**REPORT ON MID-TERM EVALUATION**

**of the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue**

**Prepared by Nana Gibradze, Independent Consultant**

**on behalf of the**

**Crisis Prevention and Recovery Practice Area for Latin America and the Caribbean**

**September - November 2010**

The Mid-Term Evaluation of the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue was carried out from 13 September – 6 November 2010 by independent consultant Nana Gibradze.

The Evaluation was conducted from Panama and involved Project beneficiaries and stakeholders based in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela, and United States.

The Evaluation was commissioned by the Crisis Prevention and Recovery Cluster of UNDP Regional Service Centre in Panama.

The independent evaluator expresses her gratitude to all interviewed persons for their time and consideration, also for their qualified and honest opinions. The evaluator is grateful to Ms. Sonia Gonzalez, Ms. Anaí Linares and Ms. Samara Pellecer of the Democratic Dialogue Regional Project for organizing the interviews at the Project site, providing unlimited access to Project documentation and offering continuous support and advice throughout the Evaluation.

The Evaluator is grateful to the Crisis Prevention and Recovery Practice Leader Mr. Pablo Ruiz, Conflict Prevention Advisor Mr. Gaston Ain and the CPR Team for the guidance and support in all that was required for the successful completion of the consultancy.

The evaluator expresses her gratitude to Mr. Andrew Russell for providing valuable reference material otherwise unknown to the evaluator. The evaluator also expresses her appreciation to Mr. Freddy Justiniano, Ms. Doris Cruz and Mr. Hector Morales for sharing additional documentation.

Except for the opinions of the respondents consolidated in Chapter 7 (Findings) all opinions expressed in this report are those of the evaluator and do not represent the official views of UNDP.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. [**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**](#ExSummary)
2. [**INTRODUCTION**](#Introduction)
   1. Purpose of the Evaluation
   2. Partner Audience and Primary Users of the Evaluation
   3. Structure and Contents of the Evaluation
3. [**INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION**](#Interventiondescription)
   1. Subject of Evaluation
   2. Geographic Scope and Beneficiaries
   3. Implementation Phases, Strategic Lines and Programmatic Linkages
   4. Execution and Implementation Modalities and Challenges
   5. Strategic Partnerships
4. [**EVALUATION SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES**](#ScopeObjectives)
   1. Evaluation Scope
   2. Evaluation Objectives
   3. Evaluation Criteria
   4. Evaluation Questions
5. [**EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODS**](#ApproachMethodology)
   1. Data Sources
   2. Sample and Sampling Frame
   3. Data Collection Procedures and Instruments
   4. Performance Standards
   5. Stakeholder Participation
   6. Ethical Considerations
   7. Background Information on Evaluators
   8. Major Limitations of the Methodology
6. [**DATA ANALYSIS**](#DataAnalysis)
7. [**FINDINGS**](#Findings)
   1. Project Design
   2. Relevance
   3. Effectiveness
   4. Efficiency
   5. Sustainability
   6. Visibility
8. [**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**](#Conclusions)
9. [**LESSONS LEARNED**](#LessonsLearned)
10. [**DATA SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY**](#DataSourcesBiblio)
11. [**LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**](#Abbreviations)
12. [**LIST OF ANNEXES**](#Annexes)

**CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Mid-term evaluation of the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue (RPDD) was commissioned by the Leader of the Crisis Prevention and Recovery Practice Area in Panama in September 2010. The purpose of the Evaluation was to conduct: a midterm evaluation of the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue; final evaluation of the DGTTF Funded components of the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue in accordance with the DGTTF requirements; and a comprehensive revision of the entire Project, to assess the progress of the Project since its inception towards the objectives in order to advise on the possibilities for extension and reorientation of the Project.

The evaluation interviewed 27 persons and reviewed more than 70 documents and reference materials to assess the progress towards the outputs, identify project achievements and challenges, collect lessons learned and offer recommendations to the CPR Practice Area management.

The Evaluation concluded that most part of the 4 Project outputs were achieved, especially the outputs 1: Technical assistance to national and regional initiatives for using dialogic change processes as tools for democracy-building and the prevention of conflict; and 4: Programme on Joint Border Initiatives developed and agreed by relevant parties.

The Project had mixed level of success with regard to the Outputs 2: National and local actors and institutions with capacities to design, convene, and facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues and consensus-building processes; and 3: Strengthened strategic communications and Community of Practice to support the implementation of the Project’s activities.

The Evaluation considers that the relatively limited success of the Capacity Building and Community of Practice components is due to several serious challenges beyond the Project control that affected its implementation. The most important challenge encountered by the Evaluation was the lack of strategic guidance and leadership as well as lack of corporate commitment from 2008 - 2009, which resulted in reduced funding and diminished visibility and relevance of the Project.

Another important challenge identified by the Evaluation is the intangibility and invisibility of Dialogue results in short and medium term which makes it difficult to quantify, measure and demonstrate them.

The Evaluation concluded that there still is a lack of clear understanding about what is meant by the capacity for dialogue, how to build these capacities and who should be the primary target of capacity building efforts: Regional, national and local institutions, UNDP Country Offices and decision makers at all levels and/or UN System agencies.

According to the Evaluation findings, this is partly due to the fact that there is still a lot of confusion and lack of proper understanding of the Democratic Dialogue concept at the corporate level and its role for the achievement of broader development goals.

The Evaluation concludes that the RPDD has positioned UNDP solidly in the field of the dialogue and it gained a significant standing as a facilitator and convener of dialogic processes vis-à-vis other stakeholders such as the OAS and the UN agencies.

UNDP has comparative advantages to accompany the national and regional dialogue processes and there is a documented need for UNDP presence to build dialogue capacities of institutions in LAC region.

To be able to achieve long-lasting and sustainable development results while maintaining its competitive edge UNDP needs to define a corporate strategy on Democratic Dialogue as well as a clear format of its engagement in the field of Democratic Dialogue as applied to Conflict Prevention and Democratic Governance as well as other practice areas.

The Evaluation concludes that there is a strong need for Dialogue as a UNDP corporate competency at technical and operational levels. The former is needed mostly at the Country Office and Bureau levels in order to improve provision of services to national, regional and local counterparts and assuring the quality of UNDP interventions in the field of democratic dialogue.

At the same time, there is a need to develop the operational capacity for dialogue as a mode of internal governance of UNDP to be used in its interactions with other agencies, governments, donors, civil society, and internally, among the Bureaux, practice areas and clusters.

Overall, the Evaluation concluded that the Project was a highly relevant initiative when it was launched in early 2000´s and has built a significant legacy in the field of Democratic Dialogue, contributing to the prevention and transformation of conflicts and promoting democratic governance in Latin America and the Caribbean Region.

Despite the changes that occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean during the last decade, the Democratic Dialogue approach continues to be highly relevant in the current political and social environment given that there still is a strong need for multi-stakeholder dialogue methods and tools to accompany the complex social and political challenges of modern democracies.

The Evaluation concluded that due to the challenges encountered in the course of implementation and absence of sustainability mechanisms and exit strategy, the Project was not given adequate opportunities to function properly and complete planned tasks. However, the Evaluation observed positive shift in the management of the Project and stronger corporate commitment since the set-up of the CPR Cluster in July 2009.

The Evaluation argues that the Project is still ¨in progress¨ and should be continued to allow completion of the Project cycle and to build adequate sustainability mechanisms and strategies.

Therefore the Evaluation argues for the extension of the Project for additional 3 years to compensate for the years and opportunities lost since 2008, guarantee the completion of all activities and to develop adequate sustainability and exit strategies.

The Evaluation suggests the following actions:

1. Extend and redefine the current Project for additional 3 years along the current strategic lines;
2. Establish a functioning Project Board to ensure political support and strategic guidance as well as a small group of technical advisors to provide ongoing advice and expertise in the course of Project planning and implementation;
3. In consultation with stakeholders identify current priorities for UNDP in the field of dialogue and define the project strategy for the next 3 years;
4. Conduct a consultation process on UNDP corporate strategy on Democratic Dialogue, analyzing the demand for dialogue and identifying the beneficiaries and entry points;
5. Strengthen the interagency cooperation to promote increased application of the dialogue concept and methodology in interagency settings, in particular at UNCT levels;
6. Refresh and revitalize the existing Community of Practice on Democratic Dialogue by mapping the current and needed capacities and expertise, developing the conceptual and operational framework for the COP and strengthen the capacities of COP member to serve as a human resource pool for UNDP in the LAC region and beyond;
7. Develop and conduct a rigorous awareness and visibility campaign about the dialogue concept as well as the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue proper;
8. Expand and improve the learning base on Democratic Dialogue and improve the connections with established academic institutions working in this field;
9. Continue with knowledge systematization collecting and analyzing the material accumulated during the last decade in the LAC region and updating the existing knowledge base with region-specific knowledge and practices;
10. Expand the cooperation with other practice areas and look for improving synergies with other regional programmes and projects with an existing or potential need for democratic dialogue methodology and techniques.

The Evaluation consolidated the lessons learned throughout the Project implementation as well as during the Evaluation and concluded that for the Project and the Democratic Dialogue concept to be successful, it is needed to:

1. ensure strong corporate support at HQ and country levels and provide strategic leadership and political weight to the intervention;
2. increase awareness about democratic dialogue at a cognitive level as well as about the dialogue methodology and Project services to identify properly the problems and formulate the demand for dialogue;
3. be careful with generating expectations, know when and where the democratic dialogue tool can and cannot be applied and plan and prepare the grounds for entry;
4. transcend the limits of practice area/cluster definitions and apply the dialogue transversally in various settings other than conflict;
5. view dialogue not as a high-level political process but a flexible and versatile approach to tackle various challenges to development.
6. think long-term and sustainable, building dialogue capacities to foster and sustain long-term development results
7. anticipate the demand for dialogue and team up with other regional initiatives to maximize the utility and impact of UNDP interventions and tools;
8. offer highest quality services, which are not limited to technical skills but include emotional intelligence and professional maturity as well;
9. handle the Community of Practice as a valuable source of human capital and invest in building its capacities and expanding its outreach for the benefit of UNDP and its partners in the region.

**CHAPTER 2:** **INTRODUCTION**

*Purpose and timing of Evaluation*

The evaluation of the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue (hereinafter referred to interchangeably as the Project or the RPDD) was commissioned in September 2010 by the Leader of the Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR) Practice Area in Panama. The **timing** of the Evaluation was determined by several important changes that affected Project implementation since its inception to-date:

1. Change of the management arrangements of the Project: Transfer of the implementation of the Project from UNDP Guatemala to the Regional Centre in Panama following the corporate decision to assign the Project to CPR Practice Area;
2. Recruitment of a new Conflict Prevention Advisor in the CPR Practice Area who would perform the functions of the Democratic Dialogue Regional Project Director;
3. Full execution of DGTTF Funds and required final evaluation of the DGTTF-funded components.

In view of the above the **purpose** of the Evaluation is three fold:

1. To conduct a midterm evaluation of the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue. This exercise will focus on Project objectives, inputs, outputs and activities that correspond to the current (Second) phase of the Project (2008 to present) and will assess the delivery of Project outputs, as well as activities and inputs that lead to the delivery of Project outcomes. The evaluation will also assess the relevance of the intended outputs and continued linkage with the outcomes.
2. To conduct the Final Evaluation of the DGTTF Funded components of the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue in accordance with the DGTTF requirements. This endeavor will assess the extent to which the intended outputs have been achieved as well as their contribution towards the Project outcomes.
3. To conduct a comprehensive revision of both phases of the Project, to assess the progress of the Project since its inception towards the objectives, map the lessons learned and best practices, identify main criteria of success as well as principal challenges encountered in the course of the Project lifetime and assess the need for Project continuation and/or reorientation.

*Primary Audience of Evaluation*

The primary user of this evaluation is the Democratic Dialogue Regional Project and UNDP through its CPR Practice area, which will use the evaluation findings and recommendations to programme the last year of the current phase of the Project, consult with the stakeholders the possibilities and format of a new phase of the intervention and make provisions for the institutionalization of Project results while planning the appropriate exit strategy.

The final report of the DGTTF Funded component evaluation will be shared with the DGTTF management. Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned will be made available to beneficiary Country Offices, key stakeholders, as well as the members of Democratic Dialogue and Conflict Prevention Communities of Practice as necessary.

In line with the UNEG norms for Evaluation in the UN System the present evaluation will contribute to knowledge building and organizational improvement through sharing the findings and lessons learned with all concerned stakeholders. More specifically, UNDP Country Offices as well as Conflict Prevention and Democratic Dialogue Communities of Practice will benefit from recommendations related to the capacity building and knowledge management/codification. BCPR, BDP and RBLAC will benefit from recommendations related to programmatic linkages between the Democratic Dialogue and UNDP supported national and regional programmes in Conflict Prevention and Democratic Governance. Overall, societies in Latin America as well as UNDP and UN System Agencies will become potential beneficiaries of the competencies and the know-how accumulated by the Project.

*Structure and contents of report*

The report follows the structure recommended in the Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results and is comprised of 12 Chapters as provided in the Evaluation Report Template. The sequence of chapters largely follows the Evaluation Template structure; however, some chapters have been split to make them shorter whereas some sub-chapters have consolidated and merged to avoid repetition and duplication.

Chapter 1 offers the audience a 4-page Executive Summary of the Evaluation with key findings, conclusions and recommendations as well as the challenges and lessons learned.

Chapter 2 introduces the Purpose and timing of Evaluation, describes the Primary Audience of Evaluation and outlines the Structure and contents of report

Chapter 3 presents the basic background information about the Project as the subject of the evaluation, explains the key Project objectives and expected results as stipulated in the Results Framework Matrix, linking them with corporate priorities and strategic plans and outlines the Project strategy at various stages of its implementation. It also identifies the beneficiaries and strategic partners, describes the implementation arrangements and funding situation. All issues related to weaknesses and constraints, limitations and challenges are addressed in Chapter 7 Findings and Conclusions.

Chapter 4 explains what the Evaluation intends to achieve and how, and points to the issues not covered by the evaluation, defines the evaluation scope, objectives, criteria and type of information generated by the evaluation.

Chapter 5 describes selected methods of analysis and rationale for their selection, defines data sources, data collection procedures and methods, describes the sampling methods applied and identifies limitations of the selected methodology.

Chapter 6 describes what type of data was collected, how this data was processed and identifies challenges of data analysis.

Chapter 7 offers the Findings of the Evaluation. The findings section is structured along the evaluation criteria described in Chapter 4 and Evaluation questions. It includes the findings related to the achievement of 4 Project Outputs in accordance with the Results and Resources Framework (RRF).

Chapter 8 provides conclusions drawn as the result of the analysis of the findings. It then offers a list of recommendations to UNDP through the CPR Practice Area as well as BCPR and RBLAC.

Chapter 9 provides a synthesis of Lessons Learnt on the basis of the evidence gathered by the Project during both phases as well as the lessons identified by the Evaluation proper.

Chapter 10 contains the consulted data sources and the bibliography.

Chapter 11 contains the list of abbreviations and acronyms

Chapter 12 contains the list of annexes.

**CHAPTER 3:** **INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION**

*Subject of Evaluation*

The subject of the evaluation is the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, which is currently in its second phase of implementation. The overarching goal of the Project is to promote dialogue as a means to strengthen the democratic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean and facilitate conflict prevention and transformation in order to achieve long term development objectives. More specifically, the Project, throughout its two phases seeks to promote the culture of inclusive and participatory civic dialogue, create spaces for multi-actor interactions, generate institutional changes for peaceful management of complex situations, generate, systematize and disseminate knowledge, build and strengthen institutional capacities for consensus building and peaceful transformation of conflict.

*Geographic Scope and Beneficiaries*

Given its regional scope, the Project interventions were aimed at the LAC region in its entirety. During its both phases the Project carried out interventions in the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.

It is difficult to quantify the number of beneficiaries of such activities as learning journeys, local and regional courses, publications, study cases, results of research and analysis, news reports and the electronic bulletin InfoDialogo. It is also difficult to quantify the beneficiaries of the bi-national dialogue between Colombia and Ecuador, which include thousands of persons living in the border zone as well as the populations of these countries at large. As for the beneficiary institutions directly engaged with the Project, their number is at least 80 for the first phase and 40 for the second phase and includes those who participated in the definition of the democratic dialogue field and creation of the knowledge on dialogue.

*Implementation Phases, Strategic lines and Programmatic linkages*

The RPDD emerged from the experience of Vision Guatemala and the deliberations of the Preliminary Workshop held in November 2000 in Guatemala. There, one hundred participants from 17 countries discussed various aspects of constructing civic scenarios and civic dialogue processes, reviewed various dialogue tools and consolidated collective experiences which fed into the concept and rationale of the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue. The subsequent learning workshops in Guatemala, May 2002, Panama, December 2002 and Argentina, December 2003 saw to the establishment of the network of dialogue practitioners that formed the basis for the Regional Community of Practice on Democratic Dialogue; framed the typology of contexts in which dialogue processes can be applied, and discussed a series of questions to operationalize and promote the Democratic Dialogue concept in the framework of UNDP regional initiative.

The Project was implemented in two phases. The first phase, initiated in 2001 was titled Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue: Promoting Multi-Sector Consensus-building as a Tool for Strengthening Democratic Governance. The RPDD was an initiative of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean. It was aimed at strengthening democratic institutions as a prerequisite for achieving long-term human development in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that wereemerging from years of military dictatorships, armed conflicts and major social and political transformations of the late 1900´s.

In this context, the goal of UNDP was to facilitate the process of reconciliation of post-conflict societies and help foster institutional reform and development by applying the multi-actor strategies for consensus building and providing tools for civic dialogue processes and conflict resolution. It was for this purpose that UNDP RBLAC launched the regional initiative on Democratic Dialogue, which consolidated the practices and experiences accumulated globally to help the societies of Latin America apply dialogic processes to stimulate changes in perception and problem definition and to construct common vision for joint action.

