

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

With a 2005 GDP per capita of \$1,262,² the Republic of the Congo is classified as a lower middle-income country. However, rampant poverty is the reality behind this relative statistical wealth. In an economy heavily dominated by the extraction and export of crude oil, most human development indicators remain low, although some have improved since the country emerged from the three successive civil wars of the 1990s.

In the phase following the return to peace, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) concentrated on providing emergency assistance to certain key sectors and was authorized to function on an *ad hoc*, project-by-project basis until 2003. In September 2003, the UNDP Executive Board approved a new four-year country programme (2004–2007). In contrast to the post-conflict recovery approach of the previous phase, the new programme emphasized three central themes: good governance, poverty reduction, and environment and natural resource management. The period covered by the country programme has now been extended to the end of 2008 in order to respond to the objective of harmonizing programming cycles among United Nations (UN) system agencies.

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Assessment of Development Results (ADR) is an independent evaluation tool used by the UNDP Evaluation Office to assess the UNDP contribution to national development results. The overall goals of an ADR are to:

- Provide an independent assessment of

country-level development results in areas covered by UNDP interventions, assessing both their relevance and effectiveness. UNDP activities are also assessed in light of partnerships with other development actors;

- Contribute to accountability and to learning from experience;
- Provide an analysis of how UNDP positioned itself to add value in response to national needs and priorities, and how it adapted to changes in the national development context; and
- Present key findings and lessons, and provide a set of forward-looking recommendations for future UNDP programmes.

In broad terms, this ADR examines whether UNDP did the right things in the Republic of the Congo and how well it did them. This report addresses:

- Relevance of UNDP programmes and activities, and its capacity to respond to changes in the national environment;
- UNDP effectiveness in achieving stated objectives and intended results;
- Sustainability of the development results to which UNDP contributed; and
- UNDP strategic positioning and comparative advantages.

This evaluation limits itself to the period of 2004–2007. It also examines projects started prior to 2004, when these are relevant to understanding ongoing activities.

² UNDP, *Human Development Report 2007–2008*, New York, 2007.

In addition, the evaluation team did not limit itself to examining the project portfolio and outcomes linked to project activities. It also looked at non-programmatic interventions, such as advocacy, coordination, support for policy development, communications and public information, as well as civil-society relations.

The detailed Terms of Reference for this evaluation, prepared by the Evaluation Office, are attached as Annex I.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

UNDP retained the services of Abacus International Management L.L.C. to carry out this evaluation exercise, with support from the UNDP Evaluation Office and the country office in the Republic of the Congo. The independent evaluation team consisted of three members: two international consultants and one national consultant.³

The methodology used was based on ADR guidelines⁴ and the broader UNDP evaluation policy.⁵ The preparatory phase involved an intensive initial review of documentation, as well as consultations with the UNDP Evaluation Office, the Regional Bureau for Africa and key UNDP departments. In New York, the two international consultants met with representatives of UN system bodies, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). The consultants also briefed the Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Congo to the United Nations in New York on the ADR exercise.

The preparatory phase also included a one-week scoping mission to Brazzaville, undertaken by the

team leader and the national consultant. The mission was used to refine the scope of the evaluation, to discuss the structure and rationale of the country programme with UNDP officers, and to identify additional documentation to guide the team. The mission enabled the team to select key projects and activities to be reviewed in more depth based on the relative size of their budgets and relevance to the programme themes. The mission was also used to map UNDP partners for more detailed interviews. All team members followed this preparatory mission with a second round of desk review of documentation.⁶ On the basis of the desk review, notes and questions were shared with the relevant units of the country office in preparation for detailed working sessions during the main mission.

The main two-week mission took place from 27 February to 12 March 2008. The evaluation team had extensive discussions with UNDP senior management, programme units responsible for thematic areas and project staff. The team also met a number of UNDP partners in the government, the UN system, multilateral and bilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society. The team made a point of extending its civil-society contacts beyond the ambit of organizations already associated with UNDP and sought the views of members of associations, NGOs, academic institutions and women's groups, as well as of political leaders from the majority and the opposition. Individual interviews were semi-structured, with each potential respondent having received an information note containing a general list of questions a week before the arrival of the international consultants.⁷

In total, over 80 persons were interviewed during the course of this evaluation, mainly in individual

3 Carrol Faubert was the Senior Consultant and Team Leader. International team members included Abdenour Benbouali, Senior Consultant, and Hyacinthe Defoundoux-Fila, National Consultant.

4 UNDP, 'Guidelines for an Assessment of Development Results', Evaluation Office, New York, December 2007.

5 UNDP, 'The Evaluation Policy of UNDP' (DP/2005/28), Evaluation Office, New York, May 2006.

6 A list of major documents consulted appears as Annex II.

7 See Annex III for a list of persons met and Annex IV for the information note.

meetings. Group meetings were organized for NGOs, in view of the large number of participants. Non-UNDP persons interviewed belonged to one of the four categories identified in Table 1.

Field visits to project sites in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire and Kinkala⁸ (Pool Department) supplemented the desk review, interviews, and individual and group meetings. Field visits were selected by taking into account the logistical difficulties in the Republic of the Congo, as well as the opportunity to expose evaluation team members to a variety of projects in key thematic areas in the same location. This allowed the evaluation team to visit two of four UNDP offices and

12 project sites, which represented of the major themes of the country programme. On each occasion, a specific effort was made to enter into direct discussions with project beneficiaries, including primary school teachers, members of local community management committees, vocational trainers and their students, and former combatants engaged in a small-scale vegetable gardening project.

This ADR was carried out under stringent time constraints, with a view to presenting a report and recommendations in time to feed into the planning of the 2009–2013 country programme. The duration of the entire process was reduced to

Table 1: Categories of non-UNDP persons interviewed for this ADR

Respondents	Main evaluative questions
Government	Have UNDP interventions appropriately reflected national priorities? Has UNDP demonstrated a capacity to adapt to changes in the national environment? How do you see the role of UNDP as a contributor to national development? What were the most significant and successful UNDP interventions and why? Are there areas where UNDP should intervene further or improve its performance? What arrangements have been made to ensure the sustainability of results achieved with UNDP support? What are the existing coordination mechanisms, and how effective has UNDP been in coordinating with others?
Civil society leaders, politicians, national NGOs	What are your views on progress towards human security and development? Has UNDP effectively contributed to improving the situation in the Republic of the Congo? What was the most significant UNDP contribution? What could have been done better or differently to improve effectiveness and better respond to needs more adequately? Do you participate in consultations organized with the support of UNDP for the development of major national strategy documents or for sectoral programmes? What has been the effectiveness of such consultations? Have you benefited from UNDP-supported training or capacity building? What is the image of UNDP with the general public?
Multilateral and bilateral development partners, including UN agencies and international financial institutions	What are your views on progress towards human development in the Republic of the Congo? What are your views of the UNDP role and performance, including effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and strategic role? What are the major comparative advantages of UNDP in this country? What has been the major 'value added' of UNDP? How could UNDP have been more effective? What coordination mechanisms are in place, and what role does UNDP play in coordination?
Programme beneficiaries	Has your situation improved as a result of the UNDP intervention? Did UNDP support correspond to your needs? Was the support timely and well targeted? What did UNDP do well? What did it do wrong? How do you see the future? Will you be able to continue your activities once direct UNDP support ceases?

8 Kinkala was visited on 2 February 2008, during the scoping mission.

less than three months, approximately half of the average time normally allotted to an ADR exercise. This limitation precluded commissioning additional surveys and research that could have helped fill information gaps.

As the ADR concentrates mainly on intended and unintended outcomes and results, the existence of baseline data is crucial to assessing the situation at the end of the programme. The team found that such data was unavailable for most projects. Although outcome indicators were generally identified in the initial project descriptions, the team noted confusion between outcome indicators and project outputs, as well as the absence of mechanisms to ensure the systematic collection of data related to indicators during the course of a given project.

Where baseline data was not available, the team sought to establish trends at the broader national level over recent years. Where specific data had not been collected to enable the assessment of trends and results, background questions aimed at determining actual results were posed to parties on different sides of the development partnership. The analysis thus made use of the triangulation method, which is based on: stakeholders' perceptions; programme documentation, evaluation reports and other relevant written material; and existing surveys and data.

Finally, in a multiple-actor environment where factors affecting outcomes go far beyond those under UNDP control, evaluating the direct correlation between UNDP activities and development results is nearly impossible. The team endeavoured to establish credible linkages between UNDP activities, programme outputs and national development results. This analysis, supported by documentary evidence whenever possible, was based on prevailing perceptions of the main UNDP contributions among key stakeholders in the Republic of the Congo.

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report is organized into four chapters. Following the Executive Summary and this introduction, Chapter 2 examines the national development context and the UNDP role in the aid community. Chapter 3 assesses the UNDP contribution to development results in the Republic of the Congo through both programme activities and other interventions. Chapter 4 draws evaluation conclusions and makes recommendations.

While analysis of the various programme interventions is based on an overview of the full portfolio of projects under each major programme theme, details of representative projects are presented in boxes accompanying the text.