

Efficiency

Flexibility and rapidity of response are crucial in conflict-affected countries. Yet there is generalized criticism of UNDP's bureaucratic procedures. Steps have been taken, over the past two years, to improve administration processes, but inefficiency and procedural complexity remain a systemic problem. At UNDP there are no special financial, procurement and human resources guidelines for the needs of large post-conflict country offices. Moreover the majority of the country office staff in Afghanistan were submerged in bureaucratic procedures. Many donors require quarterly and a few, bi-monthly reports. No two donor reports are alike and transaction costs are high.

Sustainability

In the rush to maintain deadlines, donors have succumbed to the payment of salaries and salary supplements to Afghanistan civil servants. This results in a skewing of priorities towards those of the largest donors, competition for staff between projects and a loss of capacity once external assistance is ended.

Some UNDP projects have sought to address this problem by phasing out the payment of salaries and salary supplements with a clearly defined exit strategy. However, an exit strategy that does not undermine national capacity is almost impossible to implement in isolation, as capacity will inevitably be bought off by other donors agencies. There is an urgent need for substantive donor coordination in this area.

CONCLUSIONS

In Afghanistan UNDP has defined for itself an important role in the early post-conflict period that is potentially beneficial to both the fledgling national authorities and the international community as a whole. This role, however, should not be performed at the expense of capacity development in key institutions essential for long-term peace building. The tendency of the international community to adopt a phased approach to post-conflict situations created an institutional vacuum that became more difficult to overcome subsequently.

From its initial focus on early recovery, UNDP programme has evolved towards an increasingly substantive contribution to the cause of security and development in Afghanistan, aligning with UNAMA core goals of seeing the country through a period of conflict to stability, recovery and development.

UNDP has increasingly understood the importance of the institutions of democracy and rule of law in ensuring a smooth transition process with prospects of long-term stability. Yet, not enough attention was paid from an early stage to stimulating and creating conditions and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and employment creation.

Following the approach of some donors, UNDP has focused on insecure provinces. By doing so, it has not sufficiently demonstrated the development dividend of the peace process in the more secure provinces which received less attention and resources.

AFGHANISTAN

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advocate focus on safer provinces to demonstrate a piece dividend.
- Renew focus on civil society as an essential component of governance (advocacy, "watchdog" functions, boost to transparency).
- In sustainable livelihoods, act locally learning from UNDP experience of community based area development schemes in post-conflict countries.
- Complement and support the above at the policy level (fiscal policies, easing commercial regulations) with feedback from experience gained in the field.
- Create a senior advisory team in the UNDP country office to lead thematic discussions and develop thematic strategies and policy options in each area of peacebuilding priority.
- Discuss with the international cooperation agencies common exit strategies, particularly regarding salary payments to Government staff.
- Better exploit existing capacity within the UN system, for example ILO in sustainable livelihoods, FAO and HABITAT in local development.



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