

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of an independent assessment of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) contributions to development results in Rwanda during the period 2000 to 2006. Field work undertaken by the UNDP Evaluation Office consisted of a preliminary scoping mission in October 2006 and a full evaluation mission in January and February 2007. This timing allowed the Assessment of Development Results (ADR) recommendations to be considered in the development of the new UNDP Country Programme Document for Rwanda, presented to the UNDP Executive Board in September 2007.

The evaluation team gathered a wide range of data, validating perceptions derived from these data with additional qualitative and quantitative data and analyses. More than 110 stakeholder interviews were conducted with direct beneficiaries and senior government officials, officers of UNDP and other UN organizations active in Rwanda, other development partners with relations to UNDP in Rwanda, representatives of civil society organizations active in Rwanda and other key informants with no direct involvement in UNDP activities.

The fundamental evaluation questions were: What are UNDP Rwanda's main achievements in its areas of intervention? What have been/what should be UNDP Rwanda's core roles and focus? What are the capacities of UNDP Rwanda? How much coherence and synergy is achieved among UNDP Rwanda's programming areas?

Contributions to Rwandan development were assessed in the five areas of focus for UNDP support: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery, responding to HIV/AIDS, and environment and energy.

MDGs and poverty reduction: UNDP's project portfolio in general is moving 'upstream', towards

supporting central and regional level government institutions. Field-level UNDP interventions have not been evaluated enough and there are few data on the poverty reduction results of UNDP interventions among local populations. While difficult to assess, information available to the evaluation suggests that UNDP interventions at field level are relevant, but their impact is limited in quantitative terms.

Support to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning is one of the largest UNDP interventions in Rwanda. The ministry finds the support comprehensive and adequate in relation to government priorities. UNDP efforts to develop capacity in this ministry have been fairly successful and some UNDP initiatives, such as the TOKTEN project, have been innovative. UNDP support to the Ministry of Infrastructure (from 2005 to 2007) to formulate a National Information and Communications Infrastructure plan and e-Government Programme constitutes important groundwork, though the effects to date are difficult to assess.

UNDP prepared the MDG Status Report of 2003 together with the Government of Rwanda. Its publication generated much publicity and helped raise national awareness of the MDGs. Since then, the MDGs have been present in the development dialogue but not always in a systematic and organized manner. Key government documents emphasize economic factors much more than do the MDGs. UNDP contributed to a new MDG follow-up report prepared in 2007 by managing a basket fund for the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda.

Democratic governance: Most of UNDP disparate contributions in this area have been well targeted and government stakeholders consider them particularly relevant. The effects of UNDP contributions have not yet fully materialized due to a number of strategic and administrative

difficulties. The attainment of targeted outcomes has been influenced by diverse factors and has been partially satisfactory.

Crisis prevention and recovery: UNDP results in this area have been mixed. Its activities are not without risk and these risks need to be carefully assessed. Yet this is also one of the areas where a neutral UN organization like UNDP has its greatest comparative advantage. UNDP should continue to help the Government of Rwanda address ongoing challenges, especially those related to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Responding to HIV/AIDS: There is a lack of reliable data on UNDP results in this area. UNDP expenditures in the sector are not large in relation to national needs, though a substantial portion of UNDP's core resources has been devoted to Rwanda's HIV/AIDS response. Additional funds have been mobilized from the African Development Bank. UNDP's comparative advantage in this area vis-à-vis other UN organizations will need to be more clearly elaborated.

Environment and energy: Recent UNDP support has made modest contributions to its targeted outcome in this area, though evaluation information is, once again, unavailable. The ADR confirmed UNDP contributions to the elaboration of strategies, most notably through support for the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) process, but not yet to the adoption or implementation of these strategies. UNDP has also helped the government make environmental concerns more visible. The Poverty Environment Initiative, for example, helps ensure that the Government of Rwanda's emerging EDPRS will be a sustainable development strategy.

UNDP Rwanda's performance was also assessed in several cross-cutting areas: These included areas of particular concern for the Government of Rwanda and other development partners: aid coordination; institutional capacity development; gender mainstreaming; environment; and two issues of particular concern for UNDP, the

coherence and synergies within UNDP thematic programmes and between UNDP programmes and other UN organization programmes, and the effectiveness of UNDP monitoring and evaluation. UNDP Rwanda's most impressive results have occurred in those areas where the Government of Rwanda is also relatively strong: aid coordination and gender mainstreaming. Results in other areas, such as institutional capacity development, promoting environment as a cross-cutting issue, monitoring and evaluation of UNDP support, and achievement of coherence and synergies among UNDP and UN programmes have been more mixed.

Aid coordination, harmonization and alignment are particularly strong in Rwanda due to strong government leadership and UNDP support in these areas has been highly effective.

While gender-specific projects have been undertaken, with impressive results, there is little direct evidence that gender issues and their impact on project beneficiaries are systematically taken into account in other UNDP supported projects. It is hoped that UNDP Rwanda's recent gender audit will enable it to correct this anomaly.

Many UNDP contributions to helping government partners develop capacities were cited during the evaluation, but there is no systematic approach to capacity development or to measuring progress towards well defined capacity development objectives. UNDP Rwanda's decision to support the emerging 'National Integrated Skills Development Policy' and a national capacity development strategy to be closely linked to the EDPRS is a promising development.

The Poverty Environment Initiative, implemented jointly by UNDP and United Nations Environment Programme, has provided environmental input into the frameworks being developed for EDPRS in agriculture, health, water and sanitation, justice, private-sector development, social protection, environment, gender, social protection and HIV/AIDS. While this cross-sectoral analysis offers guidance for orienting these sectors, it is too early to assess the development results of this work.

