

The Summary and Lessons Learnt of Outcome 3 & 4 Evaluation

Executive Summary:

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of an independent outcome evaluation of the UNDP Cambodia Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2011-2015, in particular its Democratic Governance Outcomes. The evaluation was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The two-member outcome evaluation team undertook two in-country missions, respectively from 5-9 October 2014 and from 22 October to 1 November 2014.

The outcome evaluation was looking particularly at the following two CPAP Outcomes out of six:

- **CPAP Outcome 3:** By 2015, effective mechanisms for dialogue, representation and participation in democratic decision-making established and strengthened.
- **CPAP Outcome 4:** By 2015, sub-national administrations have capacity to take over increased functions.

The evaluation also assessed to what extent the above CPAP outcomes contributed to **UNDAF Outcome 4:** By 2015, national and sub national institutions are more accountable and responsive to the needs and rights of all people living in Cambodia and increased participation in democratic decision making.

Within democratic governance, UNDP's programmatic support is primarily concentrated in the following key areas: Strengthen Democratic & Decentralization Local Governance (DDLG), Partnership for Development Results (PfDR), Strengthening Democracy Programme (SDP) and Associations of Councils Enhanced Services Programme (ACES) which is under the outcomes 3 and 4 of the CPAP 2011-15. In late 2013, the UN joint-programme Disability Rights Initiative Cambodia (DRIC) was launched.

The objective of this forward-looking outcome evaluation was – after the mid-term review (MTR) of the CPAP in March 2014 – to review the progress made thus far in light of the evolving country context and to recommend possible interventions in preparation for development of the next UNDAF, the Country Programme document (CPD), and new CPAP for 2016-18.

The outcome evaluation has been conducted following the principles of the UNEG evaluation process as set out within the RBM handbook. It assessed whether and to what extent UNDP's programmes and projects are contributing to the achievement of the intended outcomes and to identify factors, which help or hamper the achievement of outcomes. Being an independent external evaluation, the findings, conclusions and recommendations made are the view of the external consultants and do not in any way represent the policies or opinions of UNDP Cambodia.

According to the "Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators", outcome evaluations include four categories of analysis and this evaluation will follow these categories: **1) Status of the outcome; 2) Factors affecting the outcome; 3) UNDP contributions to the outcome; and 4) UNDP partnership strategy.**

The report is organised in five chapters. Following the introduction chapter and the chapter on description of the methodology, Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the situation with regard to the

outcome, outputs and the partnership strategy. Chapter 4 describes key findings, including best practices and lessons learned. Chapter 5 provides a conclusion and recommendations for UNDP interventions of the future Country Programme.

Recommendations

- Review and re-align the projects under the democratic governance portfolio to comprehensively cover emerging opportunities that have the potential to strengthen democratic good governance and the rule of law, as well as to support the policy and development needs of the Government of Cambodia. Opportunities are likely to emerge in parliament, within parliamentary commissions covering portfolios related to human development, law and human rights, as well as in government departments developing policies and reform strategies, like at the Deputy Prime Ministers office and key ministries.
- Strengthen the synergies with other projects and programmes within UNDP and among UN agencies. This is suggested for projects within the Governance unit and with projects from other units, as well as between UNDP projects and other agencies, like for example UNICEF and UN Women.
- Develop a new engagement model and creating a new policy-driven project on democratic governance that will address the need for supporting dialog among national and sub-national partners, government and civil society actors. This new project will facilitate discussion and provide policy support on key governance issues, thereby bridging the current communication gap that exists between the sub-national grass root level and the central level.
- Re-engage with the National Assembly for achieving greater government accountability. With the opposition taking its seats in parliament the dynamics at the National Assembly are changing. More active parliamentary commissions allow for engagement on key human development issues as well as to increase representation and participation in the policy-making arena.
- Sharpen the focus of the democratic governance work at the sub-national level by going beyond the support of developing tools like Local Government Associations and in addition utilise those tools and the empowered councillors for mainstreaming issues like gender, human rights, and climate change among others.
- Strengthening the in-house advisory capacity within UNDP by hiring policy advisers and creating a policy group. With the substantially increased capacity UNDP will be prepared to support national partners like the National Assembly, ministries, working groups. The available in-house advisors will also deliver in a timely fashion the necessary knowledge and expertise to the projects under the democratic governance portfolio.
- Conduct a needs assessment and high level discussions on the usefulness of measuring public service delivery in order to improve services and to better address the concern and needs of the public. Potential partners for supporting greater public administration performance in Cambodia are the NCDD and the Ministry of Civil Service.

