

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings and recommendations of an Assessment of Development Results of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Philippines. It was conducted in 2008 and covered the period 2002 to 2008 and two programmes. It is the first such country-level programme evaluation in the Philippines by the UNDP Evaluation Office. The evaluation addresses the effectiveness and the sustainability of results; relevance of UNDP activities; responsiveness, especially for vulnerable groups; and alignment and partnership with government and other agencies. The evaluation relied on programme and non-programme documents, interviews with more than 200 persons, selected field visits, and regular reports and evaluations.

## CONTEXT AND UNDP PROGRAMME

The Philippines is a lower middle-income country, with per capita income rising slowly in recent decades. A mid-term Millennium Development Goal (MDG) report has shown that many targets are likely to be met by 2015. However some indicators, such as maternal mortality and secure tenure of slum households, are falling behind. After a period of improvement, poverty rose again in 2006. Development achievements are vulnerable to environmental challenges and frequent natural disasters, armed struggles that continue to threaten human security, and persistent inequality. The positive effects of an active form of representative democracy, a strong civil society movement, and a positive decentralization process are reduced by ongoing allegations of corruption and a political party system that has not been fully established. The ancestral lands of indigenous peoples, who make up 15 percent of the population, often coincide with the last remaining depositories of land-based natural resources for forestry and mining.

The Medium-term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010 contains a broad framework for development. It includes productive use of natural resources and ecosystem protection, peace and order, and anti-corruption. Poverty reduction is sought by protecting the most vulnerable and encouraging participation of the poor in decision making. UNDP support during the 2002 to 2008 period was built around the following four practice areas: MDG achievement and poverty reduction (including responding to HIV/AIDS); fostering democratic governance; energy and environment (E&E) for sustainable development; and crisis prevention and recovery (CPR). Crosscutting themes included gender equality and a rights-based approach (RBA). The programme management structure is based around the practice areas. Core resources were reduced radically at the beginning of the evaluation period. The MDG and governance practice areas are largely confined to limited amounts of core resources whilst the environment and crisis-prevention practice areas have generated non-core resources. The year 2007 witnessed a significant decline in mobilization of non-core resources and in delivery on planned expenditures.

## DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

### MDG achievement and poverty reduction

There have been considerable achievements in advocacy for the MDGs and their incorporation into budgetary (including alternative budgetary) and statistical processes. Continual assistance in several fields has been provided to the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) on a sustainable basis. Provincial-level poverty estimates are being used for the government's conditional cash transfer system. The community-based monitoring system, partly supported by UNDP, has seen buy in from local governments and has been replicated extensively, but it still needs wider application. The Philippine Human

Development Reports have been influential not only in forming national debates, but also, recently, in providing indicators for measuring human security.

An early intervention to strengthen the microfinance sector, now expanded by existing banks, was particularly successful and led to a strong growth in the client base for three institutions. Implementation of activities in support of indigenous peoples has enhanced the capabilities of the national commission responsible for indigenous peoples' affairs. However, it has been slow, failing to attract support for a development fund and encountering issues regarding the location of the commission within the government structure. Other activities to strengthen agrarian reform communities and to enhance paralegal expertise for alternative land dispute processes were one-off interventions without strong policy components. UNDP supported government policies to combat HIV/AIDS in 42 high-risk cities. Owing to insufficient data, the extent to which UNDP contributed to the continued low national prevalence rate is unclear.

### **Fostering democratic governance**

Participation in the early stages of governance activities allowed UNDP to contribute to agenda setting in three areas of involvement (justice and human rights, public administration and political development). The programme, implemented through a national school of public administration and governance, involved a large number and variety of partners but had the smallest level of financial resources among practice areas. Programme achievements included: a medium-term action plan to improve access to justice for the poor and marginalized based on the five pillars of justice and accompanied by several small reforms; a national action plan for human rights as part of an RBA to development; and most significant, mobilization and support for the ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and for a related national action plan. Further achievements include introducing the MDGs incrementally and sustainably in city planning and enhancing

citizen participation, advocacy, and monitoring. UNDP support helped to automate the most recent elections in Mindanao, although automation at a national level remains largely at the blueprint stage. UNDP neutrality and expertise have been highly valued, although the governance practice area has not attracted much additional funding.

Despite many achievements, the governance portfolio attempted to take on too many themes, activities, and partners. In 2007, the programme focus narrowed to support for human rights agencies and mechanisms, with the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines as the implementing partner. The new focus simplifies the portfolio, enhances government ownership of implementation, and includes the rights of disadvantaged women. As programme implementation was significantly delayed, there were few results to assess at the time of the Assessment of Development Results. However, the abrupt change from the previous focus left a number of successful initiatives without an exit strategy to ensure sustainability and reduced the productive involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs).

### **Energy and environment (E&E)**

Results in the E&E practice area have been mixed. The practice area has the largest financial resources and a large number of projects. An increased focus on disaster risk management (DRM) and managing conflicts around mining have been added to the portfolio in the current programme period. Nevertheless, UNDP has contributed to many activities and achievements. A key contribution was the development of a framework to coordinate environmental policy with a series of strategies, actions and a legislative agenda that has already influenced government priorities and UNDP programme management. UNDP has also provided continual support for meeting the country's obligations under international environmental treaties. South-South cooperation in environmental management of East Asian seas has seen several policy achievements, including a sustainable development strategy and integrated coastal management at specific sites. Ecological

waste management, involving waste separation with educational and community activities, has been demonstrated to work and needs to be scaled up. To reduce dependence on imported energy sources and to mitigate climate change, UNDP supported government policies and activities to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. There has been significant progress in both areas, despite implementation delays in 2007. UNDP support to land- and marine-protected areas has made progress at the project level. However, difficulties remain in financing protected areas and identifying appropriate alternative livelihoods for affected persons.

In general, gender approaches and RBAs are not built into the design of activities in the E&E practice area, and there is limited involvement of CSOs. A recent outcome evaluation for the practice area concluded that there had been progress in advocacy, public support and community-based models of environmental management, which are likely to result in a higher level of sustainability. However, there are insufficient numbers of expert staff in environmental agencies, insufficient revenues and unfunded mandates.

DRM has been able to attract non-core funding. Despite difficulties over completing a national action plan for DRM, there has been enhanced cooperation among technical agencies, formalization of early warning systems through local government resolutions to enhance ownership, and an accelerated rate of implementation. However, DRM requires a convergence of activities across practice areas, including support for a solid institutional and legal basis, and immediate and medium-term social protection measures. Given the wide and growing number of issues being addressed under E&E, coordination of DRM activities across practice areas could be considered under the crisis prevention practice area, with appropriate specialist expertise.

### **Crisis prevention and covery (CPR)**

Since 1997, UNDP assistance to CPR in Mindanao has attracted major external funding,

has been extensively documented, and has been generally effective. The primary tools for adopting an RBA have been peace development communities supported by peace and development advocates drawn from ex-combatants. Many of the communities involved have developed significant processes that are likely to be sustainable and have been able to assist other displaced persons. Several local governments have established conflict transformation and peace-building structures, and others are following. The impact of these positive results is limited by the low coverage—currently, the total number of communities involved represents approximately 3 percent of all *barangays* in Mindanao. Income generating results have been inconclusive, and poverty is still a major source of exclusion. There are built-in obstacles to women's participation, including a strengthening of traditional decision making, and UNDP has only recently developed a gender strategy to address these issues.

UNDP has supported the extension of the CPR process to the whole country—an important and innovative step—and the introduction of a human security approach that recognizes multiple sources of conflict. UNDP has contributed amply to the national debate. However, the dynamics of conflict resolution have shifted, and UNDP contribution in Mindanao needs to be sustained to ensure the continued application of lessons learned.

## **CROSSCUTTING AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES**

There is a very uneven application of gender issues across practice areas. There is now greater gender disaggregation of data in many programme activities, but gender issues are often not addressed at the analysis stage and not included in individual work plans. UNDP has demonstrated commitment and has invested in gender training but has not been entirely successful in incorporating mainstreaming into its management structures and processes. Addressing gender concerns depends largely on individual initiatives. Similarly, UNDP has promoted an RBA through a widely shared training manual from 2002. Although

the language of an RBA increasingly appears in programme documentation, application varies across practice areas. Capacity development, involving policy and institutional arrangements as well as individual capabilities, is pursued across the UNDP programme. Design and monitoring of the programme itself displays a high level of domestic capacity to enhance national ownership and outcomes. The UNDP programme produces a large number of knowledge products each year, which are useful for advocacy. To better achieve programme objectives, a more selective approach to production and dissemination of knowledge products around demonstrated results could be pursued. Although the country office continues to be involved in UNDP regional initiatives, with substantial results, there have been some missed opportunities for South-South cooperation, for example, in sharing experiences in the Human Development Report process and in conflict prevention and resolution.

The evaluation identified some issues relating to country programme management. Annual work plans often appear after the year has started. A change in the implementing partner was successfully accomplished in one practice area but has been prolonged in another. Hybrid arrangements have developed to facilitate the mainstreaming of project management offices, but such changes still need preparation time. Record keeping on programme activities has been poor. Recent efforts to improve monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity and systems have not yet addressed the quality of results frameworks. It is not clear that recent programme changes were informed by M&E data.

## **STRATEGIC POSITIONING**

The Philippine programme largely conforms to the five areas of the UNDP global mandate (MDG achievement and poverty reduction, fostering democratic governance, E&E, CPR, and HIV/AIDS mitigation), and is largely consistent with government priorities. UNDP has supported government measures to promote the MDGs. It has been innovative in expanding

support for crisis prevention and peace-building to all parts of the country. A key advantage of UNDP is its perceived neutrality, which allows it to initiate dialogue in potentially sensitive areas. It has helped rationalize activities in the governance area, although the resulting human rights focus is not explicit in the Medium-term Philippine Development Plan. It has been responsive to country needs in E&E, although the programme could play a larger role in poverty reduction by paying more attention to combating land degradation to improve agricultural productivity. A further key advantage is the UNDP role in advocacy, which could be enhanced around a number of important issues, such as the human security approach in crisis prevention and successful experiences in building capacities at municipal and community levels.

Programme flexibility and innovation need to be matched by greater resource mobilization, especially in the MDG and governance practice areas. UNDP could further leverage its policy work through partnering around the recent trend for policy-based lending by multilateral institutions. However, a constraint is the difficulty of aligning the programme with a six-year presidential and three-year local government electoral cycle. UNDP involvement in the Philippine Development Forum and civil society participation in programming are examples of successful partnering. Promotion of civil society involvement needs to be maintained to enhance both national ownership and sustainability of results. The United Nations Country Team played an active role during the evaluation period. However, there have been some missed opportunities for joint programming and use of specialized agencies in the UNDP programme.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite its demonstrable results, UNDP has undertaken many activities where funding is constrained and has not always replicated successful activities or developed synergies across practice areas. Performance in crosscutting areas is uneven. Several lessons have been derived relating

to capacity development at the local government level, synergies between practice areas, the role of CSOs in enhancing national ownership, and the requirements for South-South cooperation.

The following recommendations are made to enhance the results and positioning of the programme. UNDP should:

- Build on its achievements in institutionalizing the MDGs in government planning and budget systems
- Re-open dialogue with cluster areas in governance that were terminated when the focus of the practice area was changed and reconsider a role in supporting political reform that would allow greater participation of the poor
- Clearly define its priorities for E&E activities around the environment and natural resource policy framework; seek a greater convergence of activities across practice areas for DRM, with consideration of the coordination role

with a dedicated staff member being taken by the CPR practice area

- Maximize its contribution to peace-building in Mindanao and other conflict areas
- Establish mechanisms to generate and implement synergies across practice areas
- Learn from the role of private-public partnerships in programme development and implementation
- Maintain and strengthen the participation of CSOs in the country programme
- Be more systematic in its generation and use of knowledge products
- Enhance internal management structures to augment the impact of gender initiatives in its programme
- Continue to improve M&E systems to provide feedback for programme management, including for gender, RBAs, and capacity-building activities