Senior management of the country office views the creation of a monitoring strategy and tools as a priority for strengthening UNDP capacity. UNDP Rwanda's efforts in this area need to be synchronized with and supported by UNDP Headquarters. Development of methodologies and tools should be accompanied by strengthening of human resources.

The greatest coherence among the five UNDP programming areas is among those units working on different dimensions of governance. The member agencies of the UN country team aim to ensure complementarities and avoid duplication through regular meetings of heads of UN organizations and a Rwanda UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) task force established to define UN-wide strategic outputs, coordinate efforts at the project and programme level and promote joint programming. Some UN organizations observed that UNDP gets involved in areas where it does not have the capacity or expertise, such as demographic data collection.

Conclusions: The country office in Rwanda has effective working relationships with the Government of Rwanda, and the government considers UNDP contributions to be very relevant. However, UNDP contributions have sometimes been delivered with less-than-optimal efficiency, particularly in governance and environment. The main problems have been shortcomings in programme administration, management and financing.

Overall, UNDP has made important progress towards a more sustainable long-term development approach, though several UNDP projects still play gap-filling roles. The dispersion of the programme across many small projects in multiple thematic areas impedes efforts to improve the quality of programme administration and technical expertise in core areas.

With UNDP support, Rwanda and its development partners have made considerable progress in the harmonization and alignment of development cooperation and their experience should be of interest to the international community.

Systematic performance monitoring is lacking in most UNDP interventions. This has a direct negative impact on their relevance and efficiency.

External factors that will greatly shape UNDP's strategic environment in coming years are the new architecture of aid, including the 'One UN' approach being piloted in Rwanda, and regional and national stability. Participation in the One UN reform pilot will enhance the status of UNDP in Rwanda. It will also place greater pressure on the country office to improve its performance and to address areas of chronic weakness shared by many UNDP country offices, such as human resource management, administrative and technical services, and monitoring and evaluation. Partners in and outside the UN system in Rwanda expect more clarity from UNDP regarding the nature of its role in Rwanda.

The situation in Rwanda's crowded rural areas and in surrounding countries, particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, will remain critical determinants of Rwanda's stability. UNDP Rwanda must stay well informed of these dimensions of Rwandan reality.

Lessons learned: Strong government ownership and leadership greatly accelerate progress towards effective alignment and harmonization of international cooperation.

Systematic capacity development, including training and skills transfer, needs to be an integral part of any project, regardless of its technical contents or institutional set-up.

Chronic administrative and management deficiencies, if not addressed effectively, can undermine partners' faith in the country office's capacity to provide high quality support.

Recommendations: If environment is to be retained as one of two areas of focus for UNDP under the new UNDAF, then the country office needs to enhance its capacity to provide strong technical and policy support and to participate effectively and consistently in the national dialogue on environment, development and poverty.

UNDP should launch a dialogue with the Government of Rwanda with the aim of expanding UNDP partnerships with Rwandan civil society organizations. UNDP also needs to ensure an ongoing dialogue and careful monitoring in response to reports of tensions surrounding the operations of the Gacaca system.¹

Project designs need to be based on initial analyses of problems and clear objectives defined together with stakeholders. Project documents should follow UNDP guidelines as well as international standards. The role of steering committees in project design should be clarified and strengthened with the objective of enhancing national ownership and sustainability.

With support from headquarters, the country office needs to establish a robust, functional monitoring and evaluation system that systematically generates ‘lessons learned’ then ensures these are reflected in programme management and design decisions.

National ownership and the sustainability of results should be strengthened by ensuring that on-the-job training and skills transfer activities figure prominently in the terms of reference of *all* technical assistance contracted by UNDP Rwanda.

Autonomous project implementation units can impede national ownership and sustainability. They should be replaced, where possible, with technical assistance that works directly within government institutions, using and adapting their systems and mechanisms for project management. The country office should prepare a strategy to phase out autonomous project implementation units in collaboration with the concerned government institutions and development partners.

The results of the gender audit should be used to raise the profile on gender in UNDP Rwanda’s portfolio from an ‘incidental concern’ to a core

issue. This should build on UNDP successful support to women politicians in Rwanda.

UNDP should sharpen the focus of their programme, concentrating on areas within the second UNDAF framework where UNDP can bring the most value added while strengthening corresponding in-house capacities. The country office needs to strengthen their human resource planning and management, with headquarters’ support. The country office also needs to improve its capacity for ensuring that clear and useful financial information can be shared with the government and cost-sharing partners in a timely and effective manner.

UNDP should help the Government of Rwanda foster harmonization and alignment among those development partners still pursuing the project approach. UNDP should explore the option of facilitating pooling of technical assistance from different development partners.

UNDP needs to clearly identify its role in each context where it intervenes, ensuring that other members of the UN country team and other development partners in Rwanda understand what role UNDP Rwanda is playing in any given situation. UNDP should focus on roles where it can achieve maximum coherence and synergies with the programmes of partner agencies.

UNDP can help the Government of Rwanda enhance national and regional stability. In the context of One UN, the country office should look for opportunities to play non-traditional roles in UNDP areas of focus. For example, it should consider options for strengthening cross-border programming links that might help stabilize the Kivu region. Nationally, UNDP should continue its support for strengthening the rule of law and the decentralization process. Enhanced ties between UNDP and Rwanda’s civil society organizations are needed to improve UNDP capacities in these areas.

1 The Gacaca judicial system is a modified form of traditional justice being applied to suit the current situation facing Rwandan society. Gacaca courts are modelled on traditional dispute settlement methods used by Rwandans in the past.