EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Assessment of Development Results (ADR) in Sri Lanka is an independent evaluation conducted in 2011, jointly by the Evaluation Office (EO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Sri Lanka. The EO and the Government participated in a Joint Management Group (JMG) which established an independent national team, led by a professional manager from the EO, and oversight to the evaluation process.

The ADR has collected and analysed evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results during the 2002-2007 (previous) and 2008-2012 (current) programme cycles. It focuses on the **relevance, effectiveness** and **efficiency** of programme activities in achieving intended programme outcomes, as well as the **potential sustainability** of the results achieved. The ADR also assessed UNDP's **strategic positioning and approaches**, drawing general conclusions and recommendations to improve UNDP's future strategy and approaches have been made.

The evaluation team adopted a case study approach and selected 31 programmes and projects implemented during the period for in-depth review. These programmes and projects were selected to ensure the evaluation covers all strategically or financially significant interventions and all thematic areas of the country programme. The evaluation team set-up a data collection strategy and conducted:

- Individual and group interviews of nearly 150 stakeholders, including policy makers, programme and project managers, project implementing agencies and partners, representatives of beneficiaries or those representing their views, and other stakeholders such as local government officials and private sector associations.

- Ten group discussions of beneficiaries, particularly of the wide-scale Transition and Recovery Programme (TRP) that was implemented directly by UNDP.

- Desk studies of all relevant documents and studies, including 15 existing evaluation reports on UNDP programmes and projects.

- Visits to 11 out of 25 Districts in Sri Lanka to observe the results achieved by field activities. For every programme or project that involved field activities, at least one location was visited.

KEY FINDINGS

UNDP has supported the Government to incorporate the Millennium Declaration Goals (MDGs) and the Managing for Development Results (MfDR) approach into the national planning framework. Introduction of the MDGs in the early 2000s was highly relevant and there has been a steady but slow progress since then. Application of MfDR has yet to achieve necessary depth and breadth to be effective. Dynamic linkages of MfDR systems between national and sub-national entities, and between the central units and other parts of the Government were still largely missing.

UNDP has undertaken several projects to facilitate poverty-reduction in specific sectors and regions. Generally, these projects had limited impact and the sustainability of any results achieved was questionable.

To promote democratic and inclusive governance, UNDP has aimed to strengthen human rights institutions, decentralization of governance and access to justice by the people. Initiatives such as localisation of the MDGs, the introduction of a Citizen's Charter, and provisions of

legal documents for internally displaced persons (IDPs), were effective in steering public service provision to the people's needs. Support to local administrations in their tsunami-related recovery effort had a tangible impact on the lives of beneficiaries. However, capacity development support largely focused on institutional strengthening, and systems to effectively utilise those capacities were generally missing.

UNDP has provided policy support to promoting sustainable development through a number of "enabling" documents, or technical studies, to support policy development and implantation. However, the majority of these documents have not led to any policy implementation on the ground. UNDP also has supported a number of field projects for sustainable development and improved environmental management. Many of these projects had produced tangible results, albeit on a limited scale.

UNDP has significantly contributed to establishing a comprehensive national disaster management system, including the creation of the Disaster Management Centre, local disaster response units and an early warning system. Inter-ministerial coordination and local government involvement in disaster management are issues which still remain. The lack of UNDP's exit strategy from this programme had put into question the sustainability of results achieved.

The TRP implemented in post-conflict areas majorly impacted the lives of beneficiaries. Its integrated approach, encompassing support for housing, livelihood and social transformation, and the strategy to focus this support in community-based organisations, has made some results sustainable. Direct implementation approach adopted by UNDP has led to greater effectiveness but left gaps in the local government's capacity to take over operations. Further, there was no common understanding on the future or the exit strategy of this programme.

Support to the mine action project has achieved major results on the ground in terms of demining.

However, reliance on foreign funding leaves the future of the project uncertain.

A gender dimension was well mainstreamed into UNDP's programmes, especially its field operations. The standalone project to increase representation of women in decision-making processes has had some contributions but no real impact as yet.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1. Over the past decade, UNDP's programme has responded well to evolving government priorities and the needs of the country, particularly in dealing with the effects of the war and the tsunami. UNDP thus remained an important partner to the country and has had a tangible impact. Today, UNDP faces the challenge of repositioning itself within a changing context. With post-conflict regions soon moving from a transitional to a developmental phase, UNDP must set out a clear course for its future in these regions. With the country solidifying its middle-income country status and developing its own capacity, UNDP is expected to strengthen its policy advice, advocacy and partnership building roles while focusing capacity development on supporting national efforts. New social, economic and environmental issues are also emerging, in which UNDP could contribute through policy support.

Conclusion 2. UNDP's approach to poverty reduction was opportunistic. Interventions aimed at poverty reduction were isolated and impact was limited. Most of UNDP's contributions to reduce poverty occurred where poverty reduction was not a primary objective, such as in post-tsunami and post-conflict recovery, the localisation of the MDGs, and the establishment of local disaster response capacities. These programmes, which mainstreamed not only poverty reduction but also human rights and gender, had a considerable impact on the lives of the poor and the vulnerable.

Conclusion 3. National capacity developed with UNDP's support has not always been fully utilised

because there was too much focus on individual and institutional capacities without sufficient attention to the system and mechanisms to use them. Further, in most UNDP initiatives, there have not been proper capacity assessments or exit strategies to prepare national institutions to take over the work and functions, putting into question the sustainability of the capacity developed.

Conclusion 4. There has been a tendency to focus on the delivery of outputs without paying sufficient attention to the conditions in which these outputs could lead to actual development results. Even beyond UNDP, in the community of development partners as a whole, this tendency to focus on delivery more than results, may have hindered effective coordination of strategies and approaches among partners engaged in similar assistance to achieve similar objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. UNDP must strengthen its focus on the achievement of development results beyond the delivery of outputs.

Recommendation 2. UNDP should support the national development effort more through coordinating and galvanizing support around national development goals, and engage in deeper programmatic coordination within the UNCT towards common development goals defined in UNDAF.

Recommendation 3. UNDP should enhance its policy advisory role. To this end, it should engage in building broader partnerships among policy makers, intellectual communities, civil society and the private sector in the country

Recommendation 4. UNDP should make an effort to more effectively use its success experiences in downstream projects. It should take initiatives to collate experiences of development partners engaged in similar activities to promote a more coherent approach.

Recommendation 5. In all areas of its programme, UNDP should more systematically consider how partnerships with the private sector could facilitate the achievement of development goals and build those partnerships into the programme design.

Recommendation 6. UNDP's capacity development should encompass support to the development of systems and mechanisms that would make use of the capacity developed.

Recommendation 7. UNDP should ensure that capacity developed in national institutions is sustainable after the completion of the engagement, and an exit strategy should be built into every project design.

Recommendation 8. In promoting accountable and transparent public service delivery mechanisms, UNDP should systematically involve both decentralized and devolved structures of local governance as well as community-level organizations, take on a policy leadership role in coordinating varied donor initiatives in this area, and take a holistic approach to democratic governance encompassing its work on human rights, access to justice, local public service delivery and RBM at national and local levels.

Recommendation 9. For post-conflict regions, UNDP should set up an exit strategy for its transition and recovery programme, on which a common understanding with partners should be developed. In this regard, it should consider retaining some capacities at the province level to monitor the socio-economic situation and coordinate the capacity development and recovery support during the transition period.

Recommendation 10. UNDP should re-examine where it could make a critical contribution to gender equality within the context of UNDAF, and provide focused support therein.