

SUMMARY

This report examines the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) contribution to development results in the Republic of Tunisia over the last two cycles of the UNDP programme, i.e. the periods 2002 to 2006 and 2007 to 2011. The evaluation, referred to as Assessment of Development Results (ADR), was carried out on behalf of the UNDP Evaluation Office in New York by four independent consultants. It took place between June 2010 and March 2011. The main evaluation mission was carried out between 26 October and 13 November 2010 and ended with a workshop at which the initial results of the mission were submitted to UNDP and to the national partners under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After the Tunisian revolution, another brief assessment mission was organized in February 2011 to take into account the new challenges in governance and inclusive human development that Tunisia will face in the short and medium term.

The Evaluation Office submitted the draft report to the UNDP Country Office, the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) and the Tunisian government to solicit their comments and to correct any factual errors. The Country Office provided comments, but none were received from the government, which had more pressing priorities given the post-revolutionary situation in 2011. For the same reason, a planned workshop to provide feedback to a broader group of stakeholders could not take place.

The report reviews UNDP's actions in the various areas of the country programme to draw lessons learned and issue recommendations that will help the Country Office and its partners develop cooperation programmes for UNDP's next programming cycle.

The report examines the context in which UNDP operates in Tunisia, evaluates the relevance of

interventions in relation to national priorities and the role played by UNDP in various national processes linked mainly to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), human rights, the environment and improving the international competitiveness of Tunisia's economy. The themes and components of the UNDP programme are examined in relation to the results obtained, the efficiency, effectiveness and durability of results, and UNDP's strategic positioning.

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT AND UNDP SUPPORT

Tunisia has undergone significant socio-economic progress over the last few decades, putting it on the path to becoming an emerging country. Its Human Development Index (HDI), calculated in 2010, ranked it 81st out of 169 countries worldwide. In terms of the evolution of the HDI over a long period, Tunisia was one of the 10 highest performing countries in the world. Life expectancy at birth went from 62.1 years in 1960 to 74 years in 2010. The maternal mortality rate decreased considerably going from 68.9 for every 100,000 births in 1994 to 47.7 in 2010. However, this rate still remains high with regard to the development of the entire health sector, which makes the task of achieving MDG 5 by 2015 a difficult one.

Progress recorded in the social sectors is attributable to the consistency of budgetary policies, which, for over 30 years, have devoted 8 to 12 percent of GDP to the health and education sectors. However, income inequalities, along with a rising Gini coefficient (41 percent in 2005), and marked regional disparities are slowing the increase of the HDI.

During the course of the two programme cycles assessed in this ADR, UNDP Tunisia aligned itself with the national priorities outlined in

successive five-year development plans. The 10th plan (2002-2006) is presented as a step towards confronting technological challenges, the challenges of globalization, and those of the scientific and technological revolution. The 11th plan (2007-2011) emphasizes the country's integration in the global economy and the appropriation of know-how by development actors. Efforts were to focus on improving productivity, promoting a knowledge economy and strengthening the quality culture, whilst avoiding the exclusion of any social force. Three major challenges explicitly and implicitly guided the UNDP programmes:

- Job creation, particularly for young people: With an overall unemployment rate exceeding 13 percent, and with young people being the most affected (24 percent), the government increased job creation schemes, but this failed to alleviate the increasing pressure of young job seekers, particularly higher education graduates.
- Regional disparities: Fifty years after the first attempts at ensuring more equitable regional development, there remains a development gap between the coast and the rest of the country. MDG indicators by region, published in 2009, highlight social and economic deficits in the regions of Tozeur, Jendouba, Siliana, Gafsa and Kasserine.
- Sustainable development: Aside from phosphate, Tunisia's natural resources are limited because a large part of its territory is desert land. From 2002 onwards, an emphasis was placed on finding a better balance between development needs and protecting the environment and natural resources. Preventing industrial pollution, preserving natural resources, protecting the coast, energy efficiency and renewable energies were prioritized.

For the two programme cycles under review (2002-2006 and 2007-2011), UNDP opted for broad support to certain sectorial strategies. The

first programme cycle used more of a project approach than a programme approach, with a range of preparatory assistances and small projects. However, during the second programme cycle, UNDP endeavoured to better conceptualize its programme by adopting the programme approach to facilitate strategic development processes and the implementation of programmes that created synergies with other partners. For the first programme cycle, UNDP programmes were concentrated in the following areas:

- integrating the country into the global economy, supporting policies for the development of the productive apparatus and regional integration;
- addressing social challenges through professional insertion, employment and combating marginalization and social exclusion;
- protecting the environment by continuing to combat desertification, preserving ecosystems and reducing energy consumption; and
- governance, with interventions based on the role and efficacy of the State and decentralization.

The responses provided by UNDP during the second cycle (2007-2011) covered three main areas:

- management and integration with the global economy;
- strengthening equity and the quality of services for reducing vulnerabilities; and
- promoting employment.

