Chapter 3

CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESULTS AND UNDP'S VALUE-ADDED

The first part of this chapter reviews the contribution of UNDP country programmes to national development results, in terms of their catalytic impact, leverage, support for policy generation, innovation and other attributes. These aspects are reviewed on a selective basis given the limitations in information and time allotted to this evaluation. The review is country-based, but singles out thematic areas that figure prominently in UNDP's mandate, namely, democratic governance, poverty reduction, gender equality and HIV/AIDS. A second part reviews five successful model projects, one in each NCC, illustrating the way in which project interventions can be meaningfully leveraged for wider national impact. The third part focuses on UNDP's contribution in terms of national development results, examining the nature of the value-added and UNDP's role as well as national perceptions of the extent of this contribution. The final part focuses, within the strictures of limited information, on the issues of effectiveness, sustainability and replicability.

3.1 CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

3.1.1 BAHRAIN

In Bahrain, projects in the current and previous programming cycles contributed to the country's national development in a variety of areas:

- **Democratic governance and women's empowerment:** Recent projects responded to political changes in the areas of human rights and women, strengthening parliament and

its institutional capacity as well as supporting the Bahrain Institute for Political Development. This institution was created by the King in 2004 to support political reform and was placed outside government in order to be impartial. Especially noteworthy in the context of women's empowerment is the signature by representatives of UNDP and the Supreme Council for Women of the Action Plan for the Political Empowerment of Women project in mid-2005. The project supported women candidates in advance of the 2006 parliamentary and municipal elections.

- **Poverty and social development:** UNDP's engagement has been limited in this area, but includes both upstream efforts to assess Bahrain's social development programmes as well as downstream activities centred around improving access to micro-finance (see next section). UNDP undertook important work promoting greater understanding of and strategic response to HIV/AIDS, as part of the country programme and in parallel with the activities of the HIV/AIDS Regional Programme in the Arab States (HARPAS). In collaboration with WHO, UNFPA and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNDP provided support to national authorities, civil society organizations and the media in promoting AIDS awareness. Knowledge/attitudes/behaviour surveys of three high-risk target groups—youth, injecting drug users and pregnant women— were completed. These findings were translated into a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy that is now being finalized. The

strategy will be the first of its kind in the Arab Gulf region. The country office is fully involved in the HARPAS programme with an annual meeting of the programme focal points from each country office. The annual work programme is reviewed by country office focal points and linkages between HARPAS and the national HIV/AIDS programmes assessed. One of the outcomes of the cooperation between HARPAS and the Bahrain country office was the recent workshop involving religious leaders, which took place in Bahrain on 22-24 April 2007.

- **Environment:** UNDP supported upstream activities aimed at developing a national environmental strategy and action plan. This participatory process involved a comprehensive study of the country's biodiversity and the initiation of a national desertification plan and strategy. Improvements in air pollution monitoring programmes were also carried out and environmental capability in using Geographic Information System technology enhanced.

3.1.2 KUWAIT

Some notable contributions of the more successful projects in Kuwait included:

- **Democratic governance and women's empowerment:** A programme to enhance political participation, with an emphasis on women, was initiated in May 2006 with a media campaign to raise awareness and support women's advancement in parliamentary elections the following month. The success of these activities put Kuwait (together with Bahrain) at the forefront of this issue, which is sensitive in the Gulf region. Various other initiatives also promoted women's empowerment. These included: symposia and presentations by the country office on gender mainstreaming and violence against women, directed at officials of the Ministry of Social Affairs, parliamentarians, women's societies and other groups; and the Centre for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR), a regional initiative to build the

capacity of current and future women parliamentarians and community leaders. The centre was jointly supported by UNDP and UNIFEM, with help from UNDP's Subregional Resource Facility, and sponsored several capacity-building workshops in early 2006. Another highlight was a gender audit and strategy, financed by the Gender Trust Fund in Kuwait, and training in gender mainstreaming for the country office and the UN Country Team. The gender adviser at the Subregional Resource Facility took the initiative of promoting this programme and is facilitating its implementation.

- **Strengthening the planning mechanism:** A macro-econometric model developed in the Ministry of Planning was used to prepare and test the socioeconomic development plan for 2000-2005. A model was also developed to facilitate comparisons with other economies around the world and is now in use in the International Comparison Programme. Two reports on gender equality indicators have also been produced.

- **Strengthening public administration:** A Performance Measurement System was developed and all of the country's ministries were guided in its use through a specially developed website and training programmes. Key performance indicators were developed for six ministries in 2004. Efforts to replicate this experience in other ministries are ongoing. Financial audit manuals were also prepared for the State Audit Bureau to analyse investments in petroleum, high-tech acquisitions, contract claims and disputes. Staff received training in auditing and information technology needed to automate audit procedures.

- **Environment:** The discussion of the Kuwait Integrated Environment Information Network (see following section) best captures contributions in this area.

- **HIV/AIDS:** HARPAS is active in Kuwait and is responding to HIV/AIDS in the Arab region through a number of initiatives. These

include awareness-raising targeted to religious leaders, women, the media and the private sector. The country office focal point maintains contacts with relevant national organizations, including the Kuwait National High Committee to Combat HIV/AIDS.

In addition, global and regional reports on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals stimulated production of national reports for Kuwait in 2003 and 2005. Recommendations from the widely disseminated global and Arab *Human Development Reports* were discussed among local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and officials from the Ministry of Social Development; NGOs were also invited to participate in the preparation of the common country assessment.

Finally, an interregional forum on the highly sensitive issues of employment and immigration is being planned. Other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council are expected to participate, eventually leading to a subregional programme.

3.1.3 LIBYA

UNDP programmes in Libya during the last two programming cycles were wide-ranging and contributed to a number of national development results.

■ **Planning:** Though a series of projects starting in the 1970s, UNDP has assisted in the preparation of national development plans. These projects have provided technical support in specific areas identified by the government. Although recognized by the government as important, it is difficult to identify the significance of this contribution to either the development of an effective plan or, if implemented, progress towards national development goals.

■ **Agriculture:** Two projects in particular, both of which were executed by FAO, were regarded as highly successful. These included a Mapping of Natural Resources project, which established a database used in planning agricultural and rural development, and a project called Strengthening National Capacities for Veterinary Services.

■ **Education:** UNDP has supported a number of projects in this field, including those that were instrumental in developing curricula for vocational training and other specialized schools. These interventions helped to build capacity, transfer knowledge and contributed to the development of a new education system in Libya. According to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Libya's experience sets a positive example for other countries.

The government's desire to normalize relations with the international community following the end of sanctions in 2003-2004 led to a number of new activities that have the potential to yield important results. It also allowed increased UNDP engagement in the areas of HIV/AIDS and gender issues. Most importantly, it opened the door to engagement in the area of democratic governance issues:

■ **Judicial reform and human rights:** A Criminal Justice Project, financed by the country office, provided a forum in which various countries could exchange experiences on the issue of human rights. It also laid the foundation for a much larger project, signed in 2006, which aims to reform Libya's justice system. In addition, and with financing from the country office and bilateral donors, a Conference on Democracy and Human Rights was held in 2005, involving UNICEF, UNHCR and independent human rights experts.

3.1.4 SAUDI ARABIA

Examples of UNDP's contributions highlighted in the 2006 analytical review of the UNDP country programme in Saudi Arabia included the following:

■ The most notable achievement, reported by the Ministry of Economy and Planning, was assistance in the formulation of the Eighth Development Plan for Saudi Arabia (2006-2010). Since 1970, these comprehensive development plans have played a crucial role in guiding the country's development towards clearly defined national goals. The eighth plan is especially important since it focuses

on reducing poverty, raising standards of living, improving the quality of life for all, enhancing the role of women and youth in national development, optimizing the benefits of globalization and enhancing partnerships for development, among other areas.

- A large number of mid-level managers participated in tailored training programmes to prepare them for in-depth training abroad on formulating policy based on solid data generation.

- Through technical cooperation with the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development, the government was able to build national capacities to operate a network of wildlife reserves and parks. By the end of 2002, for instance, the Natural Resources Conservation Training Centre, established under this project, was able to train 240 female and male trainees from Saudi Arabia and a number of Arab countries.

- UNDP successfully built a partnership with the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology, with the objective of empowering the energy sector in Saudi Arabia to meet rapidly growing demand through efficient and rational consumption patterns.

- In partnership with the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment, and with funding from the Global Environment Facility, UNDP helped to ensure that the first national communication on climate change was submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In addition, a number of politically and socially sensitive activities were undertaken that deserve special mention:

- **HIV/AIDS:** Saudi Arabia is among the most conservative of the Arab region NCCs. Nevertheless, it made significant inroads in combating HIV/AIDS. Box 3, covering both HARPAS-sponsored as well as other activities, shows how the country office was able to promote knowledge-sharing, networking, advocacy and partnership development in this most sensitive area. NCC representatives attended several of these events and, in particular, religious leaders from all the Arab region NCCs attended the 2004 and 2006 meetings organized by HARPAS. As a result, the spread of HIV appears to be under control.[13] A $50,000 grant from UNDP financed a large number of small initiatives,

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Box 3. Saudi Arabia: Progress in Combating HIV/AIDS

- November 2004: The first national workshop on HIV/AIDS was held in Saudi Arabia, on the topic of women and HIV/AIDS.
- December 2004: The UNDP country office attends the HARPAS Regional Colloquium for Religious Leaders on HIV/AIDS. A representative of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs in Saudi Arabia was also in attendance.
- December 2004: A national conference on women and the Millennium Development Goals was organized, focusing on gender issues.
- December to February 2005: A series of events were held, revolving around the Millennium Development Goals, youth and HIV/AIDS.
- June 2006: The first round-table discussion on HIV/AIDS in Saudi Arabia was organized.
- June 2006: HARPAS sponsors a meeting for HIV/AIDS focal points in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to discuss the country-level impact of the HIV/AIDS response.
- November 2006: HARPAS sponsors the Second Regional Religious Leaders Forum in Response to HIV/AIDS in the Arab States in Cairo. Saudi Arabia was well represented, with ten religious leaders participating.
- November 2006: Workshops on the role of the media in human development focused on six topics inspired by the MDGs, including the role of the media in combating HIV/AIDS.

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13 Reported cases numbered 262 in 2004, representing an increase of 10 percent over 2003 (238 cases). Over the period 1984–2004, the cumulative number of cases reported among Saudis was 2,005 (2006 Saudi Arabia MDG Report).

carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Health, including workshops, awareness-raising among teenagers, and the production of information materials.

- **Gender:** A workshop on women and HIV/AIDS was held in 2006 with the participation of UNDP, UNAIDS and UNICEF. Presentations examined the human rights implications of HIV/AIDS for women and children, particularly girls.

- *Human Development Reports:* The Ministry of Economy and Planning produced the first national human development report for 2003. The report advocated measuring and monitoring human development from a perspective much broader than the traditional yardstick of gross domestic product. The *Arab Human Development Report* had a noticeable impact both within Saudi society as well as in the dialogue with UNDP on its human development agenda.[14] In November 2006, the UNDP country office, in partnership with the Ministry of Information and Culture, held a high-level seminar with workshops on the role of media in human development and the MDGs. A workshop on women and the MDGs was also held in 2006.

3.1.5 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Results from some of the more successful projects in the UAE include the following:

- **Development strategies and plans:** The following key national and emirate-level policies, plans and strategies were prepared:
  - Dubai Strategic Plan (1996-2000)
  - Abu Dhabi Strategic Development

Programme (2000-2009)
  - Ras Al Khaimah Development Vision (2000-2009)
  - National health policies and action plan
  - Health-care financing study for the emirate of Abu Dhabi
  - Agriculture policy analysis for the emirate of Abu Dhabi (which led to the preparation of a Strategic Framework on Agricultural Development by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries)
  - Support to government institutions to formulate a federal e-government strategy
  - Technical support to the Abu Dhabi Department of Planning to conduct the emirate population census, and support for urban planning and management in Ras Al Khaimah.

- **Globalization:** Technical support and capacity-building were provided to facilitate entry of the UAE to the World Trade Organization, and to implement UAE's obligations in the world body. This support included studies and technical reports, workshops and seminars. UNDP emphasized capacity-development in information and communications technologies as part of this process.

- **Environment:** The National Environmental Action Plan, approved in January 2002, was formulated through cooperation among UNDP, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Federal Environmental Agency. The plan is comprehensive, covering the availability of fresh water; air and water pollution; conservation of the marine environment;

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14 Even though the NSPR showed that awareness of UNDP and its role in Saudi Arabia was limited, the *Arab Human Development Report* was well known. It generated different reactions among civil society participants in the NSPR. On the one hand there were those who deplored the fact that the report promotes Western values in Arab societies (for example, on gender-related issues); that it does not differentiate sufficiently between different living standards (in oil-rich and resource-poor countries, for example); and that it does not take into account external factors of poverty such as occupation in Iraq and the Palestinian territories. Others had a predominantly positive picture of the *Arab Human Development Report,* which raised critical issues the government could not ignore because of the authority of the UN(DP). Religious critics of the report were regarded with scepticism and even conservative members of the Majlis ash Shoura argued with the report for improvements in education. The accuracy of data was partly questioned because of the difficulty in obtaining it. The expertise of the writers of the *Arab Human Development Report* was questioned in terms of their familiarity with local conditions, and more local recruiting was recommended.

conservation of the urban environment; and land resources, degradation and biodiversity. Policy advice on water resources management was provided at the federal and emirate level by UNDP and ESCWA.

