

## Chapter 4

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter reviews the main conclusions of this evaluation, addressing the relevance of UNDP interventions during 2004–2007, their effectiveness in contributing to development results, the sustainability of these results and the strategic positioning of the UNDP country office. It also provides recommendations on possible future directions.

### 4.1 THE RELEVANCE OF UNDP INTERVENTIONS

The areas of interventions in which UNDP engaged correspond to expressed national priorities, the broad corporate parameters of the organization, and to the genuine needs felt by the Congolese population at large. UNDP interventions address problems perceived by the Congolese as crucial to their well-being and development. Most of these interventions are aligned with areas where UNDP has recognized competence and expertise, including promotion of good governance, development of pro-poor strategies, support to national environmental policies and plans, and disarmament through community action. However, some activities, such as infrastructure-rehabilitation projects, are less in line with UNDP competencies.

The country programme continued to feature a number of activities that were either a continuation of the previous cycle's post-conflict projects or were targeted to beneficiaries defined in relation to a conflict that ended almost 10 years ago. The generalized poverty affecting the whole population and the difficult economic conditions, particularly

in rural areas, justifies an approach that moves from targeting ex-combatants to a more generalized, pro-poor and community-based approach.

However, the programme should continue to address issues related to peace consolidation<sup>45</sup> through more upstream interventions aimed at improving governance, developing poverty reduction actions that address whole communities, and fostering public security. The latter would benefit from a focus on developing legislation on firearms and the management of national arms depots. In the phase that should follow the second cycle of elections, UNDP should concentrate on peace consolidation initiatives in areas of recognized UNDP competence.

The regular resources allocated by UNDP to the Republic of the Congo are relatively meagre when compared to the vast needs of the population, the majority of which lives below the poverty line. This has forced the country office to develop an aggressive fundraising strategy that diverted staff away from important tasks and, at times, created misunderstanding and annoyance with partners. It has also reduced the capacity of the office to use regular resources as seed money for larger projects, with a view towards attracting both donor funding and national cost-sharing contributions.

The special circumstances of the Republic of the Congo, specifically its low human development index despite the technical classification as a lower middle-income country, should prompt the

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<sup>45</sup> The three areas of peace consolidation as used in this report reflect the conclusions of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development meeting in Addis Ababa on 16–17 February 2006.

country office, with support from UNDP headquarters, to develop new funding strategies. During the process of finalizing this report, the evaluation team was informed that UNDP had already negotiated increased cost-sharing agreements with countries facing similar situations.<sup>46</sup> The formula could be explored for the Republic of the Congo. At a minimum, this would require that the government, through cost-sharing from national resources, matches UNDP inputs from regular resources.

#### **4.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP INTERVENTIONS**

UNDP programmes in the Republic of the Congo have combined up- and downstream activities. Upstream, UNDP has been instrumental in developing a number of national strategy documents and plans of action, as well as legislation on a number of issues crucial for the promotion of democratic institutions, improvement of governance, protection of the environment, gender equity, HIV/AIDS, pro-poor policy formulation and the attainment of the MDGs. This has been accompanied by a very visible and effective advocacy effort, which has been one of the main strengths of UNDP in the Republic of the Congo.

Downstream interventions have been essential for UNDP to gain the credibility and access needed to effectively engage in advocacy on several politically sensitive issues. This combination of two levels of entry has been commendable and productive.

UNDP has also succeeded in developing important synergies between some projects and activities, particularly in its support of former combatants and its advocacy with parliamentary institutions.

One of the important aspects of UNDP action in the country has been the development of a field presence outside the capital. The choice of

locations has been sensible and the intention of making at least some of these offices UN hubs was laudable. Unfortunately, the reality fell short of expectations as, in terms of management and organization, the offices remained more UNDP than UN offices. The offices did provide useful services to visiting members of the UN team, but neglected the necessary linkages with other organizations, including NGOs. Despite some management weaknesses and a too-sporadic presence of senior staff, the office in Kinkala, in the department of Pool, became an important symbol of return to normalcy in that troubled region.

Cross-cutting themes of gender and HIV/AIDS were not always taken into account at the initial planning phase, but were re-introduced during the course of implementation. Additional attention will be needed during the project design phase in order to ensure more systematic mainstreaming. The intention of the country office to more systematically include the environment as an underlying concern in the design of development projects should be encouraged.

In general, the definition of outcomes and their indicators remains weak. More importantly, however, even when valid indicators exist, the country office and project management staff do not have the human or financial resources needed to ensure proper monitoring. This makes proactive programme management more difficult in the absence of measurable indicators of progress and effect. It similarly complicates the final evaluation of programmes. Commendable work has been done for the development of outcomes, indicators and means of verification in preparation for the UNDAF of 2009–2013. This represents an opportunity for UNDP to improve its own performance and develop a joint UN approach to some monitoring and evaluation functions.

#### **4.3 SUSTAINABILITY OF RESULTS**

The sustainability of results achieved with UNDP support remains problematic. For upstream

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46 The examples of Botswana and Gabon were cited.

interventions where the output was defined as the development of a national strategy or workplan, it often happened that the outputs were successfully produced but did not yield the anticipated effects. This evaluation has used the phrase 'dormant success' to describe this gap between successful outputs and the absence of effective results. It is hoped that the expected results will materialize, if future authorities exercise the necessary political will and allocate appropriate human and financial resources.

Such an end result is often the same for downstream projects, in which sustainability depends upon local communities and their management committees pursuing these activities with their own resources after the UNDP-supported initial phase. The situation is considered a little better for income-generating assistance to individuals or small groups, although the longer term monitoring of initial successes is weak or absent.

The consequences of lacking sustainability include a gradual loss of the benefits of the project, lack of subsequent implementation of the developed strategies and sectoral policies, and the complete abandonment of management structures and instruments. It also means that effective UNDP exit strategies cannot be implemented.

The primary condition for sustainability remains the presence of the political will of authorities to address structural and procedural issues related to the efficient allocation and utilization of public resources. In the programme design phase, UNDP could have given more attention to developing a more comprehensive exit strategy. Such a strategy could include designating an entity to take over the activity, the conditions to make this transition effective, and benchmarks to monitor the commitment and capacity necessary to assume full ownership of the programmes by national and local institutions or by relevant community organizations.

Despite having the resources at their disposal, local authorities appear to have been hesitant to financially participate in projects on a cost-sharing

basis. UNDP would need to initiate discussions on this important issue with the government, possibly on the basis of the formula mentioned in section 4.1. A cost-sharing approach should become the rule rather than the exception.

Human resource weaknesses within the civil service remain a factor impeding both efficient national participation in programme activities and full national ownership. A number of capacity-building initiatives have been implemented under various projects. The effort, however, could have been more systematic and structured. It would be useful for UNDP to link to existing initiatives, so as to promote a concerted and coordinated capacity-building effort between donors and the government.

#### **4.4 UNDP STRATEGIC POSITIONING**

UNDP has made judicious decisions in the selection of its intervention areas. At this juncture, it is appropriate to question the continued pertinence of continuing post-conflict activities beyond the current programme cycle. UNDP should now build on its comparative advantages in the areas of good governance, the development of pro-poor strategies, community development programmes, the regional approach for environment and its strong advocacy services.

UNDP has developed good relations with some civil society organizations and private sector actors. A more structured partnership with NGOs is needed. A number of consultative mechanisms with wide participation exist, but they can be rendered more effective and meaningful. Coordination, on the other hand, is relatively weak and initiatives are required to reflect on the issue with donors, the UN system, larger NGOs and the government.

The relations between UNDP and the multilateral and bilateral development community have been excessively based on financial partnerships. UNDP needs to reassert its intellectual leadership in areas of its competence by capitalizing on its good work organizing thematic and consultative groups for the preparation of major strategy papers.

UNDP participation in UN inter-agency coordination has been effective, despite the remaining—and unavoidable—ambiguity resulting from the dual roles of UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative.

Overall, UNDP enjoys a favourable image in the Republic of the Congo and has developed excellent relations with its government counterparts. The media coverage of UNDP activities is intense and productive.

## 4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Twelve recommendations are derived from the analysis contained in this report. These are:

### GENERAL AND STRATEGIC ISSUES

1. The next Republic of the Congo country programme should build upon demonstrated UNDP comparative advantages. These include UNDP support for good governance, pro-poor and community development approaches, a regional approach to environmental issues and strong advocacy capability. UNDP should gradually phase out post-conflict activities.
2. In order to ensure lasting stability and sustainable development, peace consolidation should become the central focus and underlying theme for most UNDP activities, particularly those in good governance and poverty reduction.
3. UNDP should continue to emphasize the linkages between upstream and downstream approaches, intervening at both political and operational levels in all programmes.
4. Based on experience in other countries, UNDP should engage the government in negotiations aimed at increasing national cost-sharing contributions to at least equal the resources allocated by UNDP.
5. Particular attention needs to be devoted to fostering national ownership and ensuring sustainability. This could include:

- Greater attention during the project design phase to incorporating a sustainable exit strategy, based on identifying the national mechanisms expected to take over, defining conditions of an effective management transfer and establishing benchmarks for monitoring relevant preparations and the capacity of the chosen national entity;
  - Intensified efforts in national capacity-building through establishing a comprehensive and structured programme in close coordination with the government and other development actors;
  - Continued gradual and prudent approach to increasing the national execution component of programmes; and
  - A clear demonstration of the political will of national authorities in addition to their commitment to assuming ownership of programmes, in particular through increased cost-sharing as outlined in recommendation four above.
6. In close consultation with all partners, UNDP should start to reflect on ways to improve coordination among development actors. This is of particular importance for good governance initiatives, in view of the UNDP intent to further develop its support to some financial oversight and administrative institutions.

### OPERATIONAL ISSUES

7. The UNDP country office in the Republic of the Congo should vigorously pursue its efforts to improve programme delivery. In addition, measures of rewarding staff efficiency should be established, and the new CEDAP should be independently evaluated in 2009, after two full years of operation.
8. The formulation of outcomes, indicators and means of verification should be improved. In possible collaboration with donor-partners, the UNDP country office must ensure that sufficient financial and human resources are

devoted to monitoring outcomes as well as outputs. In defining outcomes for the next UNDAF, UNDP should build upon inter-agency work and encourage the development of a system-wide approach to outcome monitoring and evaluation.

9. The country office should engage partners in discussions geared towards improving the performance and efficiency of Project Review Committees and Steering Committees.
10. UNDP offices outside Brazzaville need to develop their services for the benefit of both UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. This should include creating open and inclusive coordination hubs at the local level, promoting cross-fertilization, and undertaking activities such as mapping development and humanitarian actors, which was previously done through the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
11. More attention should be given to the mainstreaming of gender and HIV/AIDS considerations into the country programme during its initial design phase.
12. While direct environmental interventions should continue, particularly in subregional contexts, the country office's intent to treat such concerns as cross-cutting should be encouraged.