EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of an Assessment of Development Results (ADR) for Colombia. The purpose of the ADR was to assess UNDP's overall performance and contribution to development results as well as to draw lessons for future strategies. Specifically, it analysed programmes and projects undertaken by UNDP in Colombia under the 1998-2006 Country Cooperation Frameworks, with emphasis on 2002-2006 and UNDP's strategic positioning. The ADR was carried out between May and September 2006. Its results are based on field work that took place during July 2006, in which more than 140 interviews were conducted in Colombia. This was complemented by interviews held at UNDP Headquarters and an extensive and intensive documentation review, as well as a content analysis of the Colombian media.

DEVELOPMENT RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY PRACTICE AREA

The activities of UNDP in Colombia were clustered in four practice areas: poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), fostering democratic governance, supporting energy and environment for sustainable development and crisis prevention and recovery.

POVERTY REDUCTION

UNDP has provided valuable support for the measurement and analysis of the Millennium Development Goals at the national, departmental/subnational and municipal levels. This work has been one of the few instances of effective inter-agency coordination. In addition, UNDP played an important role in mainstreaming the MDGs within the Colombian public sector, not only by supporting research and analysis at all three levels of government, but also by assisting in the elaboration of a policy document setting out targets and strategies designed to allow the Government of Colombia to incorporate the MDGs into its national development policies.

A related area of UNDP support has been the development of policy frameworks for poverty reduction and the production and dissemination of several relevant studies dealing with critical poverty reduction issues.

Recommendations. An important task for the UNDP office in Colombia is to disseminate and deepen the debate around the first MDG monitoring report for Colombia, based on the valuable work that has already been done by the Colombian Government with support from the UN system and UNDP.[1]

The sustainability of UNDP poverty reduction activities depends on future actions, particularly on developing alliances with other development agencies that can build on UNDP's achievements (especially those organizations of the UN system that are actively involved in the productive sectors, such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the UN Industrial Development Organization and the World Bank). UNDP could play a brokering role with these agencies, enabling it to bolster peace and recovery efforts through productive activities and other development projects, thus contributing to greater development effectiveness in Colombia of the UN system as a whole.

UNDP's relevance could be further enhanced by engaging in a dialogue about the eventual consequences of the government's social and fiscal policy, which is currently based on a

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1 According to Colombian Country Office the report was published at the end of 2006 and its launching date is to be agreed upon with the National Government, during 2007.

combination of transfers and subsidies, and whose equity, effectiveness and sustainability is doubtful. UNDP's perceived neutrality could allow it to enter into, and contribute to, this debate in a way that would not be feasible for the international financial institutions.

Finally, UNDP could draw further from the expertise of its regional and/or international centres, and mobilize South-South cooperation, to provide its country programmes with additional human resources, experience and support that could significantly increase their substantive added value.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

UNDP contributions to democratic governance in Colombia have focused primarily on improving the monitoring of government decision-making at all levels. The 'Fight against Corruption' and 'Citizens' Participation' projects, implemented with the government's Comptroller General's Office, provide positive examples of the results of UNDP involvement in public administration reform and anti-corruption efforts. Through these projects, citizens' 'Monitoring and Evaluation Committees' were institutionalized as a form of fiscal control, and 'Citizens' Agendas' became a formal mechanism for the articulation of civil society in social policy.

The persistence of conflict in the country over the last five decades has made peace-building an obligatory component of UNDP interventions in the area of governance. The main UNDP activities in this area during the 2002-2006 programming cycle consisted of four projects under the Reconciliation and Development Programme (REDES). The basic formula of activating civil society, strengthening local governmental institutions and building alliances among local, regional, national and international actors is not entirely new. However, it offers a promising approach for introducing development activities in conflict-ridden areas where the national government has a limited presence and no effective tools for fostering subnational or local development.

UNDP's capabilities for adding value through technical assistance are greatest at the level of subnational/municipal governments, as the positive results achieved in Bogotá indicate. Outside the city of Bogotá, which is rapidly gaining institutional capacities and expertise, other major metropolitan areas, intermediate cities and rural communities throughout Colombia still have considerable need for UNDP financial management services, technical expertise and knowledge transfers.