- **Gender:** UNDP helped develop the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women, which was approved at the highest level and is now being implemented; training was also offered for women starting their own enterprises. In partnership with the General Women's Union (GWU), UNIFEM organized a symposium called 'Enhancing the Role of Arab Women Parliamentarians in Public Life' in Abu Dhabi. Also in collaboration with GWU, UNIFEM is implementing a three-year regional project to facilitate empowerment of Arab women parliamentarians. The first project, on gender mainstreaming, was signed by UNDP, UAE, GWU and the British Embassy in 2006.

- **HIV/AIDS:** UNDP, UNICEF and WHO partnered with the Ministry of Health and the UAE Red Crescent Society to provide AIDS awareness-raising activities, including orientation sessions and training workshops for high school and university students and medical professionals.

- The first MDG Report for the UAE was produced in 2004. Senior members of civil society suggested these reports could be used as a vehicle for engaging the central economic ministries in dialogues that could lead to and strengthen UNDP's involvement in some of its core competency areas. A second MDG report for the UAE was produced in 2007.

3.2 REVIEW OF FIVE MODEL PROJECTS

The five model projects reviewed below were selected for their innovation and catalytic impact. As their technical and geographic scope is deepened and extended, it is expected that their leverage will also increase. These projects include MicroStart in Bahrain; the Integrated Environment Information Network Project in Kuwait; the Rehabilitation of the Old Town of Ghadames in Libya; the Urban Observatory Network for Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah Region in Saudi Arabia; and the Date Palm Research and Development Project in the UAE.

3.2.1 BAHRAIN: MICROSTART

An evaluation of this project in 2002 concluded that it "succeeded in its important objective of introducing microfinance to Bahrain by creating a sustainable credit delivery and management capacity in three national NGOs. A very strong foundation has been established upon which Bahrain can now expand the range and impact of microfinance on its unemployment situation and

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Box 4. Bahrain: Key Results from the MicroStart Project (1997-2002)

- **Lending performance:** MicroStart's participating NGOs provided a total of over 5,000 small loans to over 3,000 beneficiaries. The total value of the loans is approximately $1.8 million and growing.

- **Loan repayments:** Over 99 percent of all the funds loaned are on their prescribed schedule for repayment (or fully repaid).

- **Financial sustainability:** The NGO microfinance activities are financially sustainable. The amounts generated by the interest rates (or administrative charge under *murabaha* lending) are greater than the cost of staffing and administering the programme.

- **Impact on beneficiaries:** An impact survey of beneficiaries reported that most increased their revenue between 25 percent and 50 percent.

- **National impact:** The number of beneficiaries (3,000) is equal to about 30 percent of the number of people on social assistance rolls, or 20 percent of the estimated number of Bahraini unemployed.

- **Cost-effectiveness:** MicroStart proved to be a cost-effective means of assisting the needy as funds are rapidly repaid and rolled over to additional beneficiaries.

Source: MicroStart evaluation

social assistance programmes." Policy makers interviewed for the National Stakeholder Perception Report (NSPR) cited the MicroStart project as one of the more successful projects (Box 4 shows some of the key results), though NGOs noted a number of shortcomings, including the lack of trainers, limited capital for financing and insufficient marketing due to the lack of marketing experts. The project supported poverty alleviation by empowering the poor. Moreover, it is potentially replicable, thereby successfully leveraging the relatively small amount of money invested in the initiative by the UN.

3.2.2 KUWAIT: INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENT INFORMATION NETWORK

This project provided both specialists and the public with access to updated and reliable demographic and environmental information, using the Geographic Information System (GIS), and is developing national institutional and technical capacities for using the GIS. Phase I of the project covered the marine and coastal environment; phase II included four main modules, relating to air, land, coastal zones and marine environments. An issues paper on national water security was prepared and funded under the umbrella project.

3.2.3 LIBYA: REHABILITATION OF THE OLD TOWN OF GHADAMES

The rehabilitation of the old town of Ghadames, located 650 kilometres southwest of Tripoli, is a $3.7 million project completed in 2007 as part of the Tourism Master Plan. It grew out of a project in 1998-1999 to assist the General People's Committee for Tourism to prepare a development plan that assessed the potential for developing the old town as a tourist attraction. Water-use studies and a review of building styles followed as a basis for preparing a rehabilitation plan to restore the old city, which was endorsed by the General People's Committee in February 2000. Work began on restoring buildings that year, in addition to repairing selected streets, public places and mosques. The work was carried out by Libyans using traditional techniques and local materials, such as date palm branches and adobe

brick. The project also established sustainable water usage of the water channel system in the spring of the Ain-Al Faras oasis.

3.2.4 SAUDI ARABIA: URBAN OBSERVATORY NETWORK FOR AL-MADINAH AL-MUNAWWARAH REGION

In the context of a new, more participatory approach to development planning, emphasis has been placed on regional planning, with the need to localize MDG indicators for the 13 regions in Saudi Arabia. One of the best practices is a $137,000 pilot project that established an Urban Observatory Network for Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah Region. Over 107 urban development indicators have been produced, analysed and are being translated to on-the-ground projects in line with the eight MDGs. The project is now being replicated in Jeddah, and other municipalities have expressed interest. The World Bank has also taken an active interest in providing additional assistance. This project was deemed as among the most successful by both country office staff and government counterparts, who expressed a desire for additional capacity-building in future projects and more substantive involvement by UNDP.

3.2.5 UAE: DATE PALM RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The first phase (2000-2004) of this programme was completed and evaluated as highly successful; the second phase (2004-2008) is now under way. The long-term goal is to build the capacity of UAE nationals working at the Date Palm Research and Development Unit of UAE University to produce high-quality date palms of the desired varieties that meet national requirements. The strength of this intervention is in effectively responding to the core development challenge facing UAE: economic diversification. The research and development unit has become the leading centre for date palm work in the country and has also established a prominent international profile. Future assistance could potentially lead to an International Date Palm Research and Development Centre. Box 5 summarizes the project's major achievements.

3.3 THE NATURE OF UNDP'S CONTRIBUTION AND ITS VALUE-ADDED

The first two sections of this chapter provided an overview of some important contributions to national development results associated with UNDP projects. This section will elaborate on the nature of UNDP's role in bringing about those results. Before doing so, however, it is important to note the many reasons project partners are attracted to UNDP in the Arab region NCCs. These reasons reflect their assessments of UNDP's value-added. Respondents to the three National Stakeholder Perception Reports (NSPRs) carried out—in Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—and interviews held by evaluation team members in all five countries identified the following attributes:

- **Bearer of the UN flag.** UNDP is the embodiment of the UN and a conduit as well as a window to the UN system. This is a powerful rationale among senior political echelons in counterpart ministries (ministries of foreign affairs, in particular), as was emphasized in Bahrain but also pointed out in other Arab region NCCs. UNDP's country presence and interaction symbolize a spirit of national engagement with the human development principles and values of the UN.

- **Impartiality.** The fact that UNDP has no hidden agenda (unlike some bilateral aid donors or private sector firms) make it a natural choice in many sensitive areas where advisory assistance is sought.

- **Wealth of global experience.** Officials in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia highlighted the fact that UNDP can assess and relate to national issues based on its experience worldwide. This two-way channel draws in global standards of excellence and yields valuable experience that builds upon and can potentially benefit other countries.

- **Access to the UN's specialized expertise.** Involving UNDP is an expedient and affordable way to access the services of UN specialized agencies that do not have a country presence.

- **Transparency.** All of the Arab region NCCs noted that the relative transparency of UNDP's operations (including compliance with international auditing standards, coupled with administrative and financial procedures that are sometimes more efficient than those of national development projects) make the organization an attractive partner.

- **Access to international experts.** UNDP's global network gives it access to technical expertise not available within countries. In the view of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Arab region NCCs will require such assistance for four or five decades to come to address issues they share in common.

- **UNDP imprimatur.** Having the seal of UNDP enhances the credibility and acceptability of a final product. For example, in a project involving Kuwait Airways, it was thought that UNDP's involvement would be a positive factor in getting the parliament to consider privatization of the company. In Bahrain, Ministry of Health officials noted that they had been trying to get a special unit for about 20 years, but only succeeded after a UNDP consultant recommended its introduction in a report.

Not all the reasons for engaging with UNDP were made in terms of its value-added. Some respondents said simply that there is a need to make use of existing agreements between UNDP and the government (as noted in the NSPRs in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia). More specifically, some government project partners see UNDP projects as sources of 'free' additional resources, for example, in Bahrain and Kuwait, where budgets for the UNDP programmes are centralized. This is also the case where the partner is guaranteed multi-year funding (as is sometimes the case in all Arab region NCCs).

3.3.1 CONCEPTUALIZING DIFFERENT TYPES OF ROLES PLAYED BY UNDP

The nature of UNDP's involvement can change, depending on the country and the initiative to be undertaken.

- **Process facilitation:** UNDP adds value in terms of process when it acts as a facilitator or medium for a UN agency or supplies goods or consultants faster than though government channels. This typically occurs in projects where UNDP plays mainly an administrative-financial role. It includes such aspects as speed; audits according to international standards; access to additional or 'free' budgetary resources to the beneficiary; continuity of budgetary resources for multi-year programmes, etc.

