



ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT RESULTS EVALUATION OF UNDP CONTRIBUTION **BANGLADESH**



HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION
efficiency COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP relevance MANAGING FOR
sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsive
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP responsiveness NATIONAL OWNERSHIP
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sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsive
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ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT RESULTS: BANGLADESH

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FOREWORD

This is the report of an independent country-level evaluation conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office in 2010. The evaluation examines the strategic relevance and positioning of UNDP support and its contributions to Bangladesh's development from 2005 to 2010.

UNDP has played an important role in Bangladesh since independence in 1971. The Bangladesh country programme has now grown to be one of the largest UNDP programmes in a non-conflict situation. During the period covered by the evaluation much has happened both on a national scale and at the global level. At the national level, the period covers a major shift in democratic governance and the effects of a catastrophic cyclone, and at the global level Bangladesh faced the challenges of dealing with rising commodity prices and the global financial crisis. But Bangladesh has also made great progress during this period, including towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, while at the same time achieving a reduction in aid dependency. National goals, including moving to middle income status have been articulated by the government and UNDP is committed to supporting Bangladesh in achieving these goals and other national aspirations. The evaluation therefore comes at a critical time when UNDP has an opportunity to further strengthen the significant contribution it has made over the period being examined.

The evaluation found a strategically well positioned and responsive programme that is aligned with national priorities and promotes United Nations values in the country. It highlighted the support that UNDP provided to democratic elections and disaster risk management but also notes that support in many other areas has produced a significant contribution and has the potential to make a

difference to the lives of the people of Bangladesh. Such transformations are often long-term and UNDP commitment to supporting Bangladesh over this time-frame means that it can play a special role in support of development change.

The evaluation also identified a number of areas where UNDP needs to address specific challenges including ensuring appropriate national ownership of all its interventions and making greater efforts to ensure the sustainability of the results to which it contributes. Programmatically the evaluation noted that greater attention needs to be paid to environmental challenges that affect the poor and to strategic gender concerns.

This is also a special exercise in that it is one of a handful of country-level evaluations undertaken in 2010 using a team consisting only of senior national consultants. For the UNDP Evaluation Office the experience has been very positive and the local knowledge provided by the consultants has resulted in an analysis more deeply anchored in national realities. The evaluation has provided recommendations to allow UNDP to build on the strong foundations that have been established over the last thirty years. I hope it will be useful for UNDP as well as its national and international partners in Bangladesh and that it will help UNDP continue to make a significant contribution to achieving national development goals.



Saraswathi Menon
Director, UNDP Evaluation Office

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
ASICT	Assistance to Strengthening ICT
CDC	Community Development Committee
CDD	Community Driven Development
CDMP	Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CHTDF	Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWBMP	Coastal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Programme
DFID	UK Department for International Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LGSP-LIC	Local Government Support Project - Learning and Innovative Component
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFI	Microfinance Institution
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PDC	Para Development Committee
PRP	Police Reform Programme
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SEMP	Sustainable Environment Management Programme
REOPA	Rural Employment Opportunity for Public Assets
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPPR	Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bangladesh has a long history of partnership with the United Nations having joined the organization in September 1974. It has participated generously in the UN peacekeeping and has made many other significant contributions including initiating the annual UN General Assembly resolution on a culture of peace, and as a founding member of both the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) began working in Bangladesh in 1973 and has been working since to support national development efforts.

This Assessment of Development Results (ADR) in Bangladesh is an independent country-level evaluation to assess the overall performance of UNDP and its contribution to development in Bangladesh since 2006. It provides stakeholders with an objective assessment of UNDP work and evaluates the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UNDP programmes. This report also examines UNDP strategic positioning in Bangladesh including relevance and responsiveness to national development priorities and needs. The ADR is situated against the background of Bangladesh's human development achievements and national priorities. The ADR is based on a comprehensive literature review and analysis of background data on Bangladesh including project documents, project progress reports, annual reviews, and evaluation reports. The ADR also draws on detailed interviews with stakeholders in Dhaka and field work in seven districts where UNDP is active. Data was collected and analysed over the period July to December 2010.

Over the period covered by the ADR, a series of economic and political changes have taken place

both globally and locally that influenced the pace of development in Bangladesh and merit attention in the context of this ADR. While these changes provide the backdrop against which the relevance and effectiveness of the development projects and policies were assessed, they also underpin the new policy realities and new development challenges. The most striking events that took place during the period covered by this ADR included the global food crisis of 2007-2008, cyclone Sidr in November 2007, and the global financial crisis of 2008—the effects of which are still unfolding. In fact, the combination of natural disasters, food shocks and financial market shocks made Bangladesh particularly susceptible to slippages in meeting the targets of growth, poverty reduction and human development.

UNDP IN BANGLADESH

The UNDP Country Programme Document 2006-2011 was approved by the UNDP Executive Board in June 2005 and a County Programme Action Plan was then prepared and signed with the government in September 2006.¹ Below are the five key areas of intervention in which UNDP would make its development contribution:

- Economic growth and poverty alleviation
- Democratic governance and human rights
- Reduction of social and economic vulnerability
- Sustainable environment and energy management
- Promoting gender equality and the advancement of women

Although the programme covers all of the main

¹ This is unusually late as a CPAP is usually prepared and approved in the period between approval of the CPD and the start of the new county programme.

focus areas of UNDP, the Country Programme Document noted that issues of democratic governance would receive priority attention. However in terms of resource allocation, the area of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and reducing poverty received the largest share of resources, representing 40 percent of the total as compared to 25 percent for the area of fostering democratic governance. Over the period 2006 to 2010 UNDP delivered approximately US\$ 320 million. The country office was also very successful in mobilizing resources; approximately US\$ 250 million over the five-year period being examined.

Following its design in late 2004 - early 2005 the country programme evolved significantly. The Country Programme Document and Country Programme Action Plan set out 13 and 12 outcomes respectively but in 2008 a decision was made to reduce the number to nine. Country office staff stated that this was based on the need to remove some areas where no progress had been made and to adjust the programme to the new UNDP corporate strategic plan. Most important, the implementation of the country programme covered a period of political uncertainty under successive caretaker governments (that lasted from 2006-2008). This led to disruptions in UNDP work and consequently affected its development contribution. During the programme period, UNDP also had to respond to the key events not envisaged when the programme was formulated. Core UNDP activities by each programme theme are described below.

Economic growth and poverty alleviation: UNDP has emphasized supporting the MDG process in Bangladesh. The MDGs also provide UNDP an effective entry-point to engage with the planning and governance process in Bangladesh. The commitment to poverty reduction is fundamental to the UNDP mandate, which is supporting the Government of Bangladesh in developing, implementing and sustaining poverty reduction schemes in innovative and inclusive ways. UNDP, through its poverty reduction portfolio, works to empower

vulnerable groups in rural and urban areas to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

In recent years, significant progress has been made in rural areas. UNDP supports one of the Government's flagship social safety net programmes, providing wages, savings, and livelihood training for the rural poor and vulnerable people, specifically women, through links with local governments, community partnerships, and service delivery. Significantly, the project is focused around an innovative poverty alleviation graduation strategy that delivers long-term improvements, providing not just safety nets but also safety ladders out of poverty. However, rapidly growing urban centres present new development challenges as many people continue to live beyond the reach of basic services. UNDP's urban poverty programme is implementing strategies that aim to improve the livelihoods and living conditions of the urban poor and extreme poor people, especially women and girls, by mobilizing and empowering thousands of urban poor communities to identify, plan and manage local-level infrastructure and socio-economic projects.

UNDP work involves supporting the government's pro-poor policy development and planning by opening up UNDP's global knowledge base to Bangladesh. UNDP has partnered with the government, to support interventions that strengthen local government institutions and make them better able to serve and deliver services to those they represent. In partnership with the government, communities, and non-government organizations, UNDP's multi-sectoral peace-building and service delivery programme in the post-conflict Chittagong Hill Tracts region pursues accelerated, sustainable socio-economic development and poverty reduction based on principles of local participation and decentralized development. The programme builds the capacities of local institutions and community groups to plan and execute small scale income generation projects, as well as expanding the quality and reach of public services from education to health.

Democratic governance and human rights: UNDP played a very active advocacy role in restoring democracy and introducing electoral reforms. The main justification for UNDP involvement is its political neutrality. UNDP's partnership with the Bangladesh Election Commission supports a reformed electoral process through legislative and policy reform, the country's first biometric photo voter registration, constituency delimitation, institutional capacity building, construction of independent local electoral centres and the provision of translucent ballot boxes. National and international observers hailed the historic return to democracy with free, fair and credible elections in 2008, 2009 and 2010, enabled by a reformed legal, policy and institutional framework for elections. A key result was the registration of over 81 million voters through the creation of the country's first ever photo voter list with biometrics.

Representative democracy is not merely a political right; it plays a vital role in protecting the economic and human rights of weaker sections of the community. In this respect, UNDP is also supporting parliamentary reform. The establishment of the National Human Rights Commission was the result of sustained policy advocacy by UNDP, civil society, and other development partners. For the first time in its history, Bangladesh now has an independent statutory body responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights for all citizens. UNDP support to police reform is a long term and comprehensive capacity building initiative to improve human security in Bangladesh and supports the transition from a police force to police service, and strengthens the police's ability to contribute to a safer and more secure environment based on respect for the rule of law, human rights and equitable access to justice.

Reduction of social and economic vulnerability: The key element of the UNDP strategy in this area is to involve people in the choice, implementation and ownership of the disaster mitigation initiatives once the project life is over. In this strategy, the government plays a key role and hence an additional focus of the UNDP strategy

is to enhance the capacity of central government and local government agencies for better environment management to enable the local people to perform their ownership role vis-a-vis environmental projects. UNDP's disaster management portfolio also supported a paradigm shift in Bangladesh, from emergency relief to disaster risk reduction. The provision of policy advice, technical assistance and community-level intervention helped to improve the capacity of the government, the local communities and local institutions to prepare, respond to and 'build back better' from natural disasters.

Sustainable environment and energy management: UNDP supported the Sustainable Environment Management Programme with 21 partner agencies within the government and private sector including NGOs. This was the first programme in Bangladesh to involve such a large number of government agencies, private agencies and NGOs linking environment with major development and poverty reduction strategies. There were approximately 28 projects under this thematic area.

Promoting gender equality and women's advancement: UNDP Bangladesh moved from an agenda for directly addressing gender equality - advocacy and support to gender-related policies and laws, government gender mainstreaming efforts, and sex disaggregated data and research - to focusing interventions in this area to gender mainstreaming in UNDP projects.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions draw on a rich body of findings set out in the main text of the report and some of these findings are included with each conclusion below. The conclusions should be seen as being mutually reinforcing conveying an overall sense of UNDP weaknesses as well as its strengths and the challenges it faces in contributing to development results in Bangladesh.

1. During the ongoing programming period, UNDP has made significant contributions

to a number of key development results in Bangladesh. Other contributions have the potential to be transformational in terms of supporting national goals and aspirations.

Two examples of significant contribution can be highlighted. First, UNDP made an important and timely contribution to election reform, specifically to the 2008 election. The registration of more than 81 million voters in just 11 months is only one example of UNDP contribution through its project support. Second, UNDP interventions in the area of reduction in social and economic vulnerability strengthened government efforts to streamline disaster management efforts towards a total risk reduction approach using community awareness and participation. There are also areas where UNDP has supported efforts that have the potential to be transformative:

- Contribution to placing Human Rights on the policy agenda and institutionalizing it in the National Human Rights Commission.
- Police reform where UNDP engagement is a reflection of its neutrality and position as a trusted partner.
- Support to the decentralization process that has led to policy and legislative reform.
- Application of social mobilization as a tool for urban poverty reduction by encouraging the formation of the organization of the urban poor groups in slums and low-income urban settlements.
- UNDP, widely viewed as a neutral mediator in areas of conflict, played a pivotal role in contributing to service delivery and peace-building in the post-conflict context of the Chittagong Hills Tracts.
- Contribution to rural extreme poverty reduction through innovative interventions, which have the transformational potential of raising rural ultra-poor women out of poverty in a short time-frame.

2. Most UNDP interventions during the programming period 2006 to 2010 reflected national development priorities in Bangladesh.

This has been made possible by forging strategic partnerships at different levels and establishing rapport with successive governments, which made UNDP a trusted and valued partner of the Government of Bangladesh.

It is clear that at an overall level, the UNDP programme, in terms of the stated outcomes to which it will contribute, is relevant to national development priorities, being deliberately aligned to national development strategies. At the same time it builds on its comparative strengths of neutrality and closeness to government in providing support to address difficult issues. For example, since UNDP enjoys the reputation of an impartial player in the development process, UNDP was invited by the Government of Bangladesh to participate in the reform process during a critical time. However, there have been significant shifts in the policies of the government since the departure of the caretaker government. In a number of cases, lack of national ownership, in the sense of ensuring adequate support from the government at the appropriate level for the intervention, undercut UNDP contributions to national development results in general, and 'value for money' in particular.

3. The multi-stakeholder approach adopted by UNDP has been responsible for strengthening UNDP's contribution to improved human development in Bangladesh, especially to addressing the challenge of poverty reduction. In practice, however, there has been mixed experience with respect to involvement of NGOs/Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and local government while the private sector played a limited role in the process.

UNDP has played an important role working with government and other members of the international development community in strengthening the aid effectiveness agenda. UNDP worked closely with civil society across a number of its projects. For example, the Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP) with 21 partner agencies within the government and civil society was the first programme in the history

of Bangladesh in which so many Government organization and also NGOs were involved to link environment with major development and poverty reduction strategies of Bangladesh. The role of NGOs and CSOs is quite varied across the poverty and service delivery projects supported by UNDP as is the role of local government. Partnership with the private sector is also mixed and is more evident in environment projects than in those directed at poverty reduction. More needs to be done to cement broad partnerships across all projects.

4. UNDP has been observed to play multiple roles during the programming period (project implementation, policy advice, fund provider, service provider, advocacy etc.) and in some areas a more appropriate balance could have been achieved.

Multiple roles are, of course, inevitable for an organization like UNDP pursuing multiple routes for poverty reