EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Assessment of Development Results (ADR) for Armenia was conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2014. The evaluation assesses UNDP's performance and its contributions to development outcomes in Armenia between 2005 and 2013. The ADR provides recommendations for UNDP's future strategic positioning in Armenia and its new Country Programme Document.

The analysis of development results for each thematic area used relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability as evaluation criteria. UNDP's strategic positioning was analysed in terms of strategic relevance, capacity to respond to national demands while addressing UNDP's mandate, value added, comparative advantages, competitive advantages, promotion of United Nations (UN) values and contribution to the coordination of the UN system.

The assessment adopted a multi-method approach to data collection and analysis. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Triangulation techniques were employed for various sources of information and methods, in addition to verification and validation methods, such as internal team meetings and discussion of the preliminary results with two groups: UNDP staff and a national reference group.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall, UNDP initiatives have been relevant to Armenia's development and have been aligned with national needs, government priorities and UNDP's mandate. Initiatives have been efficiently implemented and most outputs have been timely delivered with adequate quality. Most outcomes are considered sustainable. There is strong national ownership of results and local

capacity has been enhanced. Support for the continuation of UNDP-implemented initiatives and achieved results, demonstrated through changes in legislation and regulations, is also high. Country-led approaches have been particularly relevant to promoting shared accountability between the Government and civil society and to fostering sustainability and national ownership of results.

UNDP has been most effective in (i) supporting formulation or reform of national policies and strategies, (ii) developing and strengthening national institutional capacities, (iii) implementing large and complex projects, (iv) administering resources and (v) piloting innovative solutions. Some of the most significant contributions are highlighted below.

UNDP's contributions to poverty reduction and support to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have helped to strengthen regulatory frameworks and mechanisms to establish and revitalize small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). UNDP support has also strengthened national and local capacities to develop and implement innovative and diversified income-generating policies and practices targeting vulnerable groups, with the aim of reducing inequalities.

UNDP has been successful in engaging civil society organizations and private stakeholders in discussions about vocational education training (VET), public-private partnership (PPP) and corporate social responsibility (CSR). A law on VET was developed and submitted to the Government. The Government amended the employment law to enable rural youth to become eligible for free enrolment in pubic VET training and retraining programmes and reformed the education policy. The Government also revised the CSR and PPP concepts and legal acts. A

number of strategy documents and policies that UNDP helped develop are fostering inclusive growth, such as the National Strategy on SME Development and a national diaspora partnership, which the Government has taken ownership of and implemented. UNDP also contributed to strengthening the capacities of relevant institutions to support SMEs development at national and local levels. There are signs of an increasingly improved environment to foster trade among regions and an improved system of agricultural produce realization, with established market chains.

UNDP has effectively contributed to the strengthening of capacities in data collection and data systematization through joint work with the Government on the development of indicators for the communities database. UNDP supported the development of a unified community database that informs national and regional-level decision-making processes in addition to the ArmInfo database, which tracks progress towards achieving the MDGs and monitors commitments to human development.

UNDP has been effective in helping the Government to strengthen capacities at community, regional and national levels of government for decentralization, planning, management, delivery of public goods and services, and monitoring the implementation of social policies. The Government Effectiveness Index (percentile rank 0–100) showed some improvement over a five-year period (2008–2012), increasing from 46.4 to 54.5; however, it is still behind the 2015 target of 71.5 set by UNDP. At the current pace, it is unlikely the target will be achieved on time.

UNDP's contributions to democratic governance have helped to strengthen institutional capacities and mechanisms to address human rights issues. UNDP has helped empower people living with HIV to claim their rights and fight stigma. It has also promoted participatory decision-making at the local level and supported youth participation in policymaking.

UNDP has effectively contributed to human rights in the following broad areas: the fights against human trafficking, drug trafficking, and corruption, and the fight for gender equality. Significant contributions include:

- strengthening the capacities of the Human Rights Defender's Office

- raising awareness of human rights among civil servants

- increasing capacities to combat drug and human trafficking and to assist victims

- improving legislative framework on gender equality and the capacities of women to engage in local-level decision-making processes

- contributing to an anti-corruption strategy by supporting the drafting of legislation and ensuring compliance with the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)

Under gender equality and women's empowerment, UNDP has effectively contributed to the development of the State Gender Policy Concept and the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities. It has also strengthened the capacities of the National Institute of Labour and Social Research, and helped to integrate gender in civil servant curricula and to empower women and increase their engagement in decision-making processes. UNDP has also contributed significantly to empowering and building the capacity of women to run for local offices.

There is a growing effort to mainstream the gender perspective in UNDP programmes. However, gender mainstreaming is at times perceived as contrived and minimalistic — an additional layer of requirements and generally considered last. UNDP Armenia still lacks a clear strategy with a theory of change for how addressing gender could effectively fast track development. The UNDP strategy does not clearly indicate how it would improve and generate not only gender-responsive but gender-transformative results that can address cultural roles, stereotypes and power structures.