- **Technical and substantive support:** This is an enhanced role whereby UNDP is pro-actively providing technical expertise, usually to fill a capacity gap or to provide substantive inputs (this could mean, for example, drawing up lists of consultants and recommendations on the pros and cons of each candidate; contributing to the content of terms of reference; and reviewing studies from a purely technical perspective). In such a role, UNDP has a major influence on project design and implementation, with full technical input by UNDP in both respects (either individually or in partnership with other organizations).

- **Adding the UNDP dimensions:** The first two types of services could be provided by a variety of development organizations or private sector consulting companies or management firms that have access to global expertise. What makes UNDP different is its focus on human development as well as on a number of core approaches to its engagement with programme countries. These include supporting national ownership, capacity-development and gender equality and ensuring a coordinated approach. UNDP value-added relates specifically to these areas.

This last type of value-added is the most important and is what UNDP should attempt to maximize in its engagement with programme countries. In doing so, it can make the greatest contribution to national development results. This UNDP dimension is not restricted to UNDP's interventions in core areas, but can be added value when UNDP enters into partnerships with other organizations, including UN specialized agencies. In this way, UNDP can add value in areas (sectors and themes) outside its main practice areas.

3.3.2 STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION OF UNDP'S VALUE-ADDED

Identifying the areas in which UNDP can maximize its value-added is also important because UNDP is not the only international development organization in the Arab region NCCs. A variety of groups are involved in

helping the NCCs meet their development needs. Although not systematically reviewed by the evaluation team, these include other international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in all Arab region NCCs, including, most recently, Libya; bilateral donors (including, for example, the German Agency for International Cooperation and the Japan International Cooperation Agency), since some NCCs receive official development assistance;[15] private sector firms;[16] international civil society organizations[17] and other UN agencies. In addition, other nations provide small-scale but important support through their embassies that is relevant to UNDP's human development agenda.[18] In light of this plethora of actual and potential actors,[19] the question arises as to why UNDP services are sought. There are two aspects to that question. The first is what motivates existing and potential beneficiaries to approach UNDP. The second relates to the experience of participants in UNDP's projects: To what extent were their expectations met?

As a prelude to answering these questions, it should be noted that in all Arab region NCCs, beneficiary agencies normally initiate project requests. This is mandated in Saudi Arabia by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and occurs in other NCCs as a general rule, as reflected in the three NSPRs[20] and the evaluation team's findings in Libya and the UAE. UNDP, however, is involved at all stages of project formulation and development. The evaluation team considers that

the demand-driven nature of the programme and total financial contribution by the government drives a stronger sense of national ownership of UNDP-supported projects among national partners in NCCs, compared to non-NCC countries. But there is also a higher risk that the diversity of demands from the government will lead UNDP to extend support in areas beyond its mandate. Even here, the differences may not be as stark as appears as first blush, since the same kinds of issues can arise in non-NCCs when government cost-sharing predominates (as in the some Latin American programme countries where government cost-sharing can exceed 90 percent of delivery).

What were the views of those involved in UNDP programmes in the three NSRPs in regards to UNDP's actual valued-added? Different countries emphasized different aspects of what they perceived to be UNDP's contribution. Respondents to the **Bahrain** NSPR were the most positive, commending UNDP's value-added both with respect to process (speed, imprimatur, conduit to the outside world) and in providing good international technical support.

Respondents in **Saudi Arabia** were also generally positive, but more critical of UNDP's shortcomings. They commended the process role of UNDP, since its rules for the commitment of funds and engagement of experts are considerably more flexible than normal Saudi administrative procedures. But UNDP's technical role was

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15 DAC countries have reported annual official development assistance to Bahrain from 1997 to 2004 of between $1.1 million and $1.65 million.

16 McKinsey is assisting the Bahrain Economic Development Board, chaired by the Crown Prince.

17 The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, for example, held a workshop on Developing Civil Society Law in Bahrain (4-5 April 2007), with that country's Ministry of Social Development.

18 In Saudi Arabia, for example, Norway is engaging with the new Human Rights Association and is looking at supporting study tours, exchanges, lectures and other interventions. Austria has sent three Saudi delegations to Austria to look at education systems in 2007 and has also sponsored delegations from the Ministry of Justice. In Kuwait, the Dutch Embassy is involved in financing and participating in the Interregional Forum for Expatriate Labour for Development of Mutual Rights. In Libya, bilateral local sources financed and participated in the Conference of Democracy and Human Rights.

19 Until the lifting of sanctions in 2003-2004, Libya had few alternatives to accessing international expertise, but the situation in Libya now mirrors that of other NCCs in the region.

20 This is the view of country office staff in all the NCCs studied except Bahrain, who, contrary to the responses of beneficiaries in the NSPR, believe they initiate the vast majority of projects. Clearly this is a 'grey area' where different perceptions may not be unusual or even a cause for concern. What is important is that national partners believe they have ownership of project identification.

perceived to be weak, with insufficient attention paid to the selection of consultants and the quality of their work. The *curriculum vitae* database of UNDP was perceived as less comprehensive than those of other international consultancy service providers, who reacted much more quickly than UNDP to government requests. The UNDP was seen to intervene too little in project design and implementation and was mostly perceived as an 'accountant' or 'post office' to the UN system.

In **Kuwait**, the NSPR concluded that "UNDP is perceived to be relatively strong on design, planning and strategy, but relatively weak on implementation." The latter assessment is ascribed to a variety of factors, including insufficient coordination, frequent changes of leadership, insufficient technical skills and limited communication with stakeholders.

While no NSPR was conducted in Libya, the Planning Ministry, reflecting the views of implementing ministries and project managers, requested a more pro-active involvement by UNDP in the content of projects. The need to have substantive progress reports and regular evaluations from which lessons for new projects could be drawn was stressed. These points were also stressed to the evaluation team in the central ministries in Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Saudi Arabia and the Ministry of Planning in Libya emphasized the need for UNDP to define more explicitly the services it can provide and where its relative advantage lies.

It is interesting that national stakeholders interviewed focused mainly on process and technical types of value, together with a number of political issues (which could also be considered a type of development value-added in a wide sense). The overall assessment of UNDP's contribution by the evaluation team is more positive than the NSPRs, especially in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. This is partly because it was able to review points not covered in the NSPRs and partly because it had more in-depth interactions, especially with the main counterparts of UNDP in the central ministries. There are many examples of UNDP's

substantive contribution to projects in Saudi Arabia, in particular the Al-Madinah Urban Observatory, where UNDP focused the project on the MDGs, the Environmental Strategic Plan for Jeddah and others. UNDP's advocacy injected the MDGs into the National Development Plan and was used in the King's address to the Consultative Assembly. This value-added occurred in UNDP's areas of core competency—the MDGs, poverty, governance and environment. Notwithstanding such contributions, the evaluation team shares a major finding that comes out of the three NSPRs—namely that UNDP's substantive contributions were too limited—and endorses the strong entreaties by all the central ministries and many beneficiaries that UNDP's role in this respect needs to be significantly enhanced.

3.4 EFFECTIVENESS, SUSTAINABILITY AND REPLICABILITY

3.4.1 EFFECTIVENESS

While clearly there are examples of effective projects, self-assessment by UNDP country office staff indicated positive perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the project portfolios in their respective countries. In Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the vast majority of recent projects (75-80 percent) were judged to have fully or mostly met their objectives; the minority were deemed to have only partially met them or not at all. In Libya, where UNDP programmes were wide-ranging and mostly sector-based (rather than thematic), projects by and large achieved their objectives, until very recently. But there were also sectors in which this was not the case (for example, in industry and tourism). In the UAE, most of the projects rated by country office staff were considered to have fully or mostly achieved their objectives.

3.4.2 SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability involves a number of different factors, but institutional and financial sustainability are among the most important. There are many projects in the Arab region NCCs, such as those

described previously, which have proved to be or are likely to become sustainable. There are also examples of projects that were unsustainable, even though project objectives were met. One example, in Libya, was a project to build capacity in the Ministry of Planning. When the ministry moved from Sirte to Tripoli, many of the trained staff left, and there was a net loss as far as capacity was concerned. Sustainability was also impaired after the successful reform of Libya's education system because of a policy change that revamped the structure of secondary education. In the final analysis it is not possible to generalize about the extent of sustainability in Arab region NCC projects, both because many of the projects were relatively new and the dearth of evaluations.

One important aspect of sustainability is capacity-building, to which this evaluation gave special attention. Building capacity is very much a mantra of UNDP and an explicit objective of many, if not most, UNDP-supported projects. In Bahrain, the NSPR revealed that capacity-building was part of many of UNDP's activities; there was also a strong feeling among stakeholders that UNDP's projects are sustainable. But the perception in Bahrain was the exception: In all four other NCCs, capacity-building was seen to be weak or insufficient. This was reflected in the NSPRs in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.[21] In Libya, there was a prevalent and strong feeling among policy makers as well as project managers that capacity-building is an area that requires significant strengthening. This was one of the more important points emphasized by Libya's Under-Secretary of Planning, who said there was a need to move from "importing experts to localizing them."

