civil society movement which, if well supported, could contribute effectively to the achievement of development results. Civil society partners, particularly in the governance and gender sector, recommended the development of a specific partnership strategy to address critical emerging issues in these sectors, such as support to the realization of the devolution of powers to the local governance structures.

CONTRIBUTION TO UN COORDINATION

Progress in the UN reform process is slow. In terms of UNDP's contribution to UN coordination as part of the UN reform process, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) meets regularly, but the number of coordinated UN activities is relatively low. The Joint Team on AIDS is the best example of pooling UN resources for a common purpose and in a common building. Joint projects are unusual, partly due to competition over resources, and also given different accountability systems among agencies, which makes pooling of financial resources in joint budgets (virtually) impossible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the CPD and CPAP, UNDP should concentrate its resources on fewer areas and adapt its staffing to better match the changing development cooperation architecture in Zambia. UNDP should apply a more

consequent sector orientation in its planning and concentrate on fewer areas within each sector. The current sectors are relevant to national needs, but a better focus within each thematic area could contribute to higher efficiency and impact. It is further recommended that UNDP continue its support to combat HIV/AIDS within the Joint AIDS Team; activities within the democratic governance sector should focus on human rights and continued capacity development of the electoral commission; activities in the energy and environment sector should concentrate on natural resource management and climate change; and the work in gender should be placed within a broader UN framework.

UNDP should build on demonstrated comparative advantages, but adapt its staff resources closely to the selected sectors and sub-sectors. It should maximize internal synergies within the Country Office. Programme units should draw upon in-house resources, such as macro-economic experience in the SPU, to support their strategic work. Cross-cutting issues such as gender and HIV/AIDS should be mainstreamed by placing personnel dedicated to this purpose within each thematic area. The use of National UN Volunteers (NUNVs) in these positions should be considered.

UNDP should focus on the upstream side of sector development. UNDP should utilize its access to high-level expertise for sector policy analysis to guide interventions by GRZ and other partners. UNDP should formulate a concise capacity development strategy for the Country Office, probably with the assistance of the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) and the regional team. UNDP should further develop strategies for the achievement of sustainability in the various sectors, not limited to activities managed by UNDP, but looking at ways in which development results can be sustained over time.

UNDP should effectively support the aid coordination arrangements, in particular the JASZ, and provide leadership that effectively engages all partners in areas where UNDP has

a clear and demonstrated advantage. UNDP should only accept leadership in sectoral groups where it can use its special relationship with the GRZ to promote the processes that would positively influence the achievement of agreed-upon results. This would especially apply to the Democratic governance sector, where UNDP may be better placed than other cooperating partners to engage in a frank policy dialogue based on UN norms and conventions. Leadership in a sector should include efforts to ensure that all members of the group actively participate towards the achievement of common objectives.

UNDP should take the initiative towards increased integration and collaboration within the UNCT. It is especially recommended that UNDP, in close cooperation with other UN agencies, prepare proposals for a One-UN Fund to be established under the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator. The purpose of the Fund should be to pool the financial and technical resources of UN agencies, thereby providing more effective responses to development challenges in Zambia. UNDP should take the lead in promoting this in the preparation of the new UNDAF and Country Programme. The One-UN Fund will function as the common machinery facilitating joint projects involving several UN agencies with specific expertise, all of them working together on common tasks. This will go a long way towards harmonization and efficiency in UN responses. A joint resource mobilization strategy will be developed and donors will be encouraged to use the UN Fund when they want UN agencies to manage activities on their behalf.

UNDP should work closer with stakeholders from Zambian civil society, not least with women's organizations in the human rights area, and in the areas of energy and environment. Civil society organized in CSOs, NGOs or CBOs are important and legitimate partners in democratic and sustainable development, serving as watchdogs and channels of public opinion.

UNDP should increase its engagement with civil society, and assist CSOs with policy and strategic analysis, advice and financial support. UN conventions and other UN instruments should form the basis of UNDP's collaboration with CSOs in the fields of gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability.

UNDP should strengthen its capacity in developing evaluable results frameworks, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation of development results within an outcomes-based approach. UNDP should ensure that staffing capacity is available to establish effective monitoring and evaluation systems of UNDP project and non-project activities, and to develop indicators monitoring these against outcomes, as described in planning documents. In the next Country Programme, UNDP should further ensure the formulation of outcomes, outputs and indicators that are 'SMART' (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) in order to make sound assessments possible. As part of its upstream support to monitoring development in Zambia, UNDP should consider preparing a proposal for a joint UN programme of support to CSO data production activities for co-funding with cooperating partners. The support should focus on the relationships among economic growth, poverty and income distribution.

UNDP should develop a systematic and operational approach to capacity development. Drawing upon UNDP corporate research, the Country Office, jointly with other resident UN agencies, should develop a system for capacity strengthening at the institutional, organizational and human resource levels that is commensurate with results-based management and suited to Zambian conditions. The analysis should include the use of UNVs and other technical assistance personnel in sustainable ways. The system should include a plan for capacity development as an integral part of all project documents and workplans, and incorporate operational and measurable indicators of progress.