The first phase of the Project was based on three main components (Knowledge Creation, Technical Support to Country Initiatives and Resource Mobilization) and was aimed at societies in the countries of LAC region as well as UNDP Country offices in LAC. Later on an additional Communications component was added, which included the development of Democratic Dialogue website, dissemination of knowledge materials and creation of expert network. The Project was based in Guatemala City and executed directly by UNDP Guatemala. It was linked to the SRF Goal Enabling Environment for Sustainable Human Development and Sub-Goal: National, Regional and Global Dialogue to expand the development opportunities for sustainable and equitable development. It was also harmonized with the II RCF for LAC (2001-2005 extended to 2007) within the Democratic Governance Component. The first phase was completed in 2007.

The second (current) phase of the Project was approved in March 2008 and is due to be finalized in December 2011. The strategic approach of this phase is aligned with the priorities of the [UNDP’s Strategic Plan](http://www.undp.org/execbrd/word/dp07-43_updated.doc) and the LAC [Regional Programme Document for the period of 2008-2011](http://www.undp.org/latinamerica/country-docs/RPD2008-2011.doc). Within these frameworks, the Project contributed directly to the CPR Focus Area 3: Crisis Prevention and Recovery, in particular to the Key Result Area of enhancing conflict and disaster risk management capabilities. More specifically, the Project made contributions to two outcomes of the CPR Focus Area: outcome 3.1: Capacities of National Institutions to Manage Crisis Strengthened; and outcome 3.3: Joint Border Area Development Initiatives are Strengthened.

The overall strategy of the current phase is to strengthen democratic institutions by making them more responsive to citizen’s needs and demands through the provision of innovative social methodologies and capacities to prevent conflict, manage crisis and build consensus.

This strategy is based on 3 main components: 1) capacity development for strengthening facilitation skills of social and political leaders, facilitators and UNDP/UN personnel to promote and structure dialogue processes and approaches to face collective problems.  2) a demand-driven support to dialogue processes in the region with a strong emphasis on support to national strategies; and 3) consolidation of a Community of Practice and Learning which will constantly work on creating and systematizing knowledge on dialogue and acts as a pool of expertise that will guide the support given at the national level. The first three outputs of the RPDD reflect the above strategic components. The Project also includes a special output aimed at promoting consensus building in crucial border areas.

*Execution and Implementation Modalities and Challenges*

The Project has experienced serious challenges in implementation due to certain political decisions and institutional changes. While initially forming part of the Democratic Governance portfolio, by 2007 the Project was increasingly viewed by UNDP as a tool for conflict prevention and transformation. In 2008, the CPR practice area was formally created and coinciding with the completion of the first phase of the Project, it was decided to assign the Project to CPR Practice.

Around the same time the Project Director left the Project and a decision was taken to recruit a new Project Director to provide overall strategic guidance as well as technical and management support. However, the new Project Director was not hired until August 2010 and the Project continued to operate from UNDP Guatemala with the minimum human and financial resources. This caused significant impediments in the course of the implementation of the Project.

Until September 2010, the Project was executed under DEX modality and implemented by UNDP Guatemala, which also hosted the Project Team. Until 2008 the Project had a Director who was in charge of conceptual guidance and strategic leadership of the Project. The Project team comprised a Project Coordinator, an Information Processes Consultant, and an Administrative-finance Assistant. During a limited time Project also included a Dialogue Processes Consultant and a Network Strengthening Consultant After the departure of the Project Director, the Project Coordinator assumed the day-to-day management of the Project in coordination with UNDP Guatemala and CPR Practice Area in Panama.

Most of Administrative and Financial processes were handled by the Project Team and approved by UNDP Guatemala. The Information Processes Consultant and the Administrative-Finance Assistant had Atlas profiles of a General User and a Buyer respectively. The latter function was limited to requisitions and receipts and did not include the function of Purchase Orders. The Project therefore had to rely on the Guatemala Office Administration which often resulted in delays of approval of Purchase Orders.

During the first phase, the budget and project revisions were prepared by the RPDD and signed in RBLAC NY. As of 2008, all Project and budget revisions were approved in Atlas by UNDP Guatemala and signed in Panama. The Project did not receive substantive programmatic support from UNDP Guatemala; all substantive decisions were coordinated with CPR Practice Area while administrative processes were managed and approved by UNDP Guatemala. See Annex 3: Description of Services.

As of October 2010, Project implementation has been transferred to the Regional Service Centre in Panama. In August 2010, the newly appointed Conflict Prevention Advisor of the CPR Cluster assumed the function of the RPDD Director.

The Project had a formally established Project Board during both phases; however the Project document did not specify the composition, structure and roles of the Board. The Board met not more than two times during the first phase. For the second phase the Evaluation did not find the evidence of the Project Board meetings and information about its members. All key decisions, including the approval of the Project Document for the second phase, were consulted and made by email with RBLAC and after the establishment of the CPR Practice, with the CPR Practice Leader and Regional Centre senior management.

*Strategic Partnerships*

Since its inception the RPDD has developed strategic partnerships with various key institutions that are key actors in the field of conflict prevention and resolution, peace-building, democratic governance and institutional reform. UNDP has partnered with the national governments in countries where the Project has carried out activities, with the civil society and academic institutions, donors as well as various programmes and networks of dialogue practitioners. The list of strategic partners includes such OAS, IDEA, CIDA, AECID, ACDD, the Carter Centre, CAF, Fundación PROPAZ, Global Leadership Initiative, WSP-International, International Institute for Sustained Dialogue, the Third Side Network, Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, Mediators Foundation, University for Peace, Hewlett Foundation Conflict Prevention Program, Soros Foundation. The Project has forged strategic partnerships with UN System agencies, such as UN DPA as well as with UNDP bureaus such as BCPR and BDP.

For more details about Challenges encountered by the Project see Chapter 7: Findings and Chapter 8: Conclusions.

**CHAPTER 4: EVALUATION SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES**

*Evaluation Objectives*

As defined in the UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, ¨Evaluation feeds into management and decision making processes, and makes an essential contribution to managing for results. Evaluation informs the planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting cycle. It aims at improving the institutional relevance and the achievement of results, optimizing the use of resources, providing client satisfaction and maximizing the impact of the contribution of the UN system.

Thus the objective of the Evaluation is to provide the CPR Practice and UNDP leadership, in particular BCPR and RBLAC, with sufficient information and recommendations in order to:

1. Define the relevance of the Project in the current regional context and in its current format;
2. Determine whether there is a need for the Project services in the region and identify/confirm thematic areas of intervention;
3. Conduct consultations with key actors to assess existence of adequate institutional and financial resources for the continuation of the Project and make provisions for resource mobilization as necessary;
4. Take the decision whether to continue the Project beyond 2011 and in which format;
5. Conduct consultations to formulate the adequate exit strategy, in order to institutionalize the capacities and know-how generated by the Project and ensure sustainability of the Project results and products;
6. Plan Project activities and program resources for the remainder of the Project life.

*Evaluation Scope*

Within this overall objective, the evaluation primarily focused on the status of implementation of the current (second) phase of the Project (2008 to present) including the progress towards its 4 expected outputs, based on the set of baselines, indicators and targets and assessed main achievements, challenges and lessons learned, both operational as well as technical and conceptual. The evaluation also assessed the quality and validity of the said outputs, baselines, indicators and targets, and wherever necessary, suggested adjustment to the results framework and AWP as necessary.

The evaluation reviewedthe overall progress of the Project since its inception in 2001, assessed the validity of existing strategic directions of the Project in the current socio-political context.

To the extent possible the evaluation assessed the awareness about the Project as well as the need for dialogic approach in the region, potential demand for Project services and possible entry points and strategic alliances for future cooperation.

The evaluation reviewed the implementation modalities of the Project, financial and administrative arrangements to determine if the Project had adequate financial and human resource capacity to achieve the intended outputs, if the resource mobilization was adequate and successful and if the use of funds was appropriate and served the Project objectives.

The evaluation reviewed the extent of support, guidance and political leadership provided to the Project to determine the level of corporate commitment and political visibility vis-à-vis the regional and national partners.

The Evaluation **did not** assess the achievement of the objectives of the First Phase of the Project (2001-2007) and referred to the Report on the Evaluation of the Second Cooperation Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean conducted by UNDP Evaluation Office in May 2007. The Evaluation also considered the responses collected during the interviews to appraise the implementation of the First Phase.

The evaluation **did not** assess specifically the financial efficiency and financial management arrangements of the Project. However, general conclusions were made on the overall financial performance and management arrangements on the basis of audit reports and financial reports reviewed during the evaluation.

The present evaluation **did not** assess the achievement of Project outcomes or the impact of Project´s effects on broader development goals since it is still in the implementation phase.

The evaluation **did not** formulate a proposal for the new phase since this task is not within the established terms of reference and requires more structured and targeted assessment of demand with active participation of all stakeholders in the consultative and decision-making process. Nevertheless, based on the findings, the evaluation identified several entry points and strategic areas of intervention and provided the CPR Practice Area leadership with a set of recommendations for the final year of the current phase to facilitate the consultation and awareness raising and assessment of the demand for the new phase.

The evaluation was conducted from Panama and was concerned with Latin America and the Caribbean. It covered three types of population: Project beneficiaries (UNDP COs as well as nongovernmental institutions), Democratic Dialogue practitioners and UNDP personnel associated with Project management/leadership.

*Evaluation Criteria and Questions*

The evaluation criteria were based on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of the Project and its interventions, as well as relevance of strategic positioning of the Project and strategic partnerships that would contribute to the achievement of the ultimate outcomes of the Project and the sustainability of its results. The evaluation also considered Visibility as a separate evaluation criterion.

Semi-structured interviews questions were based on the evaluation criteria mentioned above and varied for each respondent depending on his/her association with and awareness about the Project. Thus, practitioners and beneficiaries not directly involved in the Project implementation were not asked specific questions related to the adequacy of the results framework matrix and the AWP, Project design, implementations arrangements, relevance of outcomes and outputs etc. In such cases the questions focused more on the overall relevance of the Project in the regional context, major achievements and problems, strategic positioning and comparative advantage of UNDP vis-à-vis other institutions involved in dialogue processes, overall need for dialogue, potential demand for UNDP involvement through a regional Project or other modality.

Similarly, respondents who had occupied managerial positions, UNDP staff, decision makers received more specific questions related to the Project design, relevance of outputs, activities indicators, baseline data and targets, administrative and financial management arrangements and the like.

The Evaluation tried to minimize the response bias by wording the questions without suggesting the leading opinion.

A consolidated list of indicative (guiding) questions is given in Annex 2.

**CHAPTER 5: EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY**

*Data sources*

The evaluation used the following data sources: UNDP strategic and programmatic frameworks; Thematic and conceptual frameworks; Basic Project information; Knowledge products produced by and about the Project; Stakeholder information; and Financial Information.

The full list of the data sources is given in Chapter 10: Data Sources and Bibliography.

*Sample and Sampling Frame*

Given the time and budget constraints and the response bias (see Chapter 6 Data Analysis) it was not possible to conduct a random sampling of the entire population of Project partners; therefore a non-probability sampling method was used. An acceptable approximation was made through a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling, whereby the respondents were selected upon recommendation of current and former Project management and staff and were added throughout the evaluation. Therefore the current sample has certain limitations as it is not representative of the entire population, it is not as structured and rigorous as probability sampling would have been, and there is a possibility of a bias in the selection of the respondents.

For the purposes of this Evaluation the Population of Interest was defined as all persons associated with the Project throughout the Project cycle, or Project’s main stakeholders. This population can be divided into three overlapping groups: beneficiaries, corporate stakeholders, and contributors.

The Beneficiaries group is comprised of persons or institutions that benefitted from advisory and facilitation services, knowledge transfer, training and capacity building activities and the like. These mostly include UNDP COs, practitioners, governmental or civil society institutions or their representatives.

The Corporate group is comprised of UNDP staff including senior and middle management at Country and Bureau level, UNDP analysts and/or programme staff, designated focal points involved in the management and decision making processes affecting the Project.

The third group was identified as Contributors which include the expert practitioners and donors.

The Corporate and Contributor groups have overlapped with the beneficiaries group since many management group members have benefitted from the Project services through capacity building activities, facilitation services, etc.

Some sub-groups were not included in the list of respondents or did not participate: Government representatives were not included in the respondents´ list. As for the external donors, only one donor agency was approached and declined to participate.

Not all groups were equally represented in the sample and the number of representatives per group (beneficiary, corporate, and contributor) was too small to extrapolate the results to make generalization about the entire target population.

See Annex 1 for the description of the sample.

*Data collection procedures and instruments*

Neither qualitative nor quantitative approaches are sufficient to provide the insights and information on their own (citation). In the case of the RPDD, a combination of both approaches was used with a stronger emphasis on qualitative methods of data collection. This was due primarily to the above mentioned limitations to conduct a representative survey. Secondly, quantitative evaluations are most appropriate during the impact evaluations whereby larger target populations are assessed and random sampling is applied. Finally, the Project baseline data are formulated in such a way that makes quantitative analysis difficult to conduct.

This data collection method was based on Project documents, reports, case studies, and policy and strategy documents, open ended semi-structured interviews, extended discussions, observations as well as a visit to the Project site. The complete list of documents consulted during the evaluation is in Chapter 10.

The primary qualitative data was comprised of the knowledge, observations and commentary of the target population. The secondary qualitative data utilized during the evaluation included the information generated by UNDP, the Project and its stakeholders. Certain quantitative information was used to assess the degree to which the output targets have been reached, (including budget data, basic Project statistics, etc.), however these were verified, interpreted and contextualized using qualitative information.

Initially it was contemplated to conduct a brief structured survey to rate the Project success, relevance, institutional arrangements, and other parameters. However the survey was not conducted partly because of the small number of persons in each group and mostly because the final respondent group was not consolidated until 8 days before the final report was due and the final interview was conducted 3 days before the due date. Instead several of the survey questions were incorporated into the semi-structured interviews and a tentative rating scale of the Project components was constructed to obtain approximate rating of the Project using proxy indicators.

*Stakeholder Participation*

The evaluation was guided by the fundamental premise of transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders, which are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process. As defined by UNEG, consultation during the evaluation process ¨improves the credibility and quality of the evaluation, [it] can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations¨[[1]](#footnote-2).

In line with these provisions, most of the Project stakeholders were duly informed about the Project Evaluation and provided with the relevant information. UNDP country Offices, representatives of BCPR, BDP, CIDA, PAPEP, were contacted for interviews and information gathering purposes, providing valuable information and insights for the analysis and thus contributing directly to the evaluation. However, several important stakeholders did not participate in the Evaluation: Some stakeholders did not respond to repeated invitations and were thus excluded from the evaluation. CIDA was not available for interviews, as well as some former and actual UNDP staff. LRC, VDA, and academic institutions were not included due to time limitations. IDEA and UN DPA have not been contacted.

*Ethical Considerations*

In line with the UNDP Evaluation Policy and the UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, the evaluation was based on the principles of independence, intentionality, transparency, and ethical integrity. All respondents were provided with the Evaluation Terms of Reference that stated the objectives, scope and criteria of the evaluation. In order to capture maximum information and ensure its correctness, whenever possible the interviews were recorded. All those respondents, whose interviews were recorded, were informed about it and asked for the permission to record. All recorded conversations are available for inspection; however, due to the confidentiality of interviews, they will be made available to the respondent in case of dispute. Most of the respondents requested to receive the evaluation report. One respondent reviewed the interview notes and provided comments.

*Background Information*

The Evaluation was conducted by independent consultant Nana Gibradze, who was selected from the Regional Centre Associated Expert Roster based on her experience in Conflict Prevention issues and extensive experience with UNDP and other international development agencies.

**CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS**

The evaluation reviewed more than 70 documents and reference materials and interviewed 27 persons logging 35 hours 32 minutes of interview time. One visit to Project site was conducted. 16 (59%) respondents were male, 11 (41%) female. 20 (74%) have been UNDP Staff members at some time of the Project lifetime or contracted by UNDP as programme/Project staff.

The CPR Practice Leader was consulted before and during the Evaluation and provided important inputs regarding the actual phase of the Project, including the details about the ongoing and planned activities in the area of Democratic Dialogue. Although these consultations are not regarded as interviews and the CPR Practice Leader is not included in the list of respondents, the obtained information was considered when drawing the conclusions.

27 interviews were conducted by phone or Skype. 10 persons were interviewed in person of whom 8 were interviewed during the mission to Guatemala. The average duration of each interview was 1 hour 31 minutes with the shortest interview lasting 28 minutes and the longest 5 hours. One respondent sent additional inputs and documentation by email. One respondent was interviewed in person during the visit to Guatemala and later contacted by phone for additional inputs. 17 out of 27 interviews were recorded to ensure the accuracy of reporting. 10 were not recorded due to technical difficulties encountered by the evaluator. Annex 1 provides detailed information about the respondents and interviews.

In addition to the limitations of the sampling method described in Chapter 5, the evaluation experienced a certain degree of non-response. In order to reduce the response bias the evaluation tried to contact non respondents and obtained additional responses. In total, 40 persons were approached for interview at various stages of the evaluation. One person declined the invitation to participate due to time constraints. One offered to be interviewed in November but the offer was declined. One respondent declined to be interviewed quoting limited recollection of the Project. 10 persons (25%of the total of 40 invited) never responded to repeated communications. Several respondents were not able no answer one or more questions due to nature of their association with the Project. The interviewed 27 persons represent 68% of the total persons invited for interviews.

Of the 27 respondents, 25 (93% of the total of interviewed) were associated with the Project during the first phase. Of these, 11 (41%) collaborated with the Project **only** during the first phase. 14 (52%) have been engaged in some way with both phases of the Project. Two persons (7%) got involved with the Project during the second phase of which one respondent had very limited knowledge of the Project activities but offered insights about the overall relevance of the subject matter (democratic dialogue) and provided suggestions for future consultations and entry points.

5 (19%) respondents had very clear knowledge of Project objectives, strategy, and conceptual framework. 15 (56%) respondents were not well familiar with the Project document, but had specific knowledge and experience about activities related to one or more specific outputs. The remaining 7 (26%) had very limited or no knowledge of Project objectives and the strategy.