The evaluation team also made an assessment of capacity-building in its field work and found the implementation record to be uneven. The most visible deficiency in this respect was the lack of

inclusion of specific capacity-development strategies and concrete steps in the project formulation. Other reasons for shortfalls included experts that were too busy or not motivated "to work themselves out of a job." Whatever the record, this is an area that merits the greatest attention and can be improved. This was the unanimous view of NSPR respondents and the Ministry of Planning in Libya, which the evaluation team strongly endorses. Tighter planning for capacity-building combined with regular monitoring and supervision of progress by the implementing agency and UNDP are warranted.

3.4.3 REPLICABILITY

Replicability can be an important demonstration of a project's larger impact on development. Pilot projects that are specifically designed to be tested and, when successful, applied on a wider scale have not been part of country programmes in Arab region NCCs. However, there are important examples of replicability in the region, though these have occurred rarely and on an *ad hoc* basis. The most prominent examples are seen in the areas of public administration-budgeting and urban development. In the former are interventions in e-governance in Saudi Arabia, where replication has great potential but explicit recognition of the intervention as a pilot, integrated evaluation are not in place. Nonetheless, there has been replication, as in the case of a prize-winning information technology project with Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is being extended to other government departments and shows potential for even further extension. A UNDP-supported regional programme, Information and Communications Technology for Development in the Arab Region, supported the creation of Bahrain's e-voting system. It also forged an agreement with the Central Informatics Organization of the

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21 A situation highlighted in Saudi Arabia's NSPR concerning the Ministry of Planning is not atypical of the reasons for limited capacity-building in other ministries and NCCs. Some consultants in a UNDP-supported planning project were in place for more than 20 years, with little capacity-building among national staff. It was also suggested that the quality of staff in some line ministries makes capacity-building difficult. Among the reasons for insufficient capacity is lack of training and low salaries for the Saudi workforce, which makes it difficult to retain young professionals.

Kingdom of Bahrain to support the customization and replication of the system in other countries in the Arab region.[22] In Kuwait, the Performance Measurement System, which developed indicators for six ministries in 2004, is being extended to other ministries. Examples in the urban sector include the highly successful Rehabilitation of the Old Town of Ghadames project in Libya, which is a scaling up of an earlier project related to the Tourism Master Plan. In Saudi Arabia, the Al-Madinah Urban Observatory is being replicated in Jeddah and other municipalities have expressed interest.

That said, replication is the exception rather than the rule in NCC programmes in the Arab region.

Given UNDP's catalytic nature, replicability could be an important criterion for selecting development projects. In addition, there is a great deal of potential for building replicability into the design of many projects (particularly those involving public administration and information and communications technology) and using the conduit of regional programmes for replication region-wide. Systematic approaches in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects to build in replicability where appropriate could enhance considerably the development value of country programmes.

UNDP's contribution to national development results and value-added is summarized in Box 6.

Box 6. Contribution to National Development Results and UNDP's Value-Added: Summary of Key Findings

ON PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

- **Effectiveness:** Most projects were seen as having achieved the majority of their objectives by the stakeholders as well as the country offices, contributing to national development results in a variety of thematic areas and sectors.

- **Sustainability:** There are several examples of sustainability, but it is difficult to assess across the board. Capacity-building has occurred, but not as much as programmed, expected or desired by local beneficiaries and the government.

- **Replicability:** In the few instances where replicability did occur, it was on an ad hoc basis. There is potential for replicating successful projects, especially in public administration and the urban sector.

ON UNDP'S VALUE-ADDED

- A variety of factors make UNDP an attractive partner compared to other sources of international expertise: the fact that it is a conduit and window to the UN; its access to international expertise; its transparency and impartiality; the UNDP imprimatur; its guaranteed multi-year funding and quicker administrative procedures; and, in Bahrain and Kuwait, the fact that it is a source of 'free' budgetary resources for beneficiaries.

- UNDP's value-added was often limited to a process role in a few projects that represented a sizable part of the programme. This was the case in Libya and the UAE and, to a lesser degree, in Bahrain and Kuwait. In the majority of projects, UNDP played a technical role. In fewer projects did UNDP play a role that allowed it to use an approach that supported its responsibility to promote human development.

- National counterparts expressed a strong and unanimous desire to the evaluation team to see UNDP play a much stronger substantive role in all its activities; this was also the case for respondents to the NSPRs. Nationals were generally not satisfied with the quality of consultants. Most NCC/Gulf Cooperation Council countries have access and resources to private sector consultancy services with whom UNDP needs to compete in terms of quality.

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22 In this case, the UNDP country office had no knowledge of the regional programme intervention. This is an example of the lack of coordination between UNDP regional programmes and the country office.