Most of the interventions planned under the two Country Programme Action Plans (CPAP) anticipated national execution (NEX) methods. Planned interventions highlight the objective of obtaining 50 percent co-funding from the Tunisian government. Other potential partners were identified gradually throughout the implementation and according to the needs of the programme.

RELEVANCE

The main themes of the UNDP governance and MDG programme—notably the development of a prospective vision and of governance indicators, capacity building of the Court of Auditors, the modernization of public administration (MODAP) and human development—are relevant and correspond to the main objectives of Tunisian development plans. By aiming to modernize public administration, improve the quality of financial expertise and develop national capabilities in terms of prospects, the UNDP programme helped improve public administration programme tools. Local governance also received special attention, in the framework of a sub-regional approach (Maghreb-wide), through the ART GOLD¹ project. The choice of partner institutions was suitable for these three aspects of governance and made the appropriation of results by national institutions possible.

UNDP has persistently supported the areas of environment and energy over the two cycles. The four flagship themes of the UNDP programme in this area—desertification control, the preservation of biodiversity, the fight against climate change and energy conservation—feature among national priorities. They also meet the nation's international commitments, including the three Rio conventions pertaining to sustainable development, namely the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

EFFECTIVENESS

The promotion of MDGs and human development in Tunisia was launched in a timely manner; however the results obtained (two national reports) have not been acted upon. The Ministry of Development and International Cooperation (MDCI) did not deem it appropriate to review its tools and its approach in light of the new

conceptual framework of the MDGs. In terms of employment, UNDP's help has had little effect. The joint project on employment in the governorates of Gafsa and Kasserine is slightly behind schedule due to the lack of cooperation and partnership between the concerned ministry and the United Nations System (UNS).

UNDP's assistance to the various components of governance has not achieved all of the expected results in terms of consolidating the rule of law and the emergence of regional and local actors (regions, communes, civil society and private sector). With regard to public administration reforms, actions have been taken with some delay and have not yet produced any conclusive interim results. Finally, there have been mixed results for the good governance development indicators because their development process was not completed due to the sensitivity of this topic and the disagreements between UNDP and the government in 2007 and 2008.

However, the financial resources mobilized by UNDP and its partners for the different programmes in the environment and energy sector unquestionably strengthened the capabilities of the benefiting institutions and organizations on a national, regional and local level. This assistance enabled partners to introduce several institutional, organizational, technical and socio-economic innovations and improvements. It improved the management of the benefiting organizations, even having a 'conveyor-belt' effect on other partners at times. UNDP contributed to the implementation of national strategies and policy, notably through training and improving local competencies as well as via the transfer of new technologies, such as cogeneration, technical checks for energy efficiency, in vitro propagation of date palm and others. This success is due to the relevance of the actions undertaken, their consistency with the strategies and programmes of Tunisian partners, and the solid partnership between UNDP and national institutions.

¹ Support for Territorial Networks for Local Governance Oriented Towards Development.

Lastly, UNDP's activities on gender led to gender-sensitive budgeting being incorporated into the 11th plan (2007–2011). Nevertheless, UNDP's action in this field is still not targeted or persistent enough to generate a momentum.

SUSTAINABILITY

Projects are generally set up so as to strengthen the ownership and sustainability of the results obtained. Hosted by the departments of the various institutions involved, the projects are often led by their staff and carefully overseen by senior staff, as in the case of the Court of Auditors and the National Agency for Energy Management (ANME). However, the MODAP team needs to be further strengthened and united in order to ensure the sustainability of the expected results. In the environment and energy sector, UNDP projects have obtained good results, which have been appropriated by partner institutions and integrated into their current activities.

However, there are several indications of weak ownership for certain processes, particularly with regard to the MDGs, governance and the long-term vision of national development. The government-imposed confidentiality of the main documents of the 'Tunisia 2030' prospective vision reduced the impact of this initiative. The national dialogue envisaged as part of the project activities never took place.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: UNDP in Tunisia led many relevant initiatives, fundamentally aligned with the priorities of the country, and, from 2007, made efforts to conceptualize programming instruments according to a programme approach.

Adopting a programme approach was intended to reduce the number of small projects and to undertake innovative initiatives. However, the rigidity of the political system, and at times Tunisian bureaucracy, did not encourage dialogue between UNDP and the government in the

design and implementation of some programmes in terms of governance and MDGs.

Conclusion 2: UNDP's contribution varies greatly depending on the sectors and areas of cooperation. Its interventions in the fields of environment and energy have led to positive results that were appropriated by national organizations. However, results obtained in the areas of governance, MDGs and employment remain very poor.

In the fields of environment and energy, the projects contributed to capacity building and attracted several additional sources of funding. In the field of governance, UNDP's constant assistance in modernizing and developing new financial evaluation methods has enabled the Court of Auditors to assert itself in the political landscape as an institution guaranteeing the inspection of public expenditure.

Conclusion 3: The lack of institutionalized dialogue between the main interlocutor (the MDCI) and UNDP, and of strategies by UNDP to bypass certain barriers related to the issue of democratic and local governance, prevented UNDP from achieving its goals and expanding its partnerships with civil society.

