

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Assessment of Development Results (ADR) was conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office (EO) to assess and demonstrate evaluative evidence of the UNDP contribution to development results in Libya since 2003. The EO conducted this ADR during 2009, covering the ongoing and previous country programmes, 2003–2005 and 2006–2010, respectively (the latter was originally planned for 2006–2009 but was extended through to 2010.)

For pragmatic reasons—such as, for example, the lack of institutional memory on both the UNDP and national counterpart sides—this evaluation focused on the ongoing programme, though it includes interventions started during and continued past the previous programme cycle. The evaluation covered activities funded by all financial resources (national institutions, UNDP core resources, foundations, donors, etc.) and all execution and implementation modalities. Non-project activities were also included in the evaluation process to assess the extent of collaboration between the country office and its counterpart authorities.

Within this scope, the overall objectives of the ADR in Libya were to:

- Provide an independent assessment of the progress, or lack thereof, towards achieving the expected outcomes envisaged in the UNDP programming documents, as well as the expected results of UNDP response to national development needs;
- Provide an analysis of how UNDP has positioned itself to add value to national development efforts and how it responded to changes in the local context; and
- Present key findings, draw conclusions and provide a set of clear and forward-looking recommendations for making adjustments

for the remaining period in the current country programme and for developing the next programme.

CONTEXT

Libya has a high human development rank. The latest national Millennium Development Goals (MDG) report (2009) concluded that Libya is well placed to attain the MDGs within the established timeframe. While extreme poverty is not found in Libya, there remains a need to address disparities among different geographic regions. Equally important is the need to balance ongoing national economic restructuring with social policies that safeguard the living standards of the vulnerable.

To sustain development and growth, the Libyan economy is undergoing a major transition: it is moving away from an almost total dependence on energy resources, which became of significant commercial value in 1959, to a relatively liberal economy with diversified sources of revenue. The crude oil and gas sectors have thus far provided 70% of its gross domestic product (GDP) while employing only 3% of the workforce. Since the lift of UN sanctions in 1999, Libyan authorities have been implementing a series of measures to reform and open the economy, and progress towards a free-market economy has been steady but slow.

Libya achieved significant progress in the education sector, specifically in growth of literacy rates, women's education and access to education. However, there remains a need to ensure quality of education, particularly in remote regions. Although the ongoing economic transition has changed both the structure and the nature of the local labour market, the education sector has been slow to respond to these new market requirements.

Ensuring quality healthcare services is one of the central challenges facing the health sector. The healthcare infrastructure has improved considerably, but the system continues to depend on expatriates and offshore health centres for specialized care. Reforming primary healthcare and referral systems is another challenge that requires attention.

Recognizing the multi-dimensional nature and cultural factors related to the HIV/AIDS issue facing Libya, the authorities are streamlining activities by developing a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS policy. There is a significant need for institutional capacity building to combat the spread of the epidemic and ensure the availability of data on vulnerable groups.

Gender equality remains among national priorities. There has been significant progress towards gender equality, particularly in the education sector. Libyan women's participation in the labour market has also increased. Despite these encouraging indicators, the women's participation in political and economic processes continues to be limited as a consequence of social traditions and preconceptions.

UNDP IN LIBYA

Libya became a Member State of the United Nations (UN) in 1955, four years after achieving independence. Although now strong, Libya's relationship with the UN at the political level was strained as a result of the sanctions imposed in 1992 and their subsequent impact on Libyan economy and society. Yet at the technical level, UNDP capabilities and its access to the UN system provided the main—and often the only—source of technical know-how. Since the lift of UN sanctions in 2003–2004, Libyan authorities face a greater range of partnership options, ranging from multilateral agencies such as The World Bank to private consulting firms.

During the period covered by this evaluation (2003–2010), UNDP implemented two country programmes, expanding the second from its

original closing date of 2009 by a year. Despite the absence of a national development plan during this time, UNDP responded to the needs and priorities identified by national sector institutions.

The 2003–2005 programme was planned consistently with the UNDP mandate for sustainable human development and its orientation towards upstream activities. As such, it focused on three strategically interlinked thematic areas:

1. Capacity building for sustainable human development and public-sector reform;
2. Economic diversification; and
3. Decentralization and local governance.