- Consider the establishment of an Access to Justice and Rule of Law initiative. Before establishing a completely new project which requires time and financial resources, such an initiative could originally be driven by an in-house policy adviser in the new policy unit.

Best practices and lessons learned

- UNDP is regarded as a loyal and significant partner in Cambodia. The successful history as a trusted major partner in key sectors, like democratic governance and decentralisation has generated expectations among counterparts that UNDP should continue to provide similar types of support in the future, both in terms of funding and technical assistance. In fact, the interviews conducted for this evaluation showed that there is an expectation towards UNDP to take a lead on issues related to democratic governance, including electoral management, rule of law, fostering inclusive dialogue, anti-corruption, and human rights, among others.
- Engaging with the media can increase UNDP's leveraging potential, as shown during the "edutainment" programming produced by Loy9. UNDP can benefit from engaging more with partners from the media, civil society, academia, and research institutions. Interlocutors during interviews with the evaluation team mentioned that in their view, UNDP interaction and engagement seems to be limited to government institutions and is taking place mainly in the capital Phnom Penh, with too few visits to the provinces. A broader engagement can be beneficial to build greater awareness of the specific contributions and services provided by UNDP around the human development concept.
- Reaching out to youth during the civic education component of the SDP programme has been a success. In Cambodia, over 66 percent of the population of 13.5 million are categorised as youth with an age ranging from 15-30 years. Reaching out to the youth as a target group for non-formal civic education by establishing media platforms and community outreach has translated into positive impact. Young Cambodians are keen observers of the political situation and supportive of democratic change. During the 2013 elections, official accounts reported that 69 percent of Cambodians have voted, a decline from 75 percent in the 2008 elections. However, surveys conducted by Comfrel showed that more than 10 percent, or 1.25 million, of the electorate's names may have been absent from voter lists, indicating that young voters were not deterred to participate in the elections and that they were very committed to mark their ballots.
- There is need for more UNDP in-house policy expertise available to projects and programmes. During several discussions conducted by the evaluation team with national partners it emerged that more technical expertise and input to policy discussions is expected from UNDP. The country office needs a critical mass of in-house capacity to coordinate and manage policy advisory services, particularly if it intends to continue supporting democratic governance. Funding resources are still perceived as important, but the need for technical contributions has been mentioned equally often. UNDP is regarded as an agency able to take a leading role in positively contributing to longer-term development and policy needs. Delivering more policy

expertise can also be beneficial in informing high-level dialogues in partnership with the Government of Cambodia. Such dialogues, moderated by UNDP, can bring together experts for discussing development options in various fields, like economic development, social development, legal development, and democratic institutions.

- The implementation of projects and their mid-term reviews have shown that there is a need and an opportunity to utilise more expertise from UN agencies to enrich project implementation. Another lesson-learned is that links and dialog between sub-national level and the national level are underdeveloped and could be fostered by projects like ACES.
- The DIM modality for SPD has been a good choice, since it allows for flexibility in addressing newly emerging needs and issues. Further, being independent from a national counterpart is more conducive to the focus of the programme which is the strengthening of democratic governance and oversight. A NIM modality in turn, would have the potential of institutional bias. The SDP programme did not underperform because of the implementing modality selected, but rather because of external factors and the serious reduction in available funding. For support on democratic governance that intends to engage a wide range of stakeholders and partners, this modality is very suitable and should be considered for a new project addressing the need for dialog among national and sub-national partners, government and civil society actor, and providing policy support on key governance issues.
- There is need for a strategy to engage substantively and programmatically with civil society. Closer cooperation with civil society, as practices for example in the new UN Joint-programme Disability Rights Initiative Cambodia (DRIC) should be replicated in other projects and programmes. Partnerships should be built on the basis of how productive and useful the activities and engagement of a partner organisation can be for the implementation of initiatives.
- Capacity development has continued to remain a major driver of UNDP's work and national partners continue to perceive it as a significant contribution and need for the future. However, clearer strategies on how to develop capacities through project support should be develop. Particularly the support to national institutes and centres that can take over the role of UNDP-funded trainers and consultants should be considered.
- Cambodia has established a coordination mechanism for dialogue with development partners and to promote development effectiveness. UNDP is Supporting this mechanism through its Partnership for Development Results (PfDR) programme, with the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) as implementing partner. However, there are certain challenges with this mechanism. For example, the various Technical Working Groups do not cover all areas and does not always correspondent to the structure of the NSDP sectors. Some of the 19 Technical Working Groups are more active than others with their chairs being more or less open to discussion. The evaluation team learned that some development partners wish to see more discussion of cross-cutting issues.