UNDP has been particularly effective in increasing youth participation in decision-making processes. A UNDP-supported National Youth Aspirations Survey became a crucial part of the Armenian National Youth Report 2011. The report fed the development of the National Youth Strategy 2013–2017, which was also developed with UNDP support. UNDP played a crucial role in establishing the Youth Research Institute in 2013. The institute should contribute to evidence-based and participatory youth policymaking. UNDP is currently involved in drafting the new Youth Policy Concept. A factor contributing to the success of UNDP's support to the Government of Armenia was UNDP's ability to flexibly respond to the Government's need for policy advice with high-quality expertise.

Initiatives in mine action have also been relevant and are in line with UNDP's mandate and the local population's need to live in a safe environment with access to productive sources of income, such as pastures and croplands. UNDP has built the capacity of deminers and the Armenian Red Cross in humanitarian demining activities, provided information on contaminated areas through the Landmine Impact Survey, promoted awareness of affected communities about mine risks, and improved access of farmers to agricultural lands as a result of demining activities in Shurnukh community of Syunik region.

In the area of disaster risk reduction (DRR), UNDP helped to build a functioning DRR system in Armenia, at both national and local levels. However, DRR has not yet been fully mainstreamed in government strategies and plans. The Government increasingly recognizes the importance of DRR, as evident in its establishment of the Ministry of Emergency Situations and its national platform to address emergencies, and in its reporting on the implementation of Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA).

Overall, UNDP's contributions to environment and sustainable development progressed towards frameworks for strengthening environmental management. On ozone layer protection, UNDP

enabled the Government to meet its commitments under the Montreal Protocol on the phase out of chlorofluorocarbons. With UNDP's assistance, Armenia submitted its second National Communications report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010 and prepared a greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory under Article 4.1 of the UNFCCC. Furthermore, UNDP helped the Government to implement the requirements of the Convention on Biological Diversity. With UNDP's financial and technical support, Armenia's protected areas system was expanded by 38,828 hectares. The Law on Specially Protected Natural Areas was fully revised to enable communities to participate in protected areas management. Additionally, UNDP assisted the management of three newly established protected areas in the development of guidelines and norms, and in the development of protected area management models and business plans. In water ecosystems, UNDP promoted cooperation of the concerned countries on trans-boundary degradation of the Kura-Araks river basin.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1. The Government of Armenia and civil society consider UNDP a reliable and responsive development partner. UNDP is considered relevant and strategically positioned to support Armenia's development thanks to its strong relationship with the Government, its long-term engagement with key civil society organizations, its effective outreach to local governments and communities through project presence, and its unique convening power to foster dialogue on key and sensitive development issues.

Conclusion 2. UNDP has made relevant contributions to national development outcomes as planned in the Country Programme Documents (CPD I 2005–2009 and CPD II 2010–2015). Most significant contributions are linked to the support provided to the Government, civil society and private sector to promote democratic

participatory decision-making, strengthen institutions and regulatory frameworks, and implement national policies and programmes to reduce disparities.

Conclusion 3. UNDP has generally engaged and worked well with national stakeholders. However, it is well positioned to promote more frequent and inclusive consultation, particularly with government counterparts, to better help the Government coordinate and leverage international development efforts.

Conclusion 4. From 2005 to 2015, UNDP was expected to contribute to 18 outcomes with several projects and outputs. The excessive number of initiatives presents a major challenge for a Country Office with a limited number of staff and scarce resources for comprehensive implementation, synergic cross-practice collaboration, and adequate monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusion 5. There is great potential to further leverage the Integrated Border Management (IBM) initiatives to promote stronger programmatic synergies in other development areas, such as trade, local development, poverty reduction, human rights, migration and good relations with neighbouring countries. Its programmatic potential has not been fully explored.

Conclusion 6. UNDP has not fully distilled and disseminated lessons from achievements, innovations and challenges in developing pilot programmes and testing new approaches. Nor has it fully distilled and disseminated lessons on how these approaches can affect or enhance development policies, knowledge management and learning. These lessons could be useful for scaling up and replication of programmes and approaches.

Conclusion 7. UNDP has successfully supported national efforts to address gender inequality at a policy level in Armenia and has progressed in mainstreaming a gender-responsive and human-rights-based approach in its programming. However, some corporate benchmarks still require actions and focus on transformational change.

Conclusion 8. UNDP has mainstreamed disaster risk reduction in the area of environment and sustainable development well, but further mainstreaming is needed across all UNDP initiatives in Armenia.

Conclusion 9. Despite significant efforts, results-based management and outcome monitoring and evaluation could better and more timely feed into decision-making, learning and course corrections, and could more strategically contribute to outcome-level development results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: UNDP should hold further discussions with government stakeholders to redefine a more consultative relationship with regard to strategically prioritizing resources and identifying and selecting programme themes and beneficiaries. Equally important would be to define with the Government ways to ensure that UNDP's neutrality, efficiency and effectiveness are not compromised. This may require putting in place mechanisms to allow UNDP the flexibility needed to foster innovation, ensure value for money, and make timely and efficient contributions to sustainable development.

Management Response: *Since 2005, UNDP benefitted from a system of National Directors at Deputy Ministerial level for each portfolio, who provide overall guidance and coordination of UNDP projects and programmes, aimed at promoting stronger national ownership. This approach is currently under revision by the Country Office as in some portfolios one Ministry does not have the mandate for the range of activities, such as democratic governance that covers many areas and issues. As UNDP's programming becomes more cross-cutting, and as the programme aligns to the new UNDP Strategic Plan, so the traditional portfolio boundaries are also becoming blurred. Discussion will be held going forward to balance consultation with the necessary flexibility, efficiency and effectiveness of UNDP. The ongoing UNDAF and CPD preparation process, which includes the strategic prioritization of resources and programme*

themes, is being coordinated with the Government. Government Ministries are also encouraged to take more responsibility for donor coordination, and to attend the respective donor coordination meetings which are currently organized by the UN.

Recommendation 2: UNDP Armenia should develop the next programme with a focus on fewer and more specific, realistic and strategically targeted outcomes, narrowing the range of activities accordingly. UNDP should prioritize initiatives in which it can bring added value and in which costs can be shared by strategic national partners to ensure national ownership and sustainability of results.

Management Response: *As per new Country Programme Document (CPD) guidelines, the number of outcomes is reduced to four so this point will be addressed in the preparation of the next CPD, which will be aligned with the new UNDP Strategic Plan. The areas of cooperation will be based on country needs and UNDP comparative advantage.*

Recommendation 3: UNDP should further capitalize on the opportunities offered by IBM initiatives. It should develop a well-articulated strategy, in close cooperation with the National Security Council and other stakeholders, to leverage synergies with interrelated development issues and diversify funding sources with a conscious technical and value-for-money strategy.

Management Response: *The Country Office is beginning to explore ways to link the IBM work with other portfolios, for example in mainstreaming energy efficiency construction practices and bringing experts to look at the feasibility of providing energy supply to communities near the border crossing.*

Recommendation 4: UNDP should make further efforts to effectively document and disseminate its successful experiences and lessons learned in programme approaches and initiatives, particularly the successful pilot ones.

Management Response: *The Country Office is attempting to do this through the diversification*

of UNDP communications, public outreach and strengthened knowledge management. Some projects are trying, for the first time, to prototype ideas early in the development programme and project cycle in order to test, and prove, what works and what can then be scaled up. Kolba, UNDP Armenia's innovations lab, is responsible for experimentation in new approaches to development assistance and for working with other projects and programmes to integrate these new approaches. Lessons learned from experiments/pilots and UNDP Armenia's broader programmes are disseminated in multimedia communications. The Communications Associate will be working more closely with the RBM focal point, Kolba and Programme teams to link corporate learning, capacity development, RBM, innovation and knowledge management. The use of conventional media tools, such as press releases, news articles and success stories, audio-video materials, has been augmented by non-conventional media tools, such as websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Recommendation 5: UNDP Armenia should strive to adopt a more holistic, sustained, long-term and multipronged approach in order to more fully and explicitly integrate gender equality components into all areas of work. UNDP Armenia should focus not only on gender-responsive, but on gender-transformative contributions that can fast-track development and address power relations and cultural structures.

Management Response: *The Country Office Gender Mainstreaming Strategy is currently being updated by the Country Office to align to new approaches in the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy and new Strategic Plan.*

Recommendation 6: As Armenia is a country prone to disasters, UNDP should explore how to further integrate and mainstream DRR into all its programmes and initiatives.

Management Response: *UNDP Armenia will update the project review procedure to ensure DRR is mainstreamed into projects, with clear criteria and indicators. All areas of work proposed in UNDP's new Strategic Plan are aimed at building resilience*

whether, for instance, through greater employment and livelihoods, more equitable access to resources, better protection against economic and environmental shocks – so this recommendation will be implemented as the Country Office aligns its programmes and planning to the new Strategic Plan.

Recommendation 7: UNDP should further improve results-based management and monitoring and evaluation of the programme at the outcome level, and work with coherent and comprehensive theories of change to map assumptions and ensure complex contexts and the

multifaceted nature of development are considered to contribute to development, behavioural and transformational change.

Management Response: *It is noted that outcome evaluations are costly and resources need to be available to fully implement this recommendation. Monitoring and reporting will increase efforts to produce and use evidence based data focused on outcomes to cover learning and accountability; and the feasibility of strengthening RBM and increasing the number of evaluations will be further discussed during CPD design.*