

EVALUATION BRIEF

JUNE 2009

UNDP has made an important contribution to Uzbekistan's development over the period under review (2000 to mid-2008). This contribution took place during a time of rapid change, including the implementation of key reforms, fast economic growth and changes in the country's relationship with the international community. The Assessment of Development Results (ADR) concluded that UNDP has been relevant to Uzbekistan's priority development needs, and that its responsiveness to national demand has led to wide-ranging programme. Nonetheless, in order to increase effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of future interventions it is important for UNDP to focus on fewer issues in which it has comparative strengths and take a more comprehensive and long-term approach.

DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Since its independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has been implementing new reform policies moving towards the dismantlement of soviet era structures. No long-term development planning instrument was put in place until 2007 when the Cabinet of Ministries approved the Welfare Improvement Strategy of Uzbekistan as a "medium-term (2008-2010) national development document of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan to develop and implement economic policies covering all the priority areas of development". Uzbekistan has experienced strong GDP growth rates since 2000 and since 2004 these have been higher than 7 percent. At the same time poverty rates decreased by 1.7 percent between 2001 and 2005.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

UNDP has been relevant to Uzbekistan's priority development needs, as these have been defined by the President and the Government of Uzbekistan, and to the needs articulated at local and regional levels.

UNDP has been working with a partner government that has a strong willingness to take national ownership of development processes. Strong responsiveness to, and close cooperation with, governmental authorities has proven to be an efficient method of jointly developing effective programmes and projects. This approach has also guaranteed strong government commitment. If commitment and sustainability are to be achieved, it is crucial to undertake a participatory approach from the very beginning of the process. This is relevant at all activity levels, from central government and the Parliament to local projects and other activities. In some cases, UNDP

may have missed opportunities for engagement—for example, in areas where the comparative UNDP strength of neutrality and long-term commitment to Uzbekistan's development could have played an important role. In the case of Uzbekistan's Welfare Improvement Strategy, UNDP did not capitalize on some of its expertise (e.g., environment and energy issues) and did not conduct an adequate analysis of implementation risks, the importance of which was underscored by the recent changes in the global financial climate.

UNDP responsiveness has led to a wideranging programme. In order to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of interventions, it is important for UNDP to focus on fewer issues (and on those in which it has comparative strengths) and to take a more comprehensive and long-term approach.

Although UNDP has been responsive to government needs as these emerged, especially in the area of providing technical support to policy formulation, in some cases, UNDP has been so responsive that it lost sight of the need to focus on projects with long-term strategic linkages. UNDP could have been more critical in selecting proposals with strategic development importance and prioritizing them using development strategies. At the same time, the approaches, scope and selection of proposals were occasionally heavily influenced by available funding mechanisms and instruments, and driven by resource mobilization concerns. A more strategic response, where interventions are anchored to clear national priorities, could be facilitated through better use of annual Country Programme Action Plan reviews. Follow-up to development projects is increasingly needed in order



to ensure effectiveness and maximize UNDP contributions. The comparative strengths of UNDP lie in its work in rural areas and in its access to central government. Maintaining the appropriate balance between the two, and ensuring strong linkages between lessons learned at the local level and central policy making, will remain a major challenge in the next programme.

UNDP has engaged in some good development partnerships, and now needs to build on them, ensuring that it adds value to a relationship (e.g., though the promotion of human development and/or ensuring the involvement of the most vulnerable and marginalized portions of society).

UNDP strategic partnerships vary between sectors, projects and government levels. The strongest partnerships are with governmental authorities that jointly prepare and implement all relevant projects and activities. These partnerships are based on mutual respect, but require a higher degree of UNDP accountability and greater transparency of intervention selection and resource allocation. UNDP has also established a variety of quality partnerships with international development partners. These experiences have satisfied the partners, and while cooperation is likely to continue, it will be within a very different environment as re-engagement of many such partners intensifies. The UNDP role in such partnerships is likely to change from overall programme management to implementation of either select programme elements or areas where UNDP has a strong presence. Closer collaboration with donors and international financial institutions should focus on incorporating human development approaches and priorities within investment programmes.

While capacity development has been at the centre of many UNDP interventions, limited use has been made of the tools and approaches that UNDP has developed at the corporate level.

Inadequate use of capacity assessments has led to reduced effectiveness, efficiency of interventions and limited sustainability of results. At the same time, project design has sometimes led to inefficient approaches to capacity development. For example, instead of UNDP and its partners training all participants, appropriate institutes at local, regional and national levels could have been strengthened in order to initially focus on producing local specialists to take over subsequent capacity development activities.

There is a need for UNDP to increase its learning from experience and to facilitate greater opportunities for national learning from its interventions.

All UNDP interventions should provide lessons that can support not only its own activities, but also those of its partners. Specifically, greater effort needs to be made to link lessons learned to national policy development. Likewise, UNDP needs to build on its successes in scaling-up, as in the ELS/ABD interventions, and to ensure an even greater scope of regional and national replication. Evaluation and monitoring practices should also be strengthened, and a culture of focusing on results should be established. Learning from previous experience will not only improve intervention efficiency, but also improve effectiveness. In this respect, the international dissemination of experiences, lessons learned and best practices should be strengthened. There are central Asian countries that could benefit from Uzbekistan's experience, while those of others in the broader region could offer Uzbekistan lessons in return. With its global network, UNDP is in a position to facilitate this information exchange.

UZBEKISTAN

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus the programme on a smaller number of strategic interventions where UNDP has clear comparative strengths.
- Build on existing partnerships with international development partners, ensuring that UNDP adds value beyond purely management arrangements.
- Build on existing experience and relationships with local government and communities.
- Expand the UNDP role in supporting government efforts at aid coordination.
- Strengthen UNDP support to capacity development in Uzbekistan through a more rigorous and systematic application of corporate capacity development tools and approaches.
- Ensure that mechanisms are in place to facilitate linkages between all direct interventions and decision makers.
- Undertake annual Country Programme Action Plan reviews to increase transparency and to facilitate greater stakeholder accountability of UNDP activities in Uzbekistan.



The UNDP Evaluation Office (EO) provides systematic assessment of UNDP's contribution to development results by conducting independent thematic and programmatic evaluations.

Contact us at:

UNDP Evaluation Office (EO) • One United Nations Plaza • DC1-4th Floor • New York, NY 10017
Telephone: (212) 906 5095 • Fax: (212) 906 6008/6627 • evaluation.office@undp.org • www.undp.org/eo