Due to these factors, it was not possible to draw generalized conclusions about the perceptions within each category i.e. the evaluation cannot with all certainty conclude that the responses reflect the characteristics of the entire population of Democratic Dialogue stakeholders from where the sample was drawn. However, based on the evidence contained in the reviewed documentation and respondents´ testimonies, the evaluation can offer a gross estimate of the results for the entire population.

**CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS**

*Project Design*

The evaluation did not assess the project design of the first phase, since the corporate requirements for Project documents and management systems have changed and the subject of the evaluation is the current phase of the Project.

The Project document of the current phase is brief and concise and provides basic background information and contents. The Project rationale and objectives are coherent and well aligned with the Regional Programme Document and UNDP Strategic Plan. The Results and Resources Framework provides clear links with the RPDD intended outcomes, outcome indicators, baselines and targets. The baselines and targets for outcomes are not clearly formulated as they do not provide a unit of measurement aligned with the indicator and therefore make the measurement of change over time difficult.

The RRF outputs do not have targets, instead targets are provided for Indicative Activities. These targets are abstract and not measurable, as they do not have a unit of measurement and are not aligned with indicators. Similarly, the baseline data are note measurable, which makes the task of tracking progress over time complicated.

The Project has 4 outputs with corresponding Atlas ID numbers. The outputs are relatively clear and coherent, although use of a verb describing positive change is recommended for output statement. Outputs are defined as products and services to be produced by the resources of the Project. Output 1 is too ambitious and broad to allow UNDP to have control over its achievement, especially given the difficulty in measuring the achievement of intangible products such as the ones related to dialogue.

The Output indicators are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound. All of the indicators are quantitative and measure the progress towards outputs in terms of numbers and percentages. Outputs 1, 2 and 4 have 4 indicators each, which is a reasonable number of indicators to measure change and allow cross-checking. However, output 3 has 11 indicators, which may be justified by the Project context but is difficult to control and verify. It is recommended to maintain fewer indicators if possible.

The Management Arrangements are not clearly defined. The structure and the functions of the Project Board are not clear. The document mentions the Outcome Board without defining the structure and roles within it. The document uses the terms Project Coordinator, Project Manager and Project Advisor without defining their functions and relationship with the Project.

Cost recovery policies are not clearly defined in the Project Document. While there are adequate provisions in Atlas for charging 5% ISS and 7% GSM costs, more detail is suggested to explain the decision making and control functions, reporting lines and cost recovery policies.

The signed Project Document contains a detailed component ¨Quality Management for Project Activity Results¨ for the year 2008.While this component is well elaborated and detailed, the outputs listed in this component do not coincide with the Outputs listed in the RRF, making the quality control impossible.

This is due to the fact that the Project Document of the new Phase initially only covered the year 2008, therefore the targets and quality criteria were set for 2008. Later on when it was decided to expand the project to 4 years, it was decided not to change the Quality Control Matrix as it was considered difficult to set detailed targets and quality criteria for all 4 years of the Project. Annual targets for 2009 and 2010 were reflected in respective Annual Work Plans.

The Project Document does not have provisions for sustainability and exit strategy (see Chapter 7, Findings).

*Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Visibility*

Evaluation assessed the Project according to the above criteria using findings of the interviews as well as the information contained in the documentation provided by the Project and by some respondents.

The evaluation referred to the report of the Evaluation of Second Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF) for Latin America and the Caribbean, conducted in 2007 by UNDP Evaluation Office. This Timeframe of the II RCF for LAC was 2001-2005 (extended to 2007) coincided with the implementation of the first phase of the RPDD and the latter was included in the scope of the RCF Evaluation.

The table below summarizes the rating of both phases of the Project based on the information obtained from the interviews and Project documentation adding the Visibility component. The rating for the first phase coincides with the rating given by the Evaluation of the Second Regional Cooperation Framework mentioned above.

**Table 1. Project Rating**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | PHASE 1 | | | PHASE 2 | | |
|  | High | Satisfactory | Poor | High | Satisfactory | Poor |
| Relevance | x |  |  | X |  |  |
| Effectiveness |  | X |  |  | X |  |
| Efficiency |  | X |  | X |  |  |
| Sustainability |  | X |  |  |  | X |
| Visibility |  | X |  |  |  | X |

Below are the findings of the evaluation organized by the key questions asked during the interviews:

***RELEVANCE***

**Was the timing and purpose of the Project relevant at the inception point?**

26 of 27 respondents (96%) acknowledged that the Project was highly relevant for the LAC region and UNDP in general at the inception point.

Most of the respondents noted that the Project was conceived in the complex political and social context when most of Latin America was living through the transition from conflicts to peace. It was particularly relevant for strengthening of the third wave democracies where interests of very different and strongly confrontational actors were at stake. There was a plethora of complex issues, which included transition to peace and peace agreements, disarmament and reconciliation, legislation on armed forces and the use of land, constitutional reform etc. It was very relevant as a new way of understanding the role of dialogue in deeply divided and polarized societies of Latin America and for the creation of spaces for understanding, opening up the channels of communication.

The Project was initially launched to facilitate UNDP intervention in many of the post-conflict countries of LAC such as Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Colombia etc, to offer cooperation and technical assistance. In this context the Project was particularly relevant as a new way of understanding the importance of creating spaces in deeply divided societies and to work towards restoring relationships and understanding across the existing polarization even when it was difficult or impossible to reach agreements. At that time UNDP (and OAS) responded to a very relevant need of opening up channels of communication by joining forces and supporting the regional dialogue initiative.

The RPDD was a very promising endeavor as it helped formulate the Democratic Dialogue as an institutional concept and promote it as a new theoretical field. In the word of one respondent, it was particularly important politically to promote the concept that ¨democracy has its ¨hardware¨ in the form of the institutions as well as the ¨software¨, in the form of the processes¨. It has become vital for generating the agendas of inclusion, participation, peaceful approach to conflictivity, which would be gradually elevated to the level of civic culture for dialogue.

26 respondents (96%) mentioned that the Project contributed significantly to the creation of methodologies and tools which bring people together to work, to eliminate differences and start to listen, construct jointly. It created a very important niche to facilitate processes and promote a variety of themes, changes in attitude and ways of dealing with complex issues. The RPDD helped foster better understanding on how to better formulate public policies, how to strengthen the political system to influence political processes.

**Is the Project still relevant in a political and social context that has evolved considerably in the last ten years?**

All respondents agree that the issue of the Democratic Dialogue has not lost its relevance in the region but may vary based on the country and the context. As one respondent noted, the ¨beauty of the dialogue is in its flexibility and adaptability¨ in that it can be adapted to the realities and needs of the modern societies.

According to the respondents, the initial phase of the Project focused on experiences and practices collected from democratic dialogue processes, which were the repercussions of big conflicts of the 80s and 90s. Today the LAC society does not face major bipolar conflicts of the past, but deals with different kinds of phenomenon: on the one hand a series of localized conflicts, related to the use of land and natural resources, indigenous rights, etc., and on the other hand the issues of violence and insecurity, transnational organized crime, migration, climate change, etc. that generate different type of social, economic and governance problems.

25 (93%) respondents believe that the DD approach is capable of addressing these potential issues if properly framed conceptually and operationally. It was noted repeatedly that the RPDD is particularly relevant to address the emerging realities of conflictivity not only specific conflicts. According to one respondent the existing social division and political manipulation of social processes (e.g. Honduras) generate strong polarization and tensions and make the DD approach particularly relevant.

24 respondents (89%) believe that the Project has adequate technical capacity and know-how to fully adapt to the new political and socio-economic reality and respective needs but needs strategic leadership to maintain a more strategic perspective of UNDP engagement in democratic governance and conflict prevention areas. 4 respondents (15%) mention the ¨dialogue fatigue¨ on one hand and 20 (74%) mention a general lack of awareness about the dialogue concept and methodologies on the other and point to the need to ¨overhaul¨ the concept and publicize it in the region to regain relevance.

26 respondents (96%) consider that the Project continues to be extremely relevant but requires a solid corporate effort and support to provide the Project with adequate visibility and political support to reestablish it as an important source of knowledge and know-how on Democratic Dialogue and to better position it vis-à-vis the governments and UNDP Country Offices. 4 respondents (15%) believe that although the Project continues to be relevant ¨it has lost the momentum and visibility and is at risk of losing its relevance if it is not capable of demonstrating its value by reengaging in long term strategic interventions¨.

**Does the Project continue to be an innovative and catalytic initiative?**

18 respondents (70%) believe that the Project maintains its innovative edge by continuing to expand the knowledge base, enriching the database of experiences, case studies and lessons learned and expert profiles and by mapping the conflict transformation resources within the region. 22 respondents (81%) consider the Democratic Dialogue Project as a ¨depository¨ of knowledge on democratic dialogue or a ¨ knowledge hub¨, where potential clients can find every type of information on democratic dialogue and its application.

UNDP personnel consider this type of knowledge resource centre where all in-house knowledge is codified, categorized and easily available to be particularly valuable for UNDP users engaged in complex multi-actor processes. In the opinion of the dialogue practitioners, the RPDD knowledge base is also indispensable for the Dialogue practitioners in the LAC region and beyond as it provides a unique space for dialogue, conflict and governance practitioners to converge and gain social capital.

The respondents noted that years have passed since the publication of the handbook and there is a wealth of knowledge accumulated in Latin American and the Caribbean since 2005 that has not been properly studied and codified. At least 11 respondents (41%) believe that the Project has at its disposal all required knowledge and methodological tools to study and systematize these experiences and continue contributing to the UNDP knowledge base both regionally and globally.

**Does the Project respond to current needs of UNDP Country Offices?**

While it was not possible to assess the current needs of most of UNDP Offices in LAC region it was possible to infer from the responses that the general Project strategy and objectives are currently relevant for at least 3 Country Offices. 24 respondents (89%) noted that the need may not be easily identifiable, unless there is a clear understanding of the Democratic Dialogue Concept on one hand and the awareness of the services and tools the RPDD offers (see next question). 13 respondents (48%) indicated that any office that deals with issues of Governance, Conflict Prevention, Poverty and MDGs, Gender, Environment and Energy is a potential beneficiary of Project services as each of these areas implies stakeholder participation and consensus building and may apply the dialogue approach in the process.

As one respondent observed, there is a multitude of situations in the region where multistakeholder dialogue would be necessary, anchored to democratic governance and/or conflict resolution. In many countries of Latin America, arguably in most countries of the Caribbean where there have not been major wars or violent conflicts, societies do not see the complex problems and do not identify the undercurrent need for dialogue. However, once the positive experiences are highlighted and the concept is clearly communicated, it may be easier to identify the needs and set the benchmarks for Democratic Dialogue.

**Is there an unattended existing demand for dialogic approaches in the region?**

There was a unanimous opinion that there is a significant need for dialogic approaches in the region to help the governments and the societies deal with the modern challenges of democracy and human development. However, most of the respondents (24 persons or 89%) noted that this need has not been always properly identified and formulated as a demand by the countries.

One of the reasons for this is the relative lack of awareness on democratic dialogue approach in the countries as well as within UNDP. As one of the respondents noted ¨ I don’t think there is a demand because the subject is not known; you can’t demand what you don’t know, but there is obviously a lot of need¨. Adds another respondent with a senior UNDP position: ¨They don’t knock on the door unless they have heard of it¨. Quoting another respondent, ¨the problem will not go away unless the problem is framed properly and that is exactly what is lacking in the region¨.

However, 11 respondents (41%) noted that in countries where the Project had been directly involved and where the Dialogue capacities have been installed in the UNDP CO´s like Bolivia or Mexico, demand is relatively well formulated and UNPD is well positioned to adequately address it with the help of the regional resources.

24 respondents (89%) agree that there is a need to ¨publicize the offer¨ (visibilisar la oferta) to make the concept and the methodology known and relevant through working with Country Offices as well as at the Headquarters’ level.

15 respondents (70%) noted that there is an urgent need for capacity building of Resident Representatives and Governance/CPR advisors, training the UNDP staff in basic dialogue concepts and skills so that they are capable of assisting the governments in identifying and framing the problem and formulating the demand for Democratic Dialogue.

**Are the Project outputs aligned with UNDP country offices´ priorities?**

It was not possible to test whether the outputs are aligned with current CO priorities as only 6 Country Office representatives were included in the list of respondents. Due to time constraints it was not possible to review the Country Programmes and other programmatic documents of LAC Country Offices. However, in principle Project outputs are relevant for most of the Country Offices in the region as they are aligned with the corporate priorities such as capacity building, knowledge management and communities of practice through corporate programmatic frameworks such as the UNDP Strategic Plan and the Regional Programme Document for Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Are the expected outputs relevant for the achievement of the Project outcomes?**

The evaluation concluded that expected outputs are relevant for the achievement of the Project outcomes as long as there is sufficient institutional capacity, corporate commitment and financial/human resources to ensure their achievement.

**Are the planned activities and inputs relevant for the achievement of expected outputs?**

The evaluation concluded that most of the inputs and activities are highly relevant but not sufficient for the achievement of expected outputs.

The Output 1 is too broadly defined and implies more than one national and/or local actor or institution whereas the Activity 1.1. explicitly refers to **one** regional institution. The activity also refers to the development of a curriculum on dialogue for practitioners. While this activity is relevant for the achievement of the output, it is not sufficient to build the capacities of one or more institutions either locally, nationally or regionally. Activities 1.2 and 1.3 partially address this drawback by offering a series of learning and capacity building activities for national and local institutions and UNDP staff. More importantly, the indicators, while well defined and relevant, are quantitative in nature and do not allow to measure the extent to which the capacities have been strengthened.

The same comment applies to Output 3. While the indicators are numerous and well defined, most of these indicators are numeric and only permit quantitative assessment of the progress.

**Are current strategic alliances relevant and adequate for the achievement of Project outputs?**

The evaluation concluded that the strategic alliances were relevant and adequate for the achievement of the Project outputs, especially during the I Phase. Since 2008 the Project Team has made a significant effort to maintain and nurture strategic alliances with international agencies, non-governmental organizations, donors and UN agencies established during the first phase. This is reflected in a number of joint collaborations, partnership agreements and share of co-financing obtained during the current phases. However, due to the lack of leadership and high-level political commitment as well as the limited funding, the Project has not been able to significantly expand its current partnership base and establish new alliances with important regional and international agencies, academic institutions and corporate actors.

***EFFECTIVENESS***

**Has the progress towards achievement of outputs been steady and according to the plan?**

Despite serious challenges related to the lack of leadership and recurrent financial constraints the Project has been successful in implementing all planned activities towards the intended outputs in accordance to Annual Workplans.

**Is the change in the achievement of the output measurable?**

As noted in the beginning of the Chapter, the output indicators are numeric and measurable and the evaluation was able to determine that all indicators have been complied with. However, targets and baseline data are not well defined and do not have a unit of measurement aligned with the indicators. Therefore, it is not possible to measure the **change** in achievement of outputs in the absence of a point of reference. However, based on the testimonies of the respondents and material reviewed, the evaluation concludes that the change in outputs has been apparent.

**Is the change in the output positive?**

The overall majority of the respondents considers that the Project has achieved its objectives and was a successful initiative throughout both phases; however, most of the respondents were more comfortable discussing the achievements of the first phase than the second phase.

The majority of respondents were not aware of the Project outputs, but overall Project objectives. 20 out of 27 (74%) respondents believed that the Project has achieved its objectives even in the conditions of major limitations and challenges due to lack of corporate support and leadership, lack of financial resources etc. 9 respondents (33%) requested the Evaluator to evaluate the Project with strong reference to constant lack of resources and leadership noting that the ¨Project did much more than it could¨ (hizo mucho mas que podia).

One respondent noted that his attitude was ¨quite cynical about measuring the accomplishments because the results are not tangible and UNDP should be more concerned about the quality of the relationships generated by the dialogic processes than the number of actual agreements and deals reached¨. Most of the respondents (23 or 85%) believe that capacity building component is ¨intangible¨ and is relatively difficult to document even though by all accounts the Project has been successful.

**Are institutional arrangements adequate and effective for the achievement of the outputs?**

The Project did not have adequate institutional arrangements during the second phase.

In 2008 the Project had been assigned to the Crisis Prevention and Recovery Cluster. On 7 August 2008 the communication from the RBLAC Director was sent to RBLAC Country Offices, with a copy to the Regional Centre directorate and other senior UNDP staff announcing the establishment of the Regional CPR Cluster and the planned recruitment of a CPR Cluster Leader by 1 January 2009. By the same time the Project Director left the Project and the Virtual PAC of 31 March 2008 stated that ¨the Project board still needs to be defined to clarify the management arrangements. A new Project director will be selected to lead the new phase of the Project¨[[2]](#footnote-3).

The CPR Cluster leader did not arrive until 1 July 2009 and the Project Director was formally recruited in August 2010. The evaluation could not find the evidence of the formal establishment of the Project Board, its composition and board meetings that would steer the Project and guide the Project Team especially in the absence of a Project Director. All major consultations and decisions were conducted by email correspondence. No evidence was found of an Outcome Board mentioned in the Project Document.

The Project was implemented from UNDP Guatemala, which provided adequate administrative support to the Project Team within the requirements of direct implementation.

The rationale of transferring the Project implementation to the Regional Centre was not well understood by some respondents. 3 respondents (11%) believe that this transfer with result in positive changes while 11 (41%) believe that the Project was well positioned in Guatemala and should not have been subjected to additional operational challenge.

A significant number of respondents (16 or 59%) consider it a major error to dismantle the current Project team. While it is understood that the Project is currently lacking financial resources, the respondents consider that the team should be retained in its entirety until the end of the year to sustain the accumulated knowledge and capacity and to support the newly appointed Project Director. The same number of respondents believe that the team should be maintained until the end of the Project while consultations should be conducted with stakeholders on how to better institutionalize project achievements and technical expertise.