Recommendations. With just three years' experience, replication of the REDES programme is premature. However, results so far are encouraging. Systematic evaluation, at regular intervals, of the REDES approach to peace-building, conflict resolution and strengthening of democratic governance at the local level should be required in the next UNDP programming cycle.

To extend the successes achieved in Bogotá to other regions and localities in Colombia, UNDP should undertake investments in knowledge-creation and in distilling lessons learned from those interventions so as to facilitate their incorporation by local-level planners and decision-makers.

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

During the 2002-2006 programming cycle, UNDP's interventions have aimed to help the Government of Colombia and civil society organizations achieve sustainable development through the effective use and management of the country's natural resources. UNDP strategies for this area have prioritized environmental governance, climate change, and linkages between sustainable environmental management practices and other biological resources. UNDP's contribution to results in these areas, however, has been modest and of limited effectiveness. UNDP's energy and environment programmes were largely demand-driven and more reactive than proactive. Moreover, UNDP was not able to effectively anticipate development challenges in this area. UNDP-Colombia is generally perceived as a resource administrator, and not as a real source of technical expertise with useful knowledge

relevant to addressing the country's major sustainable development challenges at the national or subnational levels.

Recommendations. Issues related to Colombia's indigenous populations now form part of UNDP's energy and environment portfolio. However, there is no evidence that UNDP has developed a systematic strategy towards Colombia's multi-faceted indigenous problems. Such a strategy would effectively integrate population issues into UNDP's ongoing conflict-resolution, peace-building, democratic governance and sustainable development programmes. The lack of a comprehensive strategy should be taken into account in the upcoming UNDP country programme.

UNDP should also elaborate a strategy linking natural resource management to conflict prevention. Such an approach would make a significant contribution to knowledge and good practices in this area.

UNDP could also consider sponsoring an analysis of the recently completed US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, to explore implications of resulting energy and environmental regulations for Colombia's competitiveness.

Finally, UNDP should take advantage of its neutrality to convene a national dialogue on key environmental and energy challenges to sustainable development in Colombia.

CRISIS PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

Among the most important UNDP initiatives in this area are those that encouraged peace-building and recovery in several widely dispersed conflict zones (primarily REDES and the landmine programmes), and that attempted to resolve disputes and conflicts affecting the country's indigenous populations. One result of REDES has been the development of a methodology for fostering peace-building at the local level in Colombia. REDES' basic strategy involves the activation or mobilization of local actors from both civil society and government through the formation of local associations and networks that facilitate cooperation among civil society groups and between civil society organizations and local governmental officials on subnational and municipal development projects. Initial and still tentative evidence suggests that this approach is helping to reduce local conflicts and to provide alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution. The sustainability of the REDES projects, however, remains to be demonstrated.

So far, UNDP interventions involving indigenous populations have not been incorporated into the REDES programme. And although there are some links between REDES and activities involving landmines and unexploded ordnance, there is a dispersion of activities in this area. This is partly a consequence of UNDP's reactive approach—that is, trying to respond to multiple demands from different national and international organizations.

Recommendations. The next UNDP programming cycle should consider expanding UNDP interventions to the country's indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. To guide such efforts, the ADR recommends the elaboration of a strategy for UNDP activities involving Colombia's indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples, with particular attention to the integration of these groups within the REDES and landmine programmes.

The prevention strategy covering antipersonnel mines and active abandoned munitions requires more effective coordination within the UN system (especially between UNDP and the UN Children's Fund) and between the UN system agencies and the Vice Presidency's Mine Observatory to improve the overall results of the anti-mine campaign.

CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The excessive use of 'development support services' poses a risk to UNDP's reputation. Colombia is a middle-income country. As a consequence, UNDP core funds have been

limited and have not provided sufficient resources to meet the multidimensional challenges of peace and development in a context of chronic internal armed conflict. (It should be noted that the conflict has been fuelled by international drug trafficking, thus becoming an issue of global public concern.) In an effort to generate additional operational resources, and to respond to the demands of government and international agencies, UNDP began expanding its role in development support services (DSS). In fact, these services were largely administrative in nature rather than development-oriented, and included activities such as procurement and the payment of payrolls. Over the 2001-2006 period, 70 percent of UNDP's project portfolio in Colombia corresponded to DSS.