The 2006–2009 Country Programme Document (CPD) indicated formulation on the basis of a broad consultative process involving public, private and civil-society partners. The process incorporated analyses made in the first MDG Report, the second National Human Development Report and the Arab Human Development Report series. Accordingly, the CPD was designed to focus on three strategic areas:

1. Economic reform and diversification;
2. Development of education and a knowledge society; and
3. Improved governance at the local and national levels.

MAIN FINDINGS

RELEVANCE AND RESPONSIVENESS

All of the objectives and activities of projects reviewed were relevant to the needs and priorities of the national institutions requesting project support. This is a demand-driven environment, where UNDP worked directly with partner institutions or, when required, invited specialized UN institutions to assist in project implementation while retaining responsibility for all related implementation, monitoring and follow-up activities. It is that level of relevance that motivated Libyan authorities to provide the

necessary funding for project implementation.

The UNDP corporate strength of providing upstream policy advice was not visible and, therefore, cannot be confirmed. However, country-office management and staff provided guidance on specific project-related situations during design and implementation stages. It is also notable that, when financed by a particular agency, UNDP interventions are clearly relevant to that agency's needs, yet relevance becomes more difficult to assess in the context of broader national strategic priorities.

In addition, UNDP has not been able to respond to changes in national priorities—even when these were made quite explicit by national authorities' official policy statements or actions. When the country decided to develop strategies and mechanisms to accelerate the diversification of its economy and widen the role of the private sector to become the engine of development and source of foreign investments, UNDP did not use its corporate and comparative advantage to play an active role in developing needed strategies. This may be due to the country office's positioning as a demand-driven, reactive agency responding to the demands of national institutions that provide all the funds needed for project implementation. Such positioning has deprived UNDP from attaining an upstream policy advisory role—despite highlighting its importance in the 2006–2009 CPD. In the absence of a UNDP advisory resource, national authorities may have looked to use other international organizations, such as The World Bank, to meet growing demand for such services.

In a very broad sense, most evaluated projects in the two programmatic cycles did contribute to promoting UN values. Notable contributions were made in the areas of MDG achievement and promoting South-South cooperation. Due to the past UNDP role as a facilitator of UN-executed projects, a large part of the evaluated programme cycles was devoted to projects that may not have a direct human development impact of increasing Libyans' choices and

opportunities. As the UNDP mandate moves away from UN-agency execution towards nationally executed projects, a greater focus on human development is evident.

PARTNERSHIPS AND UN-SYSTEM COOPERATION

UNDP is primarily a partner of Libyan national authorities. Still, it has also developed strong relationships with a number of Libya's emerging non-governmental organizations. There are also cases where twinning arrangements of cooperation with specific entities produced positive results, such as the success of the project to jointly support the Libyan National Meteorological Centre with the French national meteorological service Météo-France and assistance from the World Meteorological Organization, the UN agency of weather, climate and water.

Although the UNDP Libya has utilized the advisory services of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States and others in the UNDP global network, a number of opportunities for partnerships were missed. Though UNDP has acted as a window to UN expertise, its move to national execution is changing its role, and it remains too early to assess whether UNDP will be able to continue facilitating Libya's access to the broader UN system.

EFFECTIVENESS

Policy dialogue, as the term is generally understood, did not materialize in the 2003–2005 programming cycle. The same is true for the programming objective defined as “[Resident Coordinator] leadership on the global agenda”. “Increased support at the country level for global agenda for [sustainable human development]” was not concrete; there is really no room in the work programme, other than activities undertaken in the framework of a project funded by some entity. Under the objective of global conventions and funding, the intended outcome of “Increased national capacity for sustainable environment management development” was not evident despite the existence of six environment-area projects. The intended outcome under the

economic diversification objective was described as “improved work skills and new economic opportunities for the workforce and especially women”; however, all the training and skills-development that took place did not relate to economic diversification. Similarly, little directly related to decentralization and local governance took place outside projects requested by national authorities.

Observations on the 2006–2009 programming cycle are largely the same. Little is happening under economic diversification, the first of UNDP priority areas. Nonetheless, recent agreements with The World Bank demonstrate opportunities for multilateral development organizations to engage with Libyan authorities on this issue. Only the very initial steps towards the objective of mainstreaming the MDGs have been made, though there are funds from both the UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund and the national authorities to support such efforts. Little work was done in the area of reducing poverty, which is not a significant issue for Libya.

In the second UNDP priority area, education sector reform and creating a knowledge society, projects for curriculum review and development did “contribute to the development of human resources” as envisaged. The training activities conducted within the framework of different projects also contributed to fulfilling this objective.

The third priority area, improved governance at national and local levels, there is modest work to generate a significant contribution, with the exception of projects with the General People’s Committee for Justice (Ministry of Justice), where UNDP intervention was limited to introducing e-governance in only two pilot courts.

Part of the cause of lacking intervention effectiveness is the poor design of the results framework; outcomes are set very high, so much so that UNDP contribution is difficult to identify. This may be in response to the ad hoc—rather than strategic—approach to program-

ming, which has often led to an incoherent set of activities aimed at contributing to the stated programmatic outcomes. This is especially true in the area of support to information and communications technologies for development.

The quality of experts provided varied. However, experts retained for training and the transfer of knowledge and development of skills have created a valuable asset that contributes to sustainability.

EFFICIENCY

Implementation delays are costly, and Libyan authorities raise questions about the impact of such delays on cost-effectiveness. The question of efficiency also relates to the implementation modality: whether it is national, direct or agency execution, the responsibilities the parties involved seem to be blurred. Some national authorities know of balances remaining in their projects, but no action was taken by UNDP Libya to implement activities that could consume such balances or return them to national authorities.

SUSTAINABILITY

Projects that have had positive results create their own momentum and have a greater chance of being sustainable. The opposite is true when projects drag on for long periods: staff change, the level of enthusiasm gradually wanes and the probability of sustainability becomes marginal. While institutional changes may sometimes cause implementation delays, they may also bring forth better staff and more cooperative leadership and lead to a higher probability of sustainability—especially so if a project demonstrates positive results. The overall level of sustainability increases as national staff acquires new skills and knowledge. This is especially true when training responds to priority needs, helps achieve project objectives and selects the most appropriate, highly motivated trainees. Therefore, projects accessed by this evaluation as effective will be more sustainable than others.

CONCLUSIONS

1. On-the-ground review of projects and the comparison between these and the planned strategic outcomes in each area illuminates a sometimes significant gap between the two. The CPDs kept close to UNDP strategic areas, but they also had to respond to the needs and priorities of Libyan national authorities. Since that is the nature of work in an NCC environment, it implies the diversification of intervention areas and a demand-driven mode of operations.
2. The nature of the partnership with national authorities has not been appropriate, negatively affecting the UNDP contribution to Libya's development results. The 'Evaluation of the role of UNDP in the NCCS of the Arab Region' noted that UNDP should move away from the traditional development agency/client relationship to one of full and equal partnership at both the strategic/policy and programmatic levels. This partnership should be based on the principles of transparency, openness, mutual accountability and respect. This assessment still holds true in the case of Libya in 2010.
3. Although improving, UNDP capacity as an organization to respond to Libya's needs is limited. Basic programming and project management skills need to be strengthened and greater effort devoted to learning from the past. At the same time, it is clear that certain UNDP corporate programming, management and reporting methods do not always work well in an environment where programming responds to *ad hoc* government requests.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prepare the CPD in close alignment with the national development plan.
2. Focus development work (as opposed to facilitation) on a small number of areas where UNDP can make a difference and add value for human development.
3. Establish a more effective reporting system that meets the needs of national counterparts and undertake annual programme reviews with national stakeholders.
4. Following the approval of the new CPD by the UNDP Executive Board, prepare a Country Programme Action Plan involving national counterparts and develop a mechanism for holding annual reviews.
5. Develop a strategy for resource mobilization.
6. Prioritize further capacity development both at the UNDP country office and its counterpart national agencies, and intensify ongoing efforts in this respect.
7. Close projects that have been open for a long time with little or no activity.
8. Ensure, to the extent possible, the recruitment of Arabic speakers as experts for local projects to facilitate communication and reach the desired level of agreements.
9. Clearly define and reach mutual acceptance of UNDP management fees.