The Evaluation did not find the evidence of ¨dismantling¨ the Project Team but rather of its restructuring. As of August the Project has a full-time Project Director in charge of overall management and guidance of the Project. Of the three Project staff members, one continues to work full time from Guatemala and another one has been offered a temporary part-time contract to provide advisory services and retain the institutional memory of the Project. Given the transfer of the Project implementation to Panama and severe deficit of funds, the post of the Administrative-Finance Assistant has been abolished and the administrative and financial support is being provided by the CPR team member in Panama.

***EFFICIENCY***

**Have the financial and human resources been sufficient to achieve the outputs?**

During the I Phase the Project received USD 1,493,452.53. The total amount required for the second phase (2001-2008) was $2,500,000 of which USD 802,477.08 was received. The Project Management and Operation Costs for the Second Phase were USD 268,539.96 which represents 33% of the total project funds.

21 out of 27 respondents (78%) believe that the financial and human resources have not been adequate and the Project team had made a ¨heroic¨ effort to achieve the outputs with the limited financial and human assets. Throughout its lifetime the Project had to face financial limitations and uncertainty of funding, whereby the Project Team would be required to cut the activities and adjust Workplans to fit within the allocation for any given year.

On the other hand, it was difficult to make financial Projections given that the Project responded primarily to the demand for services and it was not always possible to predict the type or the magnitude of the support. Therefore at times the Project had to respond to the requests for services with limited or no resources and make subsequent adjustments to limited Project budget in order to accommodate the demand.

**Have the resources been used efficiently?**

Based on the revision of Project annual reports, financial reports and 5 audit reports the evaluation concluded that the resources have been used adequately, transparently and efficiently. The Project achieved maximum efficiency by prudent spending, proper planning and accountability and seeking co-financing arrangements and partial cost recovery, charging part of the Project services and consultant costs to service recipients.

**Has the resource mobilization strategy been successful?**

The Project succeeded in attracting significant resources to complement UNDP funding during the first phase. From 2001-2008 the Project mobilized USD 711,486.69 as a third-party cost-sharing. The donors included Government of Canada, Soros Foundation, Spanish Cooperation Agency, Catalan Cooperation Agency, International IDEA, nIMD, and others.

Resource mobilization during the second phase was less than successful. Since the departure of the Project director the Project staff made numerous efforts to mobilize resources to complement the diminishing UNDP funding in order to carry out planned activities, but without adequate political weight and corporate backing this task was rather difficult. Of USD 21,552.02 of cost-sharing and co-financing arrangements, the Team managed to mobilize USD 10,178.93 from Hivos, nIMD and Universidad Rafael Landivar. The rest (USD 11,373.09) was the balance carried over from the first phase.

The Project did not have an articulated RM strategy, nor has there ever been a systemic effort to mobilize funds. The RDPP was instrumental in helping many countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, to mobilize resources, but there was not much success in attracting donor resources to finance the regional Project. As one UNDP staff member mentioned: ¨There were very few donors interested in funding the Regional Project. It was considered to be the vehicle to attract resources for LAC countries, whereas the Project itself had to be supported by UNDP funding or some complementary funding from partners¨. In fact, despite various intents to mobilize donor resources and several promises, the donors preferred to engage and fund activities directly at the national level.

In order to minimize the running costs and save funds for programmatic activities, the Project sought ways to charge part of Project services and consultant fees to beneficiary offices and projects. The Project Team has elaborated a Price List for services which included design, facilitation and implementation of Workshops, Courses, Capacity Development Programmes and Learning Journeys, Technical Assistance missions, design and facilitation of Dialogue programmes, systematizations and other services.

***SUSTAINABILITY***

**Is the Project sustainable?**

According to 21 respondents (78%) the Project is not sustainable in its current form but has an enormous value and potential and needs to be sustained by joint corporate efforts. It has been noted by at least 17 respondents (63%) that sustainability of projects of this character is often uncertain given the nature of the intervention and the intangible nature of its products.

24 respondents (89%) pointed at the enormous value of the knowledge and know-how generated by the Project and highlighted the importance of sustaining and institutionalizing the Project results. There is an overwhelming opinion that UNDP has not made adequate effort to sustain the achievements of the Project and is currently at risk of losing the human and intellectual capital created by the Project. Apart from a number of countries where the Project has had a major presence and has collaborated successfully to install technical capacities within the UNDP, most of the Project achievements may disappear or become obsolete in the absence of proper strategic decisions and proper visibility.

**Does the Project have adequate sustainability strategy?**

The approved Project document does not have provisions for sustainability of the Project results. During the first phase of the Project an effort was made to elaborate recommendations for sustainability of Project results and maximization of Project impact. During the Strategic Meeting of the RPDD of 27-31 October 2007 in La Antigua, Guatemala, the participants discussed several scenarios for the second phase of the Project and offered options for Project sustainability. The Virtual PAC of the Project conducted in March 2008 suggested to elaborate better the recommendations for the institutionalization of the mechanisms and activities of the Project in order to ¨make them sustainable after the Project’s end¨ which would contribute to define the exit strategy of the Project at the end of the period, especially in the Capacity-Building pillar¨[[3]](#footnote-4). The Project document for the current phase states that ¨the Project is clear that it has to work for installing sustainable local institutional mechanisms for dialogue and conflict transformation¨[[4]](#footnote-5), however there are no provisions and mechanisms for sustainability and the exit strategy.

The Project Team had made several efforts seeking guidance from UNDP on these issues, however, in the absence of an acting Project director and a clear UNDP strategy regarding the role and the need for the dialogue in the LAC region, no significant progress was made.

**Is there an adequate exit strategy?**

See the above paragraph

**Are financial, organizational and economic mechanisms in place to achieve sustainability of Project results?**

The Project currently does not have financial resources to sustain the Project results. There has been a modest progress in defining the institutional mechanisms which may lead to the achievement of certain sustainability of the Project: a new Project director has been appointed and there is a strong commitment on the part of the CPR Practice Area to sustain the Project results. However, there is a lot of uncertainty related to institutional changes occurring in UNDP and the recent financial crunch affecting the financing of UNDP programmes, which may have an effect on the sustainability of the Project results in the long run.

The respondents identified a serious institutional challenge that has strongly affected the Project to date and has had a negative effect on the sustainability of the Project in future. It is related to conceptual disagreement on the nature of the Project and its transfer from the Democratic Governance to the CPR Practice Area. While the opinions of the respondents are split on this issue (a slight majority of the respondents believes that the RPDD belongs in the Democratic Governance Area), all respondents agree that there is a need for better cooperation between the two practice areas and alignment of their programmes in order to avoid duplications and ensure synergies between the RPDD and other regional Projects within the Democratic Governance portfolio (such as PAPEP, SIGOB, PROLOGO, etc.). In the words of one respondent, there is a need to ¨explore programmatic linkages between the DD and UNDP-supported CP and DG programmes and look for ways how the DD initiative can be strategically linked with other regional programmes¨.

**Is there sufficient regional and/or national institutional capacity to ensure the continuity and sustainability of Project outputs?**

It was not possible to assess the national and regional institutional capacity within the scope of this Evaluation. However, based on the responses of the interviewed persons, it can be inferred that the existing regional and national capacities are not sufficient to ensure the sustainability of the Project outputs and there is a strong need to continue building the capacities for sustained dialogue working closely with regional, national and local governments, state institutions and nongovernmental and civil society organizations.

In particular, the overwhelming majority of the respondents (24 or 89%) noted the strong need to strengthen UNDP corporate capacities for democratic dialogue in order to offer adequate accompaniment to capacity building processes at national and regional levels and thus achieve the sustainability of the results. (see Chapter 7 Findings)

***VISIBILITY and OUTREACH***

23 out of 27 respondents (85%) said that the Project did not have sufficient visibility and is not properly known in the region. One respondent noted that too much visibility without adequate financial resources creates expectations and can be counterproductive whereas 19 respondents (70%) noted that the RPDD would have been able to attract more financial resources and partnerships and expand its outreach if it had sufficient leadership and visibility.

The respondents noted that while the Project had insufficient visibility at the regional level, it was more successful and known at a national level in countries where the Project had been actively involved with the governments, municipalities, civil society and the UNDP Offices and succeeded in creating a ¨platform¨ on which the actors were able to construct subsequent dialogue processes and launch similar initiatives.

Most respondents attribute this relative success to former Project beneficiaries who participated in the Project activities and were willing to give credit to UNDP and RPDD with their counterparts. On the other hand the respondents mention the role and commitment of individual Resident Representatives and staff in headquarters who believed in the Project and dedicated time and effort to promote and publicize it.

The respondents noted that even though the Project was initially mostly focused on conceptual aspects of the democratic dialogue and institutional issues, given the strong support and vision from the then RBLAC Director and the team in Headquarters, it managed to attain strong visibility and established solid presence in the region. However, during the second phase there has been ¨practically no attention from UNDP¨ and no political leadership to formulate and promote the regional agenda on democratic dialogue while simultaneously raising visibility and awareness **within** UNDP.

**What were the main achievements of the Project?**

**General achievements**

In the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the respondents (25 persons or 93%) the main achievements of the Project were associated with the change of political culture and the culture of dialogue, development of the top-notch methodology and knowledge material, high-quality and well targeted advisory services. The respondents also identify as Project achievements the Democratic Dialogue Community of Practice and to a certain extent strengthening of individual and institutional capacities for dialogue.

The respondents noted that the Project has contributed significantly to the qualitative change in thinking and mindsets, contributing a new vision of understanding among the actors and leadership, fostering change in the behavior that leads to better mutual understanding and joint vision of issues.

It was noted that in many countries of Central America characterized with high levels of inequality, violence and intolerance and with relatively short history of participatory democracy, the major contribution of the Project was the support to diversity and the ability to listen and hear others, acceptance of pluralism by actors, ability to look for common denominators despite differences and uniting different opinions for a joint vision.

The Project supported creation of a new field of dialogue mapping the issues and experiences and identifying the niche for UNDP engagement within the area of governance and conflict prevention and transformation. The Project strategic vision went beyond the facilitation of workshops and training sessions, but made a more fundamental effort of creating long-term institutional practices, through support to political processes, strengthening capacities and building consensus. According to one respondent, ¨the DD Project put the issue of dialogue in conversation amongst the practitioners and the conversation is possible because of the collective experiences in the region¨.

In the opinion of 20 respondents (74%) the Project has contributed to the development of the theoretical field of democratic dialogue by compiling and systematizing vast methodological material, experiences and case studies. By building the knowledge on democratic dialogue the Project has been making a long lasting impact in the region by contributing to the governance culture in LAC.

Most of the participants (23 or 85%) believe that the Project has succeeded in generating and disseminating knowledge on Democratic Dialogue, producing top quality knowledge products and providing space for knowledge exchange and dissemination. While one respondent noted that some of the knowledge products ¨are too wordy and long but very good¨ it was noted by at least 20 respondents (74%) that one of the legacies of the Project is the wealth of knowledge material and information available for the users at the Project website. 18 respondents (67%) name the Democratic Dialogue handbook and the website as one of the most relevant and valuable products that has had a major impact on knowledge generation and management.

In the opinion of the respondents the Project ¨did not wait for top down Knowledge Management cooperate efforts¨ but was proactive and went ahead creating an excellent knowledge base in the field of Democratic Dialogue. As one senior UNDP staff noted: ¨the RPDD developed a home-grown codified context for knowledge management purposes while many other corporate efforts have not been very successful.¨

**Achievement of Project Objectives/Outputs**

As mentioned in Chapter 4 Evaluation Scope and Objectives, the Evaluation did not assess the achievement of the Objectives of the first phase of the Project. Instead, the Evaluation referred to the Report of the Evaluation of Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean, conducted by UNDP Evaluation Office May, 2007. The Report rated the implementation of RCF programmes in the Democratic Governance Area by type of intervention and concluded that the RPDD has fully achieved its objectives in the areas of Policy Advice; Knowledge Creation and Advocacy; and Strategic Alliances and Capacity Building.

As for the current phase of the Project, the Evaluation assessed the progress towards the achievement of the four Project outputs quantitatively (based on the numeric indicators of the Results and Resource Framework) and qualitatively (on the basis of the testimonies of the respondents and documental evidence contained in various project reports)

**Output 1. National and local actors and institutions with capacities to design, convene, and facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues and consensus-building processes**

Based on the quantitative indicators provided in the RRF, the Output 1 has been achieved in its entirety. See Annex 4: Achievement of outputs.

There is an overwhelming opinion (23 persons or 85%) that the Project has succeeded in creating certain individual and institutional capacities; however, these are very difficult to measure and demonstrate in the short run. One respondent believes that there was never enough time and resources to dedicate to strengthening institutional capacities for dialogue, but mostly for individual capacities of government and civil society representatives and individual UNDP staff member who would then carry these capacities to their respective institutions. One respondent doubted that such capacity can be created in a short time and highlighted the need for a long-term strategic engagement and continuous efforts of UNDP in this field. 11 respondents (41%) believe that the Project succeeded in installing certain dialogue capacities in some UNDP offices and Government institutions but believe that these capacities can disappear unless it is regularly refreshed through trainings and practical application.

14 respondents (52%) believe that given the nature of dialogue, and frequent turnover and changes, it is very difficult to install dialogue capacities within national institutions. The respondents believe that these capacities can be most effectively strengthened by promoting the culture of dialogue, building awareness about the dialogue concept and methodology and involving more public servants and members of civil society in the dialogue processes. Many respondents share the opinion that dialogue does not always lead to an agreement. Even when the agreement is not reached there still remains the installed capacity and institutionality generated by the dialogue process. As one respondent noted, ¨dialogue can create a lot of fatigue frustration if we only look for agreements¨. Instead, the important issue is to aim at bridging the gaps and building understanding and relationships between the parties, which can have positive collateral effects.

Thus, it was pointed that most of the Government officials who participated in the initial dialogue processes in Guatemala were able to promote the concept in subsequent dialogue processes and to apply the skills in their interactions with their counterparts. One respondent quoted the case of 24 July 2003, also known as ¨Black Thursday¨ (Jueves negro) in Guatemala when protesters took over the streets of Guatemala City. One of the contributing factors to mitigating the crisis was the fact that there existed a platform of relationships between the adversaries which enabled them to interact and share a common message. As noted by the respondent: ¨the president of Guatemala had the power to dismantle the institutionality generated as a part of the peace process, but what he was not able to do overnight was to disband and return the relationships to their polarized previous state¨.

10 respondents (37%) believe that the Project has strengthened dialogue capacities in some NGOs and civil society organizations as well as of numerous individuals engaged in dialogue processes but needs to look for ways to institutionalize these capacities and ensure the sustainability of dialogue.

Most respondents (21 or 78%) agree that the Project should continue building the institutional capacities aiming at social and political leaders, facilitators and UNDP/UN personnel in order ¨ to strengthen facilitation skills and raise the capacity of leadership to promote and structure dialogic processes and approaches to face collective problems¨. 13 respondents (48%) agree that the results will be difficult to measure and point to the need to rethink the definition of ¨capacity of dialogue¨ so that it better captures the essence of dialogue and makes the task more realistic and measurable.

One UNDP staff member pointed that in order to be able to build the capacities we should better define them and make them more results oriented and ¨take a results-based approach to dialogue¨. Thus if the result is defined broadly as a dialogic society where people turn to dialogue rather than conflict, the results become difficult to measure and the task of teaching the dialogue may seem impossible. The only way to build a dialogic society is through its continuous application and practice, whereby the society repeatedly sees the results of a dialogue and becomes more dialogic in nature.

In line with its mandate UNDP supports the creation in the countries of dialogue institutions that would be in charge of dialogue processes at the national level. Thus, in the opinion of 11 respondents (41%) the Project should focus on strengthening the institutions that are responsible to formulate, convene and facilitate the dialogues at local and national level and build a kind of ¨peace architecture¨ in the communities. This implies working with different layers of the Governments, starting from the top decision makers to midlevel officials; NGOs and community organizations that use dialogue in their work and through these directly with the communities and civil society at large, helping them accept the dialogue and instilling the culture of dialogue as an essential component of democratic practice.

The majority of the respondents (21 persons or 74%) believe that UNDP itself is in need of dialogic capacities to work effectively with national governments on one hand, and UN System agencies on the other. As noted by one respondent: If dialogue is dealing with complex problems then there is a need for an in-house capacity, to deal adequately with the approach, to bring together the people, to ensure the highest quality of communication and the intelligent decision making¨.

11 respondents (41%) believe that UNDP capacity is a requirement and that there should be at least minimum technical capacity installed in the COs. These capacities can be complemented with the punctual technical expertise on one hand and continuous support from the RPDD or any other institutional entity in charge of the Democratic Dialogue. In the words of the respondents: The dialogue capacity has to be mandatory, it is not possible to count only on external expertise, the external expertise should be complementary to internal UNDP capacities.

Only 2 respondents noted that there is no need to specifically build the capacities for democratic dialogue of UNDP senior management and programme staff at country and headquarters´ level since such capacity already exists in the system through Peace and Development Advisers (who have mediation, dialogue facilitation, multi-stakeholder process facilitation experiences), BCPR Express Roster, DPA/Mediation Support Unit etc. One more respondent noted that while it would be very useful that the senior management and key programmes had DD capacities and skills, it may not be possible to achieve it given the financial and institutional limitations and this is why it is important to have strong regional technical capacities to respond to the needs at the national level.

21 respondents (74%) believe that the Project should concentrate on two types of capacity building for UNDP: general awareness level on one hand and high level dialogue skills for Resident Representatives and Programme persons including analysts, focal points, programme coordinators who work with the Governments and the communities.

**Output 2. Technical assistance to national and regional initiatives for using dialogic change processes as tools for democracy-building and the prevention of conflict**

Based on the quantitative indicators provided in the RRF, the Output 2 has been achieved in its entirety. See Annex 4: Achievement of Outputs.

In terms of the demand driven support to dialogue processes the respondents value highly the quality of services provided by the Project staff and experts. According to at least 13 respondents (48%) the Project managed to provide adequate expertise upon request, matching the necessities of specific countries and offering methodologies best suiting their purposes.