In 2007, UNDP overlooked an opportunity to adapt tools and approaches relating to the MDGs and human development to the Tunisian context. The level of development in Tunisia requires the MDGs to be adapted to the national context (MDG+) and the adopting of a more ambitious approach to human development in which the issues of governance, technological innovation and adapting production systems for sustainable natural resources management carry more weight. UNDP has not formulated appropriate bypass strategies to develop solid partnerships with civil society and strengthen its capacities.

Conclusion 4: UNDP's low capacity for advisory support at the level of the Country Office, Headquarters and the Regional Centre in

Cairo, the hybrid nature of the implementation approach and the lack of a proper monitoring and evaluation system limited UNDP's ability to manage its governance and environmental programmes and to initiate a frank dialogue and establish fruitful partnerships with the government.

Despite the efforts made by UNDP, national ownership is still insufficient. This is linked to the lack of sustainability strategies in the Country Programme Document (CPD) and CPAP and to micro-management by the two UNDP programme managers. The absence of a monitoring and evaluation system has deprived the UNDP Country Office of an overall view of programme performance and of an ability to capitalize on good practices, which could have enriched discussion and dialogue with national partners on major challenges such as employment, globalization, inequalities and governance.

Conclusion 5: The revolution of 14 January 2011 opened up new prospects for cooperation for the UNS as a whole and for UNDP in particular.

Although the new and old systems still coexist in various forms, this revolution made a break with the past possible at two levels: i) politically, with the end of the single party regime, which for the first time makes the emergence of a pluralist political system possible, and deserving of assistance; and ii) economically, with the drafting and implementation of public policies based on social equity and healthy competition, which can reconcile the Tunisian economy's need for competitiveness with job creation for the Tunisian youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its observations and new challenges to be met (poverty, unemployment among youth, corruption and the lack of democratic prospects) highlighted by the revolution of 14 January 2011, and by basing itself on UNDP's comparative advantages in terms of human rights, the promotion of

human development and the development of a culture of evaluation and transparency, the ADR proposes the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: In the coming years, UNDP should view democratic governance as a priority in order to aid the emergence of a new pluralistic political system and support the establishment and strengthening of the capacities of the new democratic institutions.

In the new context created by the 14 January 2011 revolution, UNDP's support should mainly involve strengthening the capacities of new democratic institutions and the space for free dialogue between civil society and the government, as well as respect for human rights and gender equality, without neglecting the environment and sustainable development sectors.

Recommendation 2: The programme approach, initiated in 2007 by UNDP, should be extended to all projects. This will help create a critical mass of outcomes and impacts and promote a new culture of evaluation, accountability and the integration of environmental and social dimensions into sectorial policies.

Tunisia will have to improve its sectorial policies and implement regional development programmes to help create the maximum number of jobs in all regions. In this context, UNDP should strengthen and institutionalize its partnership with the MDCI, a key ministry with regard to encouraging strategic guidelines and sectorial policies, in order to elaborate a strong growth model promoting technological innovations and employment, to outline a national aid management strategy, to contextualize the MDGs by focusing on income inequality and regional disparities, and to pursue sustainable development and inclusive human development by promoting dialogue between social partners.

Recommendation 3: UNDP should help the government improve its understanding of employment-related issues and of the

challenges that globalization poses to the Tunisian economy, and to develop programmes that bring innovation and provide access to expertise.

UNDP should continue to place emphasis on innovative activities that are likely to bring about changes in production systems (new technologies, reviewed industrial strategies, energy, environment, water, etc.), on adapting human resources training to market requirements by supporting a review of the education and training policy, and on decentralized regional development in the regions of Gafsa and Kef.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should improve its support and advice capabilities to facilitate more effective capacity building, given the acceleration of changes in production systems.

In partnership with other agencies of the UNS, UNDP should improve the quality of its expertise with regard to policy making, evaluation and advocacy issues.

Recommendation 5: UNDP should improve the design and implementation of its interventions and introduce an effective monitoring and evaluation system enabling it to apply lessons learned and capitalize on best practices.

The design and implementation of activities can be improved by defining specific objectives, expected results and performance indicators more effectively. The effectiveness of interventions is dependent on an operational strategy drawn up over the long term and adjusted on an annual basis.

Recommendation 6: With the government's agreement, UNDP should implement an action plan whereby project implementation is gradually passed on to NEX, thereby allowing for greater national ownership and a greater focus by UNDP on its strategic functions relating to development issues.

Recommendation 7: UNDP should adopt a clear and operational development strategy for wider technical and financial partnerships that are open to the private sector and civil society.

Recommendation 8: UNDP, in concert with other agencies of the UNS, should consolidate and expand its advocacy and support to grass-root social networks on certain important transversal issues, such as human development, citizenship, HIV/AIDS, gender and violence against women, notably by supporting the media in order to promote the image of, and respect for, women in all spheres of society.