While initially successful, this modus operandi carried significant costs in terms of the programme's relevance and considerable risks to UNDP's reputation (mostly by association with DSS activities involving procurement). The principal lesson from UNDP's experience in Colombia is that the incentives to self-finance a country office can lead to an over-expansion of development support services. In the process, UNDP's development contribution, and its reputation, can be jeopardized, a fact that has yet to be acknowledged by the UNDP office in Colombia.

On the other hand, through such services, UNDP was able to facilitate the operations of several international cooperation agencies—bilaterals but mainly international financial institutions. Indeed, by responding to the demands of government agencies and these international partners, UNDP-Colombia developed a portfolio of 180 projects. However, these projects lacked focus and often had limited relevance to national development priorities.

The production and dissemination of human development reports generated a number of good practices. The production of national and subnational human development reports in Colombia since 2003 has helped develop the analytical capacities needed to address sensitive aspects of human development and conflict. These reports have also served as advocacy tools and played an important role in the agenda-setting process in Colombia. A participatory process was followed in the design, production and dissemination of the reports, which proved key in developing national ownership and promoting their use.

UNDP demonstrated leadership in its coordination of civil society, government and the international community, but played a limited coordination role among UN organizations. UNDP demonstrated considerable leadership in its coordinating role to facilitate the G-24 London-Cartagena forum. Through this venue, the Government of Colombia, together with the international community and civil society organizations, discussed crucial peace and development issues and established a development agenda prioritizing six thematic issues: 1) forests, 2) reintegration of armed combatants into civilian life, 3) productive and alternative development, 4) strengthening the rule of law and human rights, 5) subnational development and peace programmes, and 6) forced displacement and humanitarian assistance. The forum provided a unique platform for dialogue among various social actors, allowing, among other things, a more fluent interaction between civil society organizations, the national government and international cooperation agencies. That said, a frequently cited concern among UN organizations in Colombia was the very limited role that UNDP has played so far in UN system coordination.

UNDP STRATEGIC POSITIONING

In positioning itself for the future, UNDP-Colombia should avoid spreading itself too thinly. Rather, it should concentrate its resources on areas of crucial importance to Colombia, such as peace-building. In doing so, it should draw on its worldwide expertise and its perceived neutrality, keeping to the minimum its involvement in development support services. UNDP's credibility is one of its key assets, which must be maintained, and which enhances its effectiveness in politically sensitive areas such as social policy.

In light of this credibility, UNDP could also help Colombia close the 'development information gap'—that is, to overcome the lack of reliable and comprehensive information required to design, implement, monitor and evaluate peace and development policies and interventions. UNDP could further contribute, in partnership with Colombian and international organizations, by cooperating to strengthen Colombian's statistical system.

To maximize its added value and improve its response to the country's development needs, the UNDP office in Colombia will have to increase the proportion of staff and consultants with substantive knowledge. At the same time, UNDP-Colombia should rely more heavily on UNDP's global knowledge network to strengthen its development effectiveness.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

UNDP interventions in Colombia have lacked an appropriate monitoring and evaluation system. It would be worthwhile for UNDP-Colombia to ensure that its new operations include adequate provisions for monitoring and evaluation as part of their design, and that such systems are implemented. Furthermore, the terms of reference for completion of interim implementation reports should include an explicit request to consider the role of UNDP in the intervention.

Finally, a programme of outcome evaluations should be developed and implemented by the country office in Colombia.

UNDP PRESENCE AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL

UNDP has undertaken a decentralization process in Colombia by creating subnational offices (two of which are still functioning). The Manizales and the Cartagena offices have become a focal point for development initiatives in each region, involving local institutions from both the private and the public sector, including universities and municipal governments. However, the potential of the subnational office model for effective coordination of UN-system activities in Colombia has been exploited only to a limited extent. In the future, Colombia's subnational offices could play a much more important role in the coordination of the UN system.

SUMMING UP

The programme of interventions supported by UNDP in Colombia during the period 2002-2006 contributed to development results that strengthened the country's peace and development process. This ADR identifies risks that should be managed and opportunities that can be pursued to consolidate peace and foster sustainable human development in Colombia.