The Project team offered a wide range of services which included organization and facilitation of learning journeys, workshops and dialogue processes, systematization of experiences and elaboration of case studies, contributions to policy debates and documents, administrative and logistical support to events, facilitation of communications and support with document samples and presentations, methodologies and tools.

The respondents noted that the Project was particularly successful in matching the services with the necessities of specific countries, adapting to the requirements of the counterparts. The Project demonstrated a very effective use of the knowledge contents providing the whole spectrum of information and material, supporting the argument with adequate examples, demonstrating value of exercises, delivering the team of experts and ¨getting the job done¨.

There is a strong opinion (21 respondents or 78%) that the Project should continue with the established practices and offer technical and operational support to UNDP offices, national, regional and local institutions engaged in dialogue processes. However, the Project should be more proactive identifying the demand through raising awareness about the Democratic Dialogue concept and methodology and generating demand. As noted extensively in the above chapters, the existing demand does not adequately reflect the existing needs. The role of the Project is to work with the UNDP Country offices to increase their awareness about and capacities for democratic dialogue to work effectively with the Governments and formulate the Democratic Dialogue interventions.

**Output 3. Strengthened strategic communications and Community of Practice to support the implementation of the Project’s activities**

Based on the quantitative indicators provided in the RRF, the Output 3 has been achieved in its entirety. See Annex 4: Achievement of outputs and Annex 5: Community of Practice and Knowledge Management: Summary of Products.

As regards to the Consolidation of the Communities of practice and learning, 22 respondents (81%) point to the need to continue and further strengthen this component.

The Regional Community of Practice on Democratic Dialogue was established to create and promote the collective knowledge on civic dialogue and its applications. It was offering a space for ¨structured interaction between the theory and practice¨ to produce a new vision and understanding of dialogue as a tool for social development and societal transformation.

In the opinion of the respondents the Project had a varied degree of success with regard to the COP. It is considered that initially the Project managed to establish a functioning Community of Practice comprised of leading practitioners and experts. The Project was successful in building the collective experience and capacity of the COP, fostering the debate on democratic dialogue and stimulating exchange of knowledge. The Project succeeded in cultivating confidence and trust among the COP members and contributed to the creation of the national COPs in selected countries (Guatemala, Bolivia, Argentina).

However several respondents expressed their doubt about the quality and relevance of the actual Community of Practice. In the opinion of at least 9 respondents (33%) the inclusion of new members in the COP since 2008 has not been transparent and was rather ¨arbitrary¨ (de manera arbitraria). The same respondents believe that the COP was also affected by internal conflicts caused by the above lack of transparency.

The Evaluation did not find sufficient evidence of the above claim. With the exception of two isolated cases, the selection of new COP members was strictly governed by the internal committee that was in charge of reviewing the CVs of potential members and validating their qualifications and profiles. These arrangements are clearly stipulated in the description of the COP on the DD website, which specify that the selection of new members is ¨endorsed by a special selection committee¨[[5]](#footnote-6). In those exceptional cases mentioned above the inclusion of new members was recommended by senior management based on the experience of the proposed candidates and it was considered appropriate and acceptable by the committee.

The COP has also been affected by the lack of overall guidance experienced by the Project. While the Project Team has managed to maintain and nurture the existing COP, conducting trainings, experience sharing and learning journeys, there is a persistent opinion among the respondents that the current COP needs to be refreshed and restructured and equipped with a well defined conceptual framework and operational guidelines.

13 respondents (48%) believe that the COP members do not have a clear and common understanding of the COP roles and functions. 19 respondents (79%) believe that there is an urgent need to conceptualize better the work of COP and establish a clear rationale and objectives that would be aligned with the UNDP corporate goals on one hand and the priorities and objectives of the RPDD, while responding to the needs of the region. The respondents also agree that the DD COP needs more intensive capacity strengthening and rigorous training to maintain the highest level of knowledge and be able to offer the best quality human resources to UNDP Country Offices, practice areas and counterparts. Finally, the overwhelming majority (23 persons or 85%) believe that the COP requires adequate management and facilitation in order to continue growing and improving the knowledge and interaction.

As for the learning component, 22 respondents (81%) believe that the Project has made a significant contribution to learning by developing a democratic dialogue course that is available in English, Spanish and French, conducting more than 65 workshops, training courses and learning journeys for a diverse group of learners and practitioners, publishing more than 20 papers, 17 case studies and 25 experiences, thus contributing to the increased knowledge about the democratic dialogue.

However, in the opinion of at least 11 respondents (41%) the UNDP corporate learning platform is not adequate as it is only offered to UNDP staff and affiliated persons. As noted by one UNDP staff, UNDP Senior Management has long been opposed to opening the Democratic Dialogue Course to UN Agency representatives which contradicts the spirit of ¨One UN¨ and prevents wider dissemination and application of the dialogue approach in the development agenda. As an alternative solution the Project has successfully lobbied for producing a CD version of the Course for its wider dissemination to non-UNDP users.

The respondents note as a drawback the relative shortness of the DD course (4 hours) and its mostly descriptive nature. While highly valuing the existence of such an awareness-raising course in general, at least 7 respondents indicated the need to develop a more comprehensive academic course that would offer a combination of learning methods and tools for a more in-depth studying of DD concept, application and methodology and that would be available not only for UNDP staff and affiliates but to other UN Agencies, civil society, government and dialogue practitioners.

Several attempts have been made by the Project to affiliate the DD course with a renowned academic/research institution, which included FLACSO and Fielding University; however, final decisions were put on hold until the recruitment of a new Project Director.

**Output 4. Programme on Joint Border Initiatives developed and agreed by relevant parties**

Based on the quantitative indicators provided in the RRF, the Output 4 has been achieved in its entirety. See Annex 4: Achievement of outputs.

Of the initial list of 40 persons contacted by the Evaluation, 9 persons had been directly involved in or had the knowledge of the implementation of the Output 4. 4. Of these 9 persons only 5 participated in the interviews, the remaining 4 did not answer the invitations.

The Evaluation consulted the Report of the Evaluation of the Binational Dialogue between Colombia and Ecuador to complement the information received from the respondents and Project reports.

According to the respondents the Project was instrumental for conceptual, methodological and operational planning, implementation and facilitation of the meetings of the representatives of Colombia and Ecuador. The Project facilitated creation of spaces conducive to dialogue reducing the initial tensions between the groups and generating collaborative environments. The Project also provided invaluable services in analyzing and systematizing the points of convergence between the actors, stimulating interaction and reflection between the actors. The Project contributed to the construction of diverse points of view and assisted in introducing a comparative vision of the problem by bringing in distinct experiences.

The respondents believe that the Project also contributed in identifying and publicizing various cross-border citizenship initiatives and networks (indigenous and afro-descendent populations, environment, parochial and academic). As noted by one respondent: the RPDD is highly instrumental in strengthening such local-level cross-border initiatives and in helping the Governments view the border problems with a different perspective.

In the words of one respondent, in addition to all the financial, conceptual, methodological and operational support provided by the Project, the value added of UNDP involvement in the process is that it guarantees neutrality, safety and visibility of the effort and helps advance mutual knowledge and understanding, combat mistrust and xenophobia and construct shared scenarios for future.

The Project conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the Binational Dialogue consolidating the achievements, challenges and lessons learned during the dialogue process and providing useful recommendations for similar initiatives in border zones. The evaluation, which is now available in English and Spanish, is viewed as a valuable knowledge product essential for formulating and planning follow-up cross-border activities as well as the new initiatives of that nature. It also contributed useful methodology for evaluation of cross-border dialogues and serves as a practical reference for similar evaluation processes.

The Project Annual plan for 2010 contemplated providing support for the binational dialogue process between Haiti and Dominican Republic to deal with the tensions related to cross border migration in the aftermath of Haiti Earthquake of January 2010. This process has been put on hold due to insufficient conditions on the ground. Subject to the availability of funding and institutional and political conditions this issue will be further explored in 2011.

**What were the main challenges and limitations of the Project?**

22 respondents (81%) noted that the biggest challenge of the RPDD was the lack of political support and management leadership deficit during the second (current) Phase of the Project, which directly and indirectly caused other challenges and obstacles.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents (22 persons or 81%) believes that the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean and the BCPR provided insufficient political commitment and support during the second phase of the Project. The respondents note that except for the initial group of visionaries, there was very little interest within UNDP to adequately promote the Project and that many of the UNDP senior officials associated with the Project were not believers in dialogue (no eran creyentes). Several participants compared the Project to PAPEP, which has enjoyed strong political support from the Bureau and has been successfully promoted as a flagship product by its management.

The recurrent description of the RPDD by the Spanish-speaking respondents was ¨orphaned¨ (huerfano). One respondent noted that the Project had been ¨abandoned¨ by UNDP when it failed to recruit a new director which would provide technical and strategic leadership, raise the visibility and expand the outreach of the Project, conduct a more aggressive resource mobilization campaign and forge new strategic alliances while maintaining and cultivating the existing ones. 19 respondents (70%) believe that due to this absence of political will and a regional strategy the Project never acquired adequate regional scope and was confined to country level punctual interventions. One respondent noted that it was ¨unfair¨ (injusto) to evaluate the Project now, after almost 3 years of being on ¨stand-by¨ and 11 respondents (41%) echoed this sentiment in different ways.

19 respondents (70%) mentioned internal tensions within UNDP as one of the most serious and ¨frustrating¨ challenges faced by the Project. At least 12 respondents (44%) believe that by the end of the first phase there was a ¨competition between the Democratic Governance area and Conflict area¨, which ended with the ¨conflict keeping the Democratic Dialogue Project¨. (los de conflicto se llevaron el proyecto). Many respondents are still worried that the RPDD has been and continues to be ¨excluded¨ or ¨ignored¨ by the Democratic Governance cluster and instead of looking for synergies between the DG and CP practice areas and programmes the DG Practice Area has moved forward with its own ¨concept¨ of social dialogue. It is still believed by some that this latent confrontation between the Democratic Governance and Conflict Prevention Areas has ¨killed¨ the Project (lo asesinaron) and put it in its subsequent ¨survival¨ mode. Others believe that the ¨survival ¨mode started with the departure of the Project Director and continued until the arrival of the new Project Director in 2010. O

Another important challenge identified by the respondents was the difficulty to demonstrate tangible results to the Governments and other actors. The respondents noted that the governments often require support and assistance from the very beginning of their tenure and often do not have time to engage in prolonged processes, they require quick ad hoc interventions and cannot afford waiting for new initiatives to be developed. However, dialogues are long processes that cannot provide results immediately and it requires significant awareness raising and capacity building of stakeholders on one hand and installed capacities within UNDP COs to provide medium and long-term accompaniment to Governments and civil society.

One respondent noted it was difficult for some national actors to accept the presence of a Project and they would have preferred working with consultants, out of a fear ¨to lose their space by ceding to the ¨strangers¨ (or ¨outsiders¨ - por temor a perder espacio por someterse a los ajenos). Other respondents also noted as a challenge the inherent resistance of national governments to accept the ¨third party¨ to deal with their internal problems, especially when these are framed and presented to the society as an actual or potential conflict.

Cases where the dialogue processes succeeded to contain the crisis (e.g. Argentina) or establish institutional platforms for multiparty consultations, like in Guatemala, demonstrate that the democratic dialogue is a useful tool to help societies and governments address disputes and conflicts without resorting to violence. However, in the opinion of at least 5 non-UNDP respondents (19%) and 6 UNDP staff (22%), in most cases the Governments as well as UNDP opt to focus on initiatives that yield quick, measurable and demonstrable results, which is one of the principal challenges that the RPDD faced.

There is still a major confusion about the concept of dialogue, its purpose and application. Many respondents believe that main problems related to the understanding of the Democratic Dialogue concept identified in the Strategic Outlook on Dialogue in 2005 are still valid and there has not been a concerted UNDP effort to promote and clarify the concept regionally and globally. According to at least 14 respondents (52%), many actors, including UNDP, do not differentiate dialogue from other process tools and do not see the point in coining a new term for what in their opinion is essentially mediation/negotiation. On the other hand, some national actors refer to political negotiations as a dialogue because it suits their political agenda, but the methodology and the practice is not the dialogue practiced by RPDD and the practitioners.

The evaluation observed the reluctance of many respondents to use ¨ democratic¨ with relation to the dialogue. In the opinion of at least 8 respondents (30%), there is no need to confuse the governments and other partners with such a definition. Some note that during the dialogue and consultation processes the working term is often ¨diálogo¨, without the adjective ¨democrático¨. One respondent suggested dropping the term ¨democratic¨ entirely while another pointed to the necessity to agree on a neutral definition.

Several participants (9 or 33%) noted with dissatisfaction the institutional arrangements during the second phase. In the absence of the Project Director, the Project Team was not only left without strategic guidance and political support but was deprived of the decision making capacity and had been completely dependent on RBLAC. Before the arrival of the CPR Practice Leader all decisions and activities were consulted with NY affecting the pace of the Project and implementation of planned activities. In the opinion of several respondents a number of proposals never materialized given the absence of decision making power of the RPDD.

8 non-UNDP respondents (30%) and 6 UNDP respondents (22%) noted that UNDP organizational mechanisms and modus operandi are very rigid and bureaucratic and often posed significant challenges to the implementation of the RPDD, especially in circumstances where quick response and decision making was required to respond to the incoming demand. On several occasions issuance of contracts and payments to Project consultants and the Project Team were delayed due to cumbersome administrative procedures (and lack of funding), affecting the credibility of the UNDP.

Several respondents pointed to the difficulties arising from the lack of transparency with which UNDP handled the recruitment of dialogue experts. 12 respondents (44%) pointed to cases when due to individual personality problems dialogue processes went wrong or caused displeasure of UNDP Country Offices and other partners. On other occasions the respondents pointed that there has not been a quality check of the capacities of Dialogue practitioners in the recent years.

23 respondents (85%) noted that UNDP does not ¨practice what it preaches¨ and that UNDP has to start cultivating the dialogue practices and skills internally as well as in its interactions with external partners, including the UN Agencies. According to 19 respondents (70%), the success of the Project depends on the individual awareness and political agenda of each resident representative in any given country. In countries where the Project has achieved some prominence and made a substantial impact, the Resident Representatives had been aware of the methodology, had been exposed to successful practices of dialogue and were willing to promote the concept with their national counterparts and UN Agencies. In most of the cases, there was no such interest on the part of UNDP in the countries as the Resident Representatives did not know how to benefit from the Project and apply it in their host country context.

11 respondents (41%) identified the lack of financial resources as one of the possible reasons why the Project could not expand its outreach and establish more solid presence regionally and noted that it was the responsibility of UNDP to work more actively with the donors to attract funding for the Project activities. Several respondents noted that due to financial constraints and uncertainty of funding, payments to consultants and events would be often delayed causing frustration and damaging the reputation of the Project and UNDP in general. The Project Team itself had experienced prolonged periods when salaries were delayed for months due to absence of funds/ delays in funds allocations.

Due to a series of external reasons the Project was relatively less successful in developing strategic links with other regional projects, in particular with PAPEP. In general the relationship between the two projects has been good, but more on a conjectural than strategic level. There have been cases of occasional collaboration and attempts to establish synergies between the two projects whereby several joint missions were conducted (Bolivia, Honduras) and RPDD consultant worked with the PAPEP project in Bolivia. However, there has not been much convergence between the two projects, and respective practice areas.

In the opinion of 8 respondents (30%), there has always been a huge potential for collaboration between the RPDD and the PAPEP, but there were different competitive visions of what space each of the projects should occupy as well as competition for resources. Several persons believe that there has not been much understanding of the purpose and the use of dialogue on the part of PAPEP creators and that the approach of PAPEP was very elitist at the inception point. However, the same persons acknowledge that in the last years the elitist approach has disappeared, at least at the level of current leadership of PAPEP, however, there is still a lot of artificial separation originating in New York, which ¨continues to construct separate processes without a systemic vision¨.

The respondents also note that while PAPEP enjoyed a strong corporate support from UNDP leadership the RPDD was ¨abandoned¨ for an extended period of time during which numerous opportunities for collaboration were not properly explored or handled.

Finally, the respondents consider that there is a conceptual misunderstanding of the nature of both Projects. In the words of one respondent there is ¨an inherent fault in thinking that PAPEP is about thinking and RPDD is for immediate action¨. The fault is partly attributed to the country offices in the way they frame and articulate the demand and partly to RBLAC, for the way these two projects were branded. RPDD was always expected to enter the country and resolve the issues immediately, articulating solutions that allow the countries to return to normality in the situations of crisis. PAPEP on the other hand is considered to ¨have more time¨ and room for analysis and debate.

The general opinion of the respondents was that the two projects are not mutually exclusive but fully complementary in that ¨PAPEP generates knowledge about potential political scenarios and RPDD generates processes for multi-actor dialogue within these scenarios¨. As noted by one respondent: PAPEP has been extremely successful in political analysis and research, but they ¨have not been able to position themselves in the context of new emergencies arising from the social change¨.

The respondents note that in future, both projects should be very tightly linked and articulated so that in the current regional context two sets of complementary tools are effectively used for mobilizing internal actions and capacities to deal more constructively with tensions and confrontation.

**Should the Project be continued and why?**

The overwhelming majority of the respondents (25 or 93%) believe that the Project should be continued. As one respondent noted: ¨It would be short sighted to abandon the Project when it has only began to point toward a cultural shift¨. The Project should ¨absolutely [be] extended with an eye towards recognizing that there is a need to accompany cultural shifts in the region, building up a COP that is committed to staying in conversation and become more virtuoso¨ and expanding the knowledge base to serve these purposes. One respondent offered to submit a formal petition to continue with the Project, indicating that the expert rosters and PDAs are not sufficient to ¨address the long-term needs on the ground¨.

One respondent indicated that there is a need for Democratic Dialogue but not necessarily as a separate Project. Another respondent indicated that while it is doubtless that the initiative is much needed, it has to be decided whether there is a need for a ¨dedicated platform to support dialogue initiatives in the region or […] a network of dialogue practitioners¨ funded jointly by BCPR and RBLAC, to provide support as needed.

In general, all respondents agree that there has always been and will be a lack of spaces for dialogue and citizen deliberation to understand complex issues, contribute to the political culture in the region and to build a joint message and vision on various issues of public policy.

In this respect, 21 respondents (78%) believe that there is a particular value added of a UNDP presence in the field of Democratic Dialogue through a ¨dedicated¨ regional Project. Given its multilateral character and its ¨active neutrality¨ UNDP is instrumental as a convening force of multiple actors, able to provide auspices for multiparty and multi-sector consultations and dialogue, collective discourse and formulation of the problems and search for solutions. The respondents believe that UNDP can offer the neutrality and entry points in the field of democratic governance and conflict prevention that no other international or regional institution can ensure, including the OAS.

24 respondents (89%) believe that the Project can offer a systemic and continuous accompaniment to Country offices that cannot be replaced by expert rosters. In the words of one respondent ¨Governments do not trust external experts, whereas UNDP Project provides the legitimacy and continuity¨. Experts do not necessarily share the vision and the philosophy of UNDP and it is often dangerous to rely solely on external expertise in sensitive political environments when they inadvertently represent UNDP and are perceived by the beneficiary institutions as bearers of UNDP message.

Most of the respondents (24 or 89%) believe that there is a need for installed dialogue capacities within the COs which act as links with national institutions and accompany national processes. Says one respondent: ¨UNDP should abandon the classical approach of relying on external expertise, and cultivate internal capacities within the offices¨. Echoes another: ¨the COs should not be considered by UNDP headquarters as service administrators¨ but be the primary service providers to the Governments and societies in countries they are stationed. Adds another: ¨If it is all about contracting experts, many Governments are perfectly capable of doing it on their own¨.

On the other hand several respondents note that the ¨people at HQ (la sede) still continue to confuse the DD with conflict mediation, it is not the same and the HQ continues to focus on reconciliation of armed conflicts, peace processes¨ pointing to the existence of peace and development advisors, mediators, when what is needed is the capacity to convene, facilitate and carry out the dialogue between various groups and layers of society, which are not necessarily in conflict. In the words of one respondent ¨, neither PDAs nor experts can fill the gap that would be there in case the RPDD is closed¨.

This is particularly true for graduated offices that do not receive funding from UNDP and are required by the Governments to provide permanent advisory services and technical capacities to support the dialogue between the Government and civil society on a plethora of social, economic and governance issues that are not necessarily related to or conducive of conflict.

In this respect, 23 respondents (85%) believe that RPDD should be extended to work with UNDP country offices to strengthen their capacities for democratic dialogue to effectively formulate, facilitate and evaluate national dialogue processes conducted by national institutions with support of UNDP (see next subchapter).

In the opinion of 25 respondents (93%), the Project is essential for building knowledge and human resources for dialogue in the region through its Community of Practice for Democratic Dialogue. In the words of one respondent ¨PRDD is a model for mapping the resources for dealing with conflict and division in the region¨ and UNDP should invest heavily in this component to strengthen the existing regional learning community and eventually bring it together as a global initiative. As noted by one practitioner: ¨the average conflict transformation practitioner in LAC has no possibilities of learning from others in Africa and other regions¨ and RPDD is a perfect instrument to offer such learning opportunities, because of its installed capacity and knowledge management expertise.

19 respondents (70%), of which 11 or 41% were actual or former UNDP staff, pointed to the importance of the RPDD in the interagency context to support the UN agencies (particularly the UNCTs) build the consensus and formulate a joint UN vision and message vis-à-vis the national Governments by means of the dialogue process.

19 respondents (70%) believe that it is particularly important to continue with the initiative in the format of a UNDP project since UNDP is not prepared to close down the initiative without having properly institutionalized the democratic dialogue methodology and know-how and establishing proper mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of the initiative. It is believed by at least 12 respondents (44%) that UNDP has failed to properly carry out a strategically important and relevant initiative and that closing down the Project at this stage would imply losing the wealth of expertise and knowledge accumulated during the last decade.

Several respondents indicated that out of 10 years of its existence, the Project has only functioned at its full capacity for 5 years, during the first phase. At the same time, the respondents also believe that even if the Project had functioned at full capacity and had adequate financial and institutional support, 10 years is not a sufficient timeframe to effect the change in mindsets and civic and political culture by applying the democratic dialogue approach. As one of the respondents noted: ¨10 years is still young. Latin America is not the region which is naturally prone to a dialogue, […] and the idea of understanding¨.

**What are the potential strategic directions and entry points?**

As mentioned above the Project had three key strategic components: 1. capacity building of social and political leaders, dialogue practitioners and facilitators, and UNDP/UN staff, 2. demand driven support to dialogue processes, and 3. consolidation of Communities of Practice and Learning.

The majority of participants agree that the Project should maintain these strategic lines but needs to develop a more ¨comprehensive and systemic approach¨ to these issues to maximize its utility and increase the impact in the long run. In the words of one respondent the project has to be reformulated considering ongoing political processes and pondering different possibilities for engagement in political dialogue.

11 respondents (41%) indicate that the Project should be reviewed and adjusted to the context of current political and social circumstances within the existing strategic lines. 9 respondents (33%) expressed explicitly that the project should continue engaging in national political and social processes working with national governments and state institutions. One respondent believes that instead of engagement in national political dialogue the RPDD can have a value added at the local level, supporting the management and transformation of local level conflicts some of which may have national repercussions.

The respondents believe that RPDD can contribute greatly to the work of UNDP for the achievement of MDG and HD goals in an inclusive, participatory and dialogic way. Thus, as stated above, the respondents note that one of the niches for the Project is to work more closely with UNDP to institutionalize the dialogue capacities within the institution. This includes support the Country Offices where there is no installed capacity to formulate and accompany the dialogue processes.

The respondents also view great potential in support of interagency work and relationships at country and regional levels, as well as at the level of Bureaus, promoting the spirit of One UN and contributing to corporate efforts to assist the countries.

In terms of thematic entry points the respondents offer a wide range of issues where the RPDD can be useful and generate impact.

As one respondent mentioned: ¨A Democratic Dialogue Project cannot have concrete themes, Democratic Dialogue is a methodology that can be adapted to any issue¨. As mentioned earlier, the Democratic Dialogue has an advantage of being a flexible tool applicable to distinct social and political contexts. On the other hand, Democratic Dialogue should be considered as a value that has to be cultivated in different contexts and not just as a tool or a mechanism. As noted by one senior UNDP staff: ¨90% of our work depends on emotional intelligence. If one has a technical base but no emotional intelligence, s/he cannot go anywhere (no va por ningun lado). Within this issue of emotional intelligence is the capacity to dialogue and propose transcendent and compatible solutions to diverse political, socio-economic or cultural problems.

When asked to identify potential entry points at least 19 respondents (70%) named the environment and management of natural resources as one of the issues that is a natural niche for the application of democratic dialogue concept and methodology. Similarly, 18 respondents (67%) indicated the issue of indigenous populations, intercultural and race relations as one of the most obvious entry points. Related issues such as land restitution and title rights, reparation for victims, right for political representation etc. were frequently mentioned as possible areas of work.

Security and violence were identified by at least 11 respondents (41%) as issues where UNDP has to work closely with national and regional institutions to combat the policies of ¨iron hand¨ (mano dura) and look for dialogic and participatory ways of challenging insecurity and transnational crime persistent in Central America and beyond.

The RPDD can contribute to issues related to cross-border migration and generate interstate dialogue to consider the migrants not just as a result of conflict but as a product of globalization and integration.

**CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Conclusions*

After reviewing the documentation and the respondents´ testimonies the Evaluation concluded the following:

**The Evaluation concludes that the Project was a highly relevant initiative when it was launched in early 2000´s and has made significant achievements**

The Democratic Dialogue Project was conceived as UNDP´s response to the rising need for alternative solutions for peacebuilding, conflict resolution and democratic governance. It offered the societies and Governments of LAC, as well as UNDP proper a qualitatively new approach to address the problems of conflictivity and governance and to enable the societies tackle the roots of these problems in an inclusive and deliberative way. In that respect, the Project objectives were highly relevant and the strategic directions were correctly identified.

The Project sought to promote the culture of inclusive and participatory civic dialogue, create spaces for multi-actor interactions, generate institutional changes for peaceful management of complex situations, generate, systematize and disseminate knowledge, build and strengthen institutional capacities for consensus building and peaceful transformation of conflict. The Project was mostly successful in achieving the above listed goals.

The RPDD was a pioneering initiative, which consolidated the knowledge and expertise accumulated regionally and in other parts of the globe and contributed to corporate knowledge management efforts through systematizing and disseminating best practices, cases and lessons learned and codifying knowledge and human resources accumulated in the region.

The Project team participated in and facilitated the elaboration of valuable knowledge products, established the regular electronic bulletin InfoDialogo, available for numerous users in the region and beyond, and the Democratic Dialogue portal, which has become a depository of abundant theoretical and practical material related to the democratic dialogue field.

The Project has forged strong strategic alliances with important national, regional and global actors and selected UNDP Offices. Some of the links (e.g. with OAS, Carter Centre) built during the first phase of the Project have weakened since 2008 in the absence of strategic leadership at high corporate level. Others (such as Fundación Propaz, nIMD, Fundación UNIR) have been maintained and further strengthened. Overall, the Evaluation concludes that the Project has laid a solid foundation over which it is possible to build and enhance strong strategic partnerships for dialogue provided there is proper guidance and adequate resources.

The Project provided successful assistance to LAC Countries responding to the demand from the Country Offices and designing, facilitating and accompanying local, national and bi-national dialogue processes, organizing learning workshops and courses for dialogue practitioners and UNDP staff.

Most importantly, the Project created strong awareness among different actors that the countries can engage and address the challenging issues based on their internal resources. The DD Project was successful in supporting institutions to build their internal capacities to handle problems by offering facilitation and accompaniment throughout the transition processes. With that the Project has created a solid understanding that there are other effective alternative to a ¨more formal and blunt Track 1 diplomacy¨[[6]](#footnote-7).

**The Democratic Dialogue approach continues to be highly relevant in the current political and social environment**

Although Latin America and the Caribbean has changed significantly since the launch of the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, there still is a strong need for multi-stakeholder dialogue methods and tools to accompany the complex social and political challenges of modern democracies.

During the 80´s and 90´s the crisis in Latin America was mostly related to the state of non-democracy and therefore the initial focus of the dialogue was on facilitating the processes of state-building, as an indigenous, nationally owned process based on state-society relations. The focus has since shifted and the prevalent challenge today is to ensure the sustainability of democracy and promote stability and peace by strengthening the democratic institutions and increasing the effectiveness of governments, in a context of deep social and political changes in many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The social and political transformation processes of the late 20th century continue as they follow the dynamics of change in the governments and civil society. The new challenges of modern democracies in LAC are increasingly related to rising authoritarian tendencies and oppressive politics, widespread inequality and rapid polarization, insecurity and violence, discrimination and intolerance.

The violent conflict has also been on the rise during the last decade. With the exception of Colombia, Latin American Region has for a long time been largely free from the violent conflicts of the past. However, in 2009 the use of sporadic violence within the monitored conflicts saw a 45 % increase, most of which was related to political and economic insecurity, system/ideology and natural resources[[7]](#footnote-8). In 2009 the LAC region was the home of 40 out of the 46 conflicts registered in the Americas[[8]](#footnote-9).

There are numerous processes that can be hampered if there is no knowledge and the practice of dialogue. These processes change from country to country and follow the dynamics of change in the governments and civil society. The recent developments in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Ecuador, El Salvador and other countries of LAC indicate that there is a strong conflict potential in the region that may require the UNDP expertise and know-how of democratic dialogue.

On the other hand, continuous requests to facilitate dialogue processes between the Governments and civil society (Honduras, Trinidad and Tobago) suggest that there is a growing need to apply the multistakeholder dialogue processes in all spheres of public and political life that require the construction of national consensus and consolidation of national agenda for development. These include situations that may not pose immediate conflict risk but are essential for democracy and human development. These are related to issues of race and ethnicity, use of natural resources, political representation, environment, gender etc.

The problem however is that these needs are not always properly articulated and formulated as a demand, which is due to the ambiguity of the Democratic Dialogue concept on one hand, and lack of awareness about the applications of dialogue in various settings on the other. The task of UNDP is to raise the awareness about the dialogue as a political process and as an approach and help the countries identify and formulate the demand, offer the best ways to manage and prevent crisis by means of dialogue, consensus-building and participation and to demonstrate that the dialogue is not limited to the context of war and peace but can be applied in varied contexts to a diverse range of development issues.

**The Project has encountered serious challenges that affected its implementation**

Since 2008, the Project has not received strategic leadership and political commitment from the RBLAC and BCPR Headquarters similar to the first phase. Except for the initial years of its existence when the RPDD was enjoying strong support and corporate commitment of the then senior management of RBLAC and BCPR, UNDP has largely failed to provide adequate political and financial support to the project and ensure the long-term sustainability of its results. The evaluation agrees with the opinion expressed by the majority of the respondents that the Project has suffered from the abandonment on the part of UNDP senior management and has been largely left to struggle for survival.

Despite the isolated efforts of selected individuals who believed in the importance and high relevance of the Project, the Project Team had not received strategic guidance and leadership since 2008. Administrative and financial mechanisms were not in place to sustain the Project results and expand the outreach of the project. Failure of BCPR and RBLAC to allocate funds and contract a Project Director during two years was one of the examples of political short-sightedness and the lack of strategic vision that contributed to the decline of the project and diminishing of its relevance and standing in the region.

Another important drawback was the lack of designated Democratic Dialogue Focal points in Country Offices, who would have acted as the primary contacts for all dialogue related interventions at country level and constitute the regional Community of Practice for Democratic Dialogue. The Project has made efforts to build and strengthen the system of DD Focal Points since the beginning, and succeeded in installing certain capacities in several priority country offices during the first phase. However, given the overall lack of awareness and interest in Democratic Dialogue among the Resident Representatives the issue of DD Focal Points in LAC Country Offices remains unresolved.

Due to the above lack of strategic guidance and leadership as well as the lack of resources the Project lost strategic direction and gradually became confined to punctual interventions at country level. This in itself cannot be considered as a drawback given that responding to country specific demands was one of the objectives of the Project. However, while working actively at country and local levels, the Project lost its regional presence and was not able to expand its outreach to address the issues of regional relevance and importance.

The same failure to provide political weight and strategic positioning to the Project and its team resulted in complete lack of visibility of the Project. Today, the Project is mostly associated with a number of its successful knowledge products (which include the Handbook for Practitioners and the Web portal), but the scope of the project, its relevance and its potential impact on regional political and social processes itself is largely lost to the potential users. This lack of visibility as well as the ambiguity and intangibility of Democratic Dialogue concept and its results are partly responsible for the relatively low level of interest of donors in the Project.

**Most of the times the Results of Democratic Dialogue are difficult to quantify and demonstrate**

In 2007, the Evaluation of the II RCF for LAC stated: ¨In the difficult context of the first part of this decade, the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue Project was, perhaps, one of the most relevant. The Project reflects both what UNDP can do in the region and the pitfalls of overly ambitious Projects. It brought together a significant group of institutions, including the Organization of American States and a significant number of national development agencies. The aim was to help foster national dialogue to promote democratic governance and facilitate human development. The results, however, are difficult to gauge¨[[9]](#footnote-10).

One of the challenges of the RPDD has been and continues to be the dichotomy between the results-oriented philosophy of UNDP and the intangibility and invisibility of the dialogue subject matter and its results.

Unlike negotiation and mediation, dialogue does not always offer solutions. If the result of a negotiation is an agreement, the result of dialogue is a shift in mindset, a relationship, an understanding. The essence of a dialogue is not to produce the agreements but to create environments conducive to building consensus, to accompany the processes and prepare actors for political action, install the capacities to listen, accept the diversity, learn tolerance and construct together. The result of a dialogue is the ability to integrate different optics into public discourse, understand the complexity and dynamics of power and involve different layers of society more completely in decision making.

However, Governments and societies usually have very short windows of opportunity and seek rapid and effective response to concrete needs in order not to waste their political capital. Thus they require immediate results to demonstrate the effects of their policies to the constituencies and do not have time for long-term engagements in complex processes that do not necessarily lead to agreements. This is why they often do not express immediate readiness for engagement, especially when it requires their active participation in the actual dialogue process and expect UNDP and other partners to provide rapid and concrete solutions.

The dialogues are long processes, they cannot provide results immediately. It is thus very difficult to define concrete tangible results, especially for the short timeframe and develop baselines and targets to measure the progress over time. As noted in earlier chapters, the result of a dialogue process is a dialogic society which cannot be built over a short period of time with a set of punctual activities but requires long and continuous engagement and strong political commitment of actors.

That said, the Evaluation believes that it **is** possible to demonstrate tangible results as long as they are clearly articulated and placed in a realistic timeframe. Thus, the Project has succeeded in building a solid knowledge base as well as the human capital. Recently, there has been a significant increase in UNDP involvement in the dialogic processes across the LAC Region. The Evaluation noted that due to active engagement and strong commitment of the CPR Practice Leader and the new Project Director, considerable progress has been made in advancing the dialogue concept and methodology vis-à-vis the UNDP country Offices and Governments of LAC. This has been manifested in the increased number of requests for assistance and facilitation of high-level political dialogues as well as the interventions at local level in the framework of existing regional initiatives.

**There is a lack of clear understanding about what is meant by the capacity for dialogue, whose capacities should be the priority of a regional programme and how these capacities can be built.**

The Evaluation agrees with the opinion of the practitioners, that the capacity to dialogue is not equivalent of the technical skill for facilitation and mediation, which is present in many persons within UNDP and in various national and regional institutions. It is relatively intangible in that a dialogic capacity has to be linked to a qualitative shift in assumptions and mindsets which are impossible to be captured and measured over the short periods of time.

The capacity for dialogue implies the capacity for tolerance and openness as well as the ability to put aside presumptions and prejudices and be open to alternative ideas and opinions. These cannot be achieved only through a set of workshops and training courses but require a more comprehensive vision of what the subject and the focus of a dialogue process should be. Thus the technical capacities for dialogue should not be limited to organization and facilitation of dialogue events, but imply more active presence in strategic processes, require convening and analytical capabilities to offer more comprehensive and continuous accompaniment to ongoing processes of social and political transformation.

For UNDP projects it is essential to define the targets for capacity building activities with regard to the outcome, i.e. with regard to the change in development conditions the project is contributing to and make them realistic and achievable. Thus, when launching the Project, UNDP should have assessed realistically which capacities it was possible and necessary to build within the limited duration of the project and with limited financial resources. Given the above described nature of the dialogue and limitations for capacity building, the Project should have targeted those institutions where it was most likely to have a long-lasting effect and over which it had certain control.

In this respect, the primary target of the Project capacity building efforts should have been UNDP country offices which have established presence in their host countries and are capable of providing long-term accompaniment and auspices to national dialogue processes. Another target of the capacity building component should have been the Community of Practice, whose primary responsibility is to build and disseminate knowledge to strengthen corporate capacities in practice areas. Instead the project focused on activities that were aimed at local and national institutions without being able to ensure proper control over the results and guarantee long-term engagement and support.

**The Project had mixed level of success with regard to the DD Community of Practice**

Initially the Project led the way in establishing a network of democratic dialogue practitioners, which contributed to the process of collective knowledge creation and sharing. During the first phase the Project was successful in constructing a dynamic network of practitioners whose primary function was to develop and transmit the dialogue knowledge and skills. However, this initial success was limited to countries where the Project has been directly engaged in dialogue processes and has developed strong professional networks and strategic alliances (Guatemala, Argentina and Bolivia).

The DD COP had acquired certain regional presence and has been instrumental in exchanging and generating knowledge and experience on democratic dialogue and most importantly, maintaining the intellectual debate and discussion despite evident lack of leadership and institutional support.

However, despite continuous attempts of the Project Team the COP has gradually lost its regional presence and failed to establish itself as a primary source of knowledge and human capital for UNDP and stakeholders. To date, there still is a lot of confusion about the mandate and role of the DD COP especially given the existence of the Conflict Prevention Expert Roster within the CPR Practice Area where many of the COP members are represented as consultants.

Today the COP is comprised of a broad group of practitioners which include UNDP officials, theoretical and practical experts and representatives of international organizations and academic institutions. Some of the COP members maintain active communication and continue exchanging experiences and knowledge and meet occasionally at the events and COP meetings organized by the Project. However, there is no evidence that the current composition of the COP and the qualifications of all of its members are adequate and respond to the needs of the region. Nor is there any evidence that the COP is considered by UNDP offices as a primary source of low-cost knowledge and experience that could be utilized to strengthen national capacities and formulate and facilitate national and local dialogue processes. Instead, UNDP offices increasingly resort to the Associate Expert network, which has numerous advantages and can complement but not replace the services and potential value of the COP.

Although initially the Project succeeded in developing the conceptual framework for the COP, it has not been operationalized and linked with concrete practice priorities and plans as is the case with other successful corporate COPs such as Human Development, Democratic Governance and Environment and Energy.

**There is still a lot of confusion and lack of proper understanding of the Democratic Dialogue concept at the corporate level and its role for the achievement of broader development goals**

Even today, after almost a decade of developing and promoting practical and theoretical knowledge on DD and the existence of Democratic Dialogue as a separate service line within the CPR Practice Area of UNDP, Dialogue and Dialogic Approach have not yet been internalized and institutionalized by UNDP as a transversal corporate tool for addressing a wide range of development challenges, which include but are not limited to conflict prevention and democratic governance. Moreover, given the persistent confusion between the dialogue and mediation/negotiation and the existing ¨dialogue fatigue¨, there is also a tendency in UNDP to believe that there is no particular need for dialogue as a unique systemic approach to problem-solving with a wide range of applications and other process tools can easily replace it.

It was surprising to observe that there is still an ongoing debate among the RPDD stakeholders whether the Democratic Dialogue pertains to Democratic Governance or Conflict Prevention. There is still a strong feeling that the concept of Democratic Dialogue, the way it was developed and promoted by UNDP is inherent to the broader notion of democratic governance as it refers to institutions and systems and is applicable to conflicts since they are caused by their failure or lack thereof.

However, after a careful examination the Evaluation concluded that the debate was not in fact related to the nature of the dialogue per se, but to the question whether the RPDD was rightly positioned within the CPR practice. The Evaluation considers that this is mainly due to the fact that the decline of the project coincided in time with transferring the Project from the DG to CPR Practice Area, and was therefore viewed as the direct result of the ¨wrong placement¨ of the project. However, the Evaluation could not find any conclusive evidence that the Project was affected by its placement in the CPR Practice Area and considers other variables (departure of the Project Director, overall lack of corporate leadership, insufficient awareness and visibility and lack of funding) more strongly associated with the decline of the Project.

The Evaluation considers that ¨Building Consensus Through Dialogue¨ service line is adequately placed within the Crisis Prevention and Recovery Practice Area even though the notion and the use of dialogue transcends the current limited application to violent conflicts and reconciliation and relates to all those spheres of public and political life that contain or generate conditions conducive to conflict. In that respect, democratic dialogue is not only applicable in the conditions of peace and war but in any process that involves governments and civil society and requires ¨consensus around critical issues in society¨.[[10]](#footnote-11)

So far UNDP has not been able to surpass the limits set by practice area definitions and apply the DD concept based on 2 levels of understanding: Dialogue as a political process, which can be particularly useful in intra and interagency settings to contribute to the achievement of common goals as ¨one UN¨; and dialogue as an approach, which can be applied to a wide range of issues beyond conflict prevention and democratic governance[[11]](#footnote-12). By confining the dialogue to the boundaries of a practice area UNDP is at risk of reducing the potential impact of dialogue as a transversal and flexible approach applicable to any setting of public life that implies difference of opinion, debate and conflict as an essential part of democracy.

**Despite the institutional challenges and constant underfunding, there has been slow but steady progress in the recent year**

The Evaluation has concluded that since the arrival of the CPR Practice leader in July 2009 there has been a notable progress in the implementation of the Project as well as in the overall advancement of the dialogue approach in the region. After more than two years since the departure of the first Project Director, the new Director was recruited to ensure adequate managerial and political guidance of the Project and has been engaged in several dialogue processes in LAC Region.

The Evaluation has noted the increased focus on the work with UNDP Country Offices in response to the growing demand for technical assistance and facilitation of dialogue processes (Bolivia, Honduras, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Nicaragua). Largely due to intense lobbying and awareness raising by the CPR Cluster, this recent increase in the demand from the Country Offices confirms the utmost importance of corporate leadership and advocacy in fostering the dialogic approach.

As of 2009 significant efforts have been made to consolidate and revitalize the DD Community of Practice and link it with the strategic priorities of BCPR and RBLAC in Latin America and the Caribbean. These priorities were discussed with BCPR and RBLAC during the Conflict Prevention Working Meeting in November 2009 as well as the meeting of the CP/DD Community of Practice in July 2010 and are included in the biannual workplan of the LAC CPR Practice Area. New expertise has been identified to expand the Community of Practice and the network of associated experts working in the field of dialogue.

Since its transfer to the CPR Practice Area the Project has mostly operated in the areas directly related to conflict prevention and resolution and has not been strategically linked with other UNDP Practice areas and UN system agencies. However, since late 2009, the CPR Practice Area in Panama has initiated a series of activities to ensure more close inter-practice cooperation through offering technical expertise and support to other regional initiatives and projects and organizing inter-practice and inter-agency encounters on issues related to conflict prevention and democratic dialogue. These include the various consultative meetings in 2009 and 2010, as well as the annual Meeting of the Conflict Prevention / Democratic Dialogue Community of Practice in 2010 with the participation of BCPR, BDP, UN DPA, Governance, Poverty and Gender Practices, the Indigenous Initiative, the regional Project ¨Afro-descendant Population of Latin America¨ and others.

The Evaluation also noted a significant progress in the learning component since mid-2009. After years of planning and the above-mentioned resistance at corporate level, the DD course was translated into Spanish and French and launched globally on the UNDP internal learning platform. Also a more comprehensive course has been developed and will be offered on the Virtual School platform in 2011 to UNDP staff as well as all interested persons outside UNDP.

**UNDP has comparative advantages to accompany the national and regional dialogue processes and build national capacities for dialogue**

The RPDD has positioned UNDP solidly in the field of the dialogue. Through the early success of the Project UNDP gained a significant standing vis-à-vis other stakeholders including the OAS and the UN agencies, in particular the UN DPA. It was recognized as a facilitator and convener of dialogic processes, which unlike other international agencies, created spaces to transfer and share experiences and knowledge to foster the multistakeholder consultation and discourse, instead of providing ready-made recipes and solutions.

Compared to other institutions and agencies working in the field of dialogue, conflict resolution and peacebuilding in general, UNDP has numerous comparative advantages given its neutrality and convening power and the ability to tackle a broad spectrum of development issues, not just peace and conflict.

The issue of dialogue is central to the mandate of UN and UNDP and is crucial in the process of achieving MDGs. UN DPA and other UN Agencies are effectively using the dialogue approach and methodologies as a key for peaceful resolution of conflicts. However, these are specifically applied in the peacebuilding, conflict resolution/transformation and reconciliation contexts, while UNDP has an important comparative advantage of using the Dialogue cross-sectorally and applying it to a diverse range of development issues such as poverty and inequality, governance, gender, environment etc.

The DD approach has to strengthen vulnerable actors and equip them with tools to position themselves strategically vis-à-vis other actors, generating conditions for dialogue. In the context of extremely polarized scenarios, national and regional institutions have numerous limitations and the initiatives conducted under the UNDP auspices offer more impartiality and neutrality and are thus more conducive to open and constructive dialogue.

In addition to its neutrality and impartiality UNDP has an established presence in all countries of LAC, which is crucial for guaranteeing continuous accompaniment and support to national development processes, for building national capacities and ensuring national ownership of development results.

**There is a need for a corporate strategy on Democratic Dialogue**

While limited in scope, the analysis of the need/demand for DD in LAC region confirms that there is a need for UNDP presence to support the dialogue processes and to build institutional capacities for dialogue. However, it is not clear what is the appropriate format of UNDP engagement in the field of Democratic Dialogue and what is the corporate strategy with regard to democratic dialogue as a political process and as an approach.

UNDP failed to take advantage of the momentum created during the first phase of the Project and did not follow the recommendations of the Strategic Outlook on Dialogue, which synthesized all existing challenges and problems and identified necessary actions to ensure the sustainability of dialogue processes in the region and enhance the UNDP´s leading role in this field. Because of the lack of strategic direction and guidance, instead of building institutionality and mechanisms for long-term impact and sustainability the Project had to struggle for survival and focused mostly on punctual interventions and maintaining key achievements.

Throughout its existence the Project has addressed the issue of sustainability and need for creating institutional mechanisms for sustaining the dialogue practice in the region. Most of the activities of the first phase aimed at creating institutional capacities within national/regional institutions that would ensure continuity and national ownership of dialogue processes. On the other hand it sought the ways to build the in-house capacity of UNDP to deal adequately with the approach, to enhance its convening power and capacity, to ensure the highest quality of communication and the intelligent decision making in all spheres of UNDP work.

Of the ten years of its existence the Project only functioned at full scale from 2002 to 2007 when it had full operational capacity, relative financial stability and solid conceptual base. Of these years, the initial 2 years were mostly dedicated to the establishment of Democratic Dialogue as an academic field and to the development of the theoretical base of the Project. The important decisions about the institutionalization of the DD concept and building corporate capacities and mechanisms that should have been taken during the current phase of the project were never taken and the project has approached its final year without adequate provisions for sustainability and exit strategy.

Without clear institutional platform and strong political support, dialogue as a corporate approach to development issues is bound to disappear or reduced to facilitation of workshops and events. At this point UNDP needs go beyond the formal existence of a service line and decide whether it is committed to preserving and integrating the dialogue into the corporate practices and culture and define the format in which the dialogue knowledge and practice can be institutionalized at the corporate level. This may be in the form of a special regional entity for DD within the CPR cluster, a regional inter-cluster structure, a corporate platform for Democratic Dialogue at HQ level, a well-structured, well-financed and fully operational Community of Practice, a core group of experts or etc. This was the task of the RPDD during the second phase but it was not able to accomplish it due to the limitations and obstacles described on earlier occasions.

Today, UNDP is not prepared for the closure of the project given that there are neither institutional structures nor mechanisms that would guarantee that the knowledge base is sustained and expanded, new experiences and cases are collected, systematized and catalogued, human resources are identified and trained and that the dialogue approach and methodology is promoted and applied by UNDP following the needs of LAC countries.

**There is a need for Dialogue as a corporate competency**

The Evaluation observed strong dissatisfaction with the inability of UNDP to promote Dialogue internally, within the organization and install it as a corporate capacity. This dissatisfaction refers to two types of competency: technical and operational.

The first type of competency implies technical knowledge of dialogue as an approach and a tool and refers to the capacity of UNDP personnel to identify and frame the contexts and problems that would benefit from a dialogic approach, formulate and facilitate dialogue processes and accompany these processes, thus supporting and building national and local capacities for dialogue; this capacity is essential for ensuring the impact and sustainability of UNDP interventions and is crucial for the achievement of the results, which in the case of dialogue are long-term, intangible and difficult to measure.

Today UNDP does not have these capacities installed in the Offices or at the HQ level. Although there is some institutional expertise within UNDP (such as Peace and Development Advisors, BCPR and RBLAC Expert Rosters) and beyond (DPA/Mediation support unit, etc), these are not capable of providing a comprehensive and continuous accompaniment and support to dialogue processes given their institutional and operational limitations. E.g., many countries are not eligible for PDA services given that there are no registered armed conflicts that would qualify for deployment of a PDA. On the other hand, the assistance provided by the associated experts is not sustainable, cost-effective and reasonable from a strategic point of view.

One of the ways to achieve this is shifting the focus of UNDP involvement from isolated punctual interventions towards more strategic approach to formation and development of dialogue capacities. This primarily implies the capacities to provide more continuous accompaniment to dialogue processes within the countries and ensure constancy and sustainability of UNDP interventions. The most straightforward and cost-effective way to achieve this is by strengthening the capacities of the Democratic Dialogue Community of Practitioners which includes staff in the UNDP Country Offices. It can be combined with punctual technical expertise of dialogue experts and practitioners but cannot be replaced by the latter. COP is the key factor for building long-lasting institutional capacities at national and local levels and is within the scope of the Project.

The other type of competency refers to the internal governance of UNDP and is applicable to every aspect of UNDP operations as it implies dialogic approach to any complex issue that UNDP faces in its interactions with other agencies, governments, donors, civil society, and internally, among the Bureaux, practice areas and clusters. In this respect, it is essential that UNDP builds and improves its dialogic capacities and cultivates dialogue as a modus operandi to work with other actors for the promotion of Human Rights and the achievement of MDGs and human development. As quoted in the earlier parts of this Report, UNDP should start practicing what it preaches and generate the culture of the dialogue within the organization to institutionalize the democratic dialogue as a corporate practice and ensure the sustainability of its interventions.

The latter type of the competency is not within the scope of the project but has been clearly identified by the evaluation as a pressing need that should be put on the agenda of UNDP and considered as an important priority within the corporate strategy on Democratic Dialogue. The Project could be an appropriate means to initiate a debate on this issue with BCPR, RBLAC, UN DPA and other important partners.

*Recommendations*

**The Evaluation concludes that the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue should be extended for at least 3 additional years**

The Evaluation acknowledges that here are limits to how long any given project can be extended unless there is a demonstrated strategic importance and value that would justify the extension of the initiative in a project format. However, it is clear that the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue should be continued to sustain the achievements of the Project and ensure the long-term impact of the its results.

The Evaluation points to several reasons that explain the need to extend the Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue for at least 3 more years:

1. The Project has not been able to accomplish all of its objectives due to the circumstances beyond its control;
2. Many of the strategic challenges and priorities identified in 2005 in the Strategic Outlook on Dialogue remain unmet and require future work and cooperation between UNDP and its stakeholders to be adequately addressed;
3. Due to the nature of dialogue some of the results are too early and difficult to demonstrate;
4. The Democratic Dialogue approach continues to be highly relevant and needed in the current political and social environment;
5. UNDP is strategically positioned to accompany important social and political changes in the Region by offering auspices and neutrality for participatory and inclusive deliberation and dialogue;
6. The Project has created an important legacy in the region which needs to be sustained and further supported to foster social, political and economic transformations in Latin America and the Caribbean;
7. UNDP is at risk of losing the immense knowledge base and expertise if these are not sustained, enriched and continued;
8. There are currently no corporate and regional institutional mechanisms within UNDP that would ensure the sustainability of the Project results and institutionalization of Project expertise and know-how;
9. There are currently no corporate mechanisms that would effectively study, systematize and codify the knowledge and experiences accumulated in the field of democratic dialogue in the recent years;
10. There have been positive changes in the management of the Project and increased demand for technical assistance and facilitation of dialogues since the arrival of the CPR Practice Leader and the Project Director, which point to an increased (albeit insufficient) corporate commitment at the regional level;
11. There is a need for a new vision, not isolated, punctual services. As indicated by one respondent: ¨The initiative must stop being a regional project with global connections and start being a global project with regional connections¨[[12]](#footnote-13);
12. The Democratic Dialogue concept has a high potential to become a flagship UNDP product that can be applied transversally not only to Democratic Governance and Conflict Prevention areas but to various fields of development regionally and globally.

The Evaluation considers that in these circumstances it is not correct to consider as a failure the inability of the Project to accomplish some of its objectives. Instead the Evaluation concludes that in the conditions of severe financial constraints and significant lack of guidance, leadership and corporate support the Project Team has made a tremendous effort to conduct all planned activities and safeguard the important results of the strategic collaboration of UNDP and its stakeholders in the field of Democratic Dialogue.

The Evaluation therefore concludes that the Project was not given adequate opportunities to function properly and complete planned tasks and therefore cannot be qualified neither as successful nor unsuccessful. Instead the Evaluation concludes that the Project is ¨in progress¨ and argues for its extension for additional 2-3 years to compensate for the years and opportunities lost at the beginning of the second phase, to guarantee the completion of all activities and to develop adequate sustainability and exit strategies.

The Evaluation recommends the following:

* 1. Extend the current Project for additional 3 years maintaining the current strategic lines and priorities but re-defining it with strong reference to strategic involvement of UNDP in the region. This does not only imply technical aspects of UNDP work but mostly political and strategic positioning of UNDP in the region;
  2. Establish a **functioning** Project Board incorporating senior staff from RBLAC, BCPR, 2-3 RC/RR with the knowledge of Democratic Dialogue principles and/or experience with the RPDD, representatives of CPR, DG Practice areas. The primary function of this Board should be to ensure strong political support and strategic guidance to the Project and to lobby the Democratic Dialogue approach with Governments and donors;
  3. Establish an Advisory Committee comprised of Democratic Dialogue ¨believers¨ including former and current UNDP staff, Project personnel, representatives of Civil society, active and retired dialogue practitioners with first-hand knowledge of the Project (preferably of its first phase) and ensure their engagement in the planning and implementation of the new phase of the Project and revitalization of the DD Community of Practice;
  4. Conduct the analysis of the needs for DD and actual demand, identifying potential stakeholders and beneficiaries and entry points;
  5. Under the guidance of the Project Board develop and launch a series of consultations with stakeholders to plan the project strategy for the next 3 years;
  6. Initiate and support a debate about the corporate strategy on Democratic Dialogue and discuss the validity and relevance of the DD concept and methodology within the context of UNDP strategic engagement in the region, primarily in the area of conflict prevention and democratic governance but considering other practice areas as well. Revisit Strategic Outlook on Dialogue which contains a set of findings, and recommendations, which are still highly relevant today and can serve as a good point of reference for the debate.
  7. Develop a focused public awareness and visibility strategy to publicize the achievements and services of the Project and to promote the DD approach with other practice areas, Country Offices, and other strategic partners. Contract professional expertise if needed and allocate funds for awareness and visibility; Consider 2 types of awareness: external – aimed at Governments, civil society and other partner agencies and internal, aimed at RC/RRs, analysts and key programme staff.
  8. Conduct an assessment of the current COP composition and capacities, to classify and map existing resources, identify the gaps in capacities and expertise and refresh the COP inviting new members and introducing new areas of expertise/capacities as required;
  9. Identify and attract experts with high academic credentials, ¨democratic dialogue gurus¨ to increase the visibility of the Project, improve lobbying of the concept/tool and attract funding;
  10. Under the guidance of the Project Board and in close collaboration with the Advisory Committee define the purpose of the regional COP for DD, develop the conceptual base and operational guidelines for the COP to match the needs of the LAC COs and countries with the capacities and expertise of the COP; identify training needs and allocate funds for this purpose; look for the ways how to operationalize the COP and consider alternative virtual platforms (TeamWorks is the current corporate platform which may not be the most suitable for the needs of the COP);
  11. Conduct the assessment of existing organizations and agencies working in the field of Dialogue to map institutional capacities and resources in the region and explore the possibilities of forming new strategic and professional alliances (e.g. CRIES, the Change Alliance etc.);
  12. Under the guidance of the Advisory Board develop the strategy for interagency cooperation and increased application of the Dialogic approach in interagency settings, in particular at the UNCT levels;
  13. Continue expanding the learning base on DD and improve the quality and outreach of its academic programmes. The current course on DD is aimed at raising awareness on DD, however, there is a need for a more comprehensive academic course, offered internally (VDA) and externally (Virtual School). Consider associating the course with an established academic institution and look for the possibilities for offering credits towards a degree or a certificate;
  14. As soon as the funds for the new phase are approved, conduct a new round of knowledge systematization to collect, systematize and disseminate the wealth of new knowledge and experiences accumulated in the region since 2005. Consider publishing a new edition of the DD Handbook enriched with the new knowledge generated in and pertinent to LAC;
  15. As soon as possible and immediately after the completion of systematizations mentioned above, convene a publicity/awareness/strategic planning event (a mini Knowledge-Fair on DD) inviting all important stakeholders, UNDP Country Offices, UNDP Bureaux representatives, UN Agency representatives, donors;
  16. Convene a brainstorming session with PAPEP to review the possibilities for joint cooperation on the basis of the Proposal for Cooperation prepared by the Project in November 2009 and the notes from the interview with Mr. Antonio Aranibar, PAPEP Coordinator, of October 2010;
  17. In the same vein, consider convening brainstorming sessions with other regional Projects to explore synergies with the RPDD, such as SIGOB, PROLOGO, Indigenous Initiative, “Afro-descendant Population in Latin America” and others;
  18. The same model of knowledge codification used by the RPDD can be useful in other areas like poverty, HD, environment and energy etc. The Evaluation recommends looking for ways of exporting the knowledge codification experience and know-how, in cooperation with the Knowledge Management Cluster of the Regional Centre and other interested entities.

**CHAPTER 9: LESSONS LEARNED**

Throughout its existence, the Project Team has kept track of important Lessons Learned, which were regularly included in annual and other reports. However, given the above mentioned lack of leadership, most of these lessons have never been strategically analyzed and applied. Thus, the biggest lesson learned is that it is important to regularly review, analyze and discuss the lessons learned and implement the recommendations drawn from them.

Therefore, in addition to recommendations listed in the previous Chapter, the Evaluation suggests including the lessons learned in the strategic planning discussions with stakeholders and Community of Practice.

Annex 5 presents the Knowledge Management Products elaborated by the Project as well as the activities related to the Community of Practice.

Annex 6 contains the consolidated list of lessons identified throughout the Project lifetime as well as during this Evaluation.

Below are the lessons identified in the course of the Evaluation:

1. The project demonstrated that whenever there is a continuous engagement, leadership and capacity to convene and articulate processes, cultural and political changes can be induced. Therefore, for a Project of this type it is imperative to have strong political commitment and advocacy at highest corporate level to ensure highest quality of decisions and interventions;
2. Resident Representatives are crucial for ensuring political commitment and support at the country level and to demonstrate the importance of the initiative to the HQ and donors. Therefore it is particularly important to work directly with the RR/RC and raise their awareness and skills through coaching labs, targeted workshops and publicity campaigns;
3. There is a tremendous strategic value in raising awareness. Awareness of the subject matter helps identify and name the problem, which then makes looking for solutions and remedies easier. There is no need to create the demand; there is a need to identify it by putting a name on it and formulate the offer;
4. Dialogues cannot guarantee the agreements, but they generate expectations and when these expectations are not fulfilled, it causes frustration and diminishes the possibilities for future dialogues. Therefore the preparatory work should include creating awareness about the essence of the dialogue and constructing realistic expectations;
5. Dialogues cannot be forced. Sustained dialogue is slow, it takes time, and the results are not seen immediately. Each dialogue sets its own pace and depends on the ability of the parties to compromise. The dialogue process requires a very important preliminary work to prepare the actors for dialogue, identify favorable conditions for dialogue and entry points, choose right persons with adequate profiles, create formal and informal spaces and define strategies of engagement;
6. The customary vision of the democratic dialogue as a high level political process is insufficient and simplistic. The democratic dialogue has to be viewed as an approach, a tool to deal with the contemporary challenges to democracy and peace in situations where the institutions do not live up to this challenge;
7. UNDP promoted the dialogue at the highest political levels, where at times there was no sufficient institutional infrastructure. If the parties are not ready and the settings are fragile, the dialogues may fail. Therefore it is important to understand that there may not always be a possibility for a dialogue and alternative approaches must be sought;
8. Dialogue is a cognitive problem which explains the existing diversity in understanding the dialogue. Persons may have instinctive knowledge of dialogue but may find it difficult to articulate and operationalize. The fundamental premises of the dialogue should be clarified at the cognitive level, worked on and developed constantly;
9. The division between governance and conflict is artificial and only exists at the HQ and cluster level. On the Programmatic level these two areas are often managed and represented by the same focal points and conflict-related projects are often Governance portfolios. The same factors that affect the stability of governance and democracy (inequality, poverty, injustice, discrimination, lack of rule of law, etc.) produce fertile grounds for violence and conflict. Therefore the DD application should not be limited to conflict environments but be viewed as an essential part of development process that implies consultation, participation, debate and search for consensus;
10. Quality of services and expertise is a deal-breaker. So is emotional intelligence and professional maturity. No amount of lobbying and awareness can replace the poor quality of technical expertise and professional immaturity of human resources acting on behalf of UNDP. Serious damage could be done when inadequate persons represent UNDP vis-à-vis governments and donors;
11. Demand for dialogue cannot be planned but it can be anticipated. There are numerous analytical tools available in the Region (e.g. PAPEP) that can be effectively used to analyze political and social contexts and construct scenarios where democratic dialogue might be needed. Therefore it is crucial that in addition to strengthening its own analytical capacities, the Project teams up with other initiatives to take full advantage of existing analytical tools and methodologies;
12. Communities of Practice need leadership and guidance, not just facilitation. There needs to be a solid conceptual and operational basis and common goal to consolidate and operationalize the existing knowledge and human capital and maximize its utility for UNDP and its partners.

**CHAPTER 10: DATA SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRPAHY**

1. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Project Document, Phase 1
2. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Project Document, Phase 2
3. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Annual Progress Reports, 2003-2009
4. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Mid-term and Annual reports for DGTTF
5. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Annual Financial Reports
6. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Financial Audit Reports 2004-2006
7. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Annual Report to CIDA, 2004
8. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Mission Reports
9. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Synthesis of Project Products and Activities, Phase 1 and 2, 2000-2010
10. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Síntesis de los Diálogos desarrollados en Guatemala con el apoyo del PRDD, 2000-2008
11. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, The UNDP Civic Scenario/Civic Dialogue Workshop, Guatemala, 2000
12. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Building Capacity for Dialogue, Deliberation and Public Engagement in Latin America and the Caribbean, Concept Note, February 2008
13. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Síntesis, Curso para Facilitadores, Diseño y Facilitación de Procesos Dialógicos de Cambio, Buenos Aires, 2009
14. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, ¨Diseñando el Futuro¨: Memoria del Encuentro Estratégico del Proyecto Regional de Dialogo Democrático, Octubre 2007, Guatemala
15. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Memoria, Jornada de Reflexión Generativa de La Interculturalidad en un Enfoque Dialógico, Antigua, 2009
16. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Curso Regional de Alto Nivel: Diseño y Facilitación de Procesos Dialógicos de Cambio, Nota Conceptual, Guatemala, 2009
17. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Proyecto Regional: Herramientas para la Prevención de Crisis y el Fortalecimiento de la Gobernabilidad Democrático
18. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, El Enfoque Dialógico en el Abordaje de Conflictos Socioambientales, Relatoría de la Jornada de aprendizaje, Antigua, 2008
19. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Taller de Socialización, PROGRAMA CH’UMILAL HAB’, Relatoría, B’elaj Ajpu, 2009
20. Draft Memorandum of Understanding on Handbook on Democratic Dialogue between UNDP, International IDEA and OAS
21. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Reports from Learning Workshops 2003-2004, *by Pruitt*, *Bettye,* 2004
22. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Informe de Evaluación de Dialogo Binacional Colombia-Ecuador, UNDP, 2009
23. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Virtual Project Appraisal Committee Minutes, UNDP;
24. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Proposal on Design, Facilitation and Logistics of Generative Workshop for UNDP-LAC Leadership
25. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Minutes of the Meeting on Democratic Dialogue with BDP, BCPR and Regional Bureaus, 2004
26. IMD Discussion Paper for Expert Meeting on Democratic Dialogue, Sweden, 2004
27. Dialogue as a Tool for Peaceful Conflict Transformation, *Pruitt, Bettye and Kaufer, Katrin,* 2004
28. A Policy Note on Democratic Dialogue, *Diez Pinto, Elena,* UNDP and Oslo Governance Center, 2005
29. Strategic Outlook on Dialogue, *Gerzon, Mark,* 2005
30. cprp-net Summary: Group E-discussion on Dialogue-like processes, 2005
31. Democratic Dialogue - A Handbook for Practitioners, *Pruitt, Bettye and Thomas, Philip,* International IDEA, CIDA, OAS, UNDP, 2007
32. A Conceptual Framework for Dialogue, International IDEA
33. Multistakeholder Engagement Processes: A UNDP Capacity Development Resource, UNDP, 2006
34. Why dialogue matters for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, UNDP, 2009
35. Democratic Dialogue Tipsheet, DAC
36. Teoría de Cambio: Un enfoque de pensamiento-acción para navegar en la complejidad de los procesos de cambio social, *Retolaza Eguren, Iñigo*, 2010, HIVOS, PRDD, PNUD
37. Case Studies, by *Noto, Gerardo, Perlas, Nicanor, Hernandez, Max, Diez Pinto, Elena, Balcarcel, Miguel Angel*, RPDD, UNDP 2004
38. Public Engagement Strategies for a National Development Framework: Recommendations on Design and Implementation, Consultancy Report, *by Thomas, Philip & Pruitt, Bettye,* UNDP, 2010
39. UNDP strategic plan, 2008-2011, UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board 2008
40. UNDP strategic vision on assistance to crisis-affected countries, UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, 2008
41. Bureau Strategy 2007-2011, BCPR, UNDP, 2007
42. Regional programme document for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008-2011, UNDP, 2007
43. Evaluation of the second regional cooperation framework for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNEG, 2001-2007
44. Proyecto Regional: Análisis político y Escenarios Probables para Fortalecer la Gobernabilidad Democrática en América Latina (PAPEP), Documento de Proyecto, UNDP
45. Nuestra Democracia, PNUD – OEA, 2010
46. Conflict Barometer 2009, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, Department of Political Science, University of Heidelberg, 2010
47. Peace and Conflict 2010, *Hewitt Joseph J., Wilkenfeld, Jonathan, and Gurr, Ted Robert,* Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM), University of Maryland, 2010
48. Informe 2009, Latinobarometro, [www.latinobarometro.org](http://www.latinobarometro.org)
49. Ethical Code of Conduct for Evaluation in UNDP
50. Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators
51. Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Development Results
52. Standards for Evaluation in the UN System
53. Norms for Evaluation in the UN System
54. The Evaluation Policy of the UN
55. Beyond Logframe; Using Systems Concepts in Evaluation, ed. Nobuko Fujita, FASID, 2010
56. Using Randomization in Development Economics Research: A Toolkit; Esther Duflo, Rachel Glennerster and Michael Kremer, December 2006 in Handbook of Development Economics, Volume 4, 2007
57. Integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches in Program Evaluation, Vijayendra Rao and Michael Woolcock, in The Impact of Economic Policies on Poverty and Income Distribution: Evaluation Techniques and Tools, ed. François Bourguignon, Luiz A. Pereira da Silva, 2003, IBRD/W
58. Evaluating Development Co-operation: Summary of Key Norms and Standards, II edition, OECD-DAC, 2010
59. Introductory Statistics, *Weiss, Neil A.,* Addison-Wesley, 1999

Links:

<http://practices.undp.org/cpr/>

<http://practices.undp.org/democratic-governance/>

<http://www.democraticdialoguenetwork.org/index.pl>

<http://www.idea.int/>

<http://www.nimd.org/>

<http://www.propaz.org.gt/website/>

<http://thechangealliance.ning.com/>

<http://www.latinobarometro.org/>

**CHAPTER 11: LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABRBEVIATIONS**

ACDD - Agencia Catalana de Cooperación al Desarrollo (Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation)

AECID - Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation)

AWP – Annual Work Plan

BCPR - Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery

BDP - Bureau for Development Policy

BND - Binational Dialogue

CAF - Corporación Andina de Fomento (Andean Development Corporation)

CCA - Country Cooperation Framework

CIDA - Canadian International Development Agency

COP - Community of Practice

CPR - Crisis Prevention and Recovery

DD - Democratic Dialogue

DG - Democratic Governance

DGTTF - Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Funds

HD - Human Development

IDEA - International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

LAC - Latin America and the Caribbean

LRC - Learning Resources Centre

MDG - Millennium Development Goals

nIMD - Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

OAS - Organization of American States

PDA - Peace and Development Advisor

PO - Programme Officer

RBLAC - Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

RCF - Regional Cooperation Framework

RPDD - Regional Programme on Democratic Dialogue

RRF - Results and Resources Framework

PROPAZ - Fundación PROPAZ

UNCT - United Nations Country Team

UNDAF - United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UN DPA - United Nations Department of Political Affairs

UNEG - United Nations Evaluation Group

VDA - Virtual Development Academy

**CHAPTER 12: LIST OF ANNEXES**

Annex 1: Description of Sample and Respondent Data

Annex 2: Indicative Questions

Annex 3: Description of Services

Annex 4: Achievement of outputs: Synthesis of Project Activities and Products by Component/Output 2001-2010 (Courtesy of the Project)

Annex 5: Community of Practice and Knowledge Management: Summary of Products (Courtesy of the Project)

Annex 6: Consolidated List of Lessons Learned Collected by the Project and the Evaluation

Annex 7: Report on the Implementation of the DGTTF-funded components

1. Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, p.10. UNEG, 2005 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Virtual Project Appraisal Committee Minutes, p. 5, RPDD, 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Ibid., p.3 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Regional Project on Democratic Dialogue, Project Document, p. 5, UNDP RBLAC, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <http://www.democraticdialoguenetwork.org/page.pl?p=community_description&s=4> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Interview with Mr. Chetan Kumar, Conflict Prevention Advisor, UNDP BCPR, 27 October 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Conflict Barometer 2009, p. 44, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, Department of Political Science, University of Heidelberg, 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. The six non-LAC conflicts are conflicts in Canada (Government vs. Bloc Quebecois and AFN) and USA (versus Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba (2 conflicts)), Ibid., p.45. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Evaluation of the Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2007, p. 35, UNEG, 2007 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Strategic Outlook on Dialogue, *Gerzon, Mark;* p. 3, UNDP, 2005 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Email from Mr. Andrew Russell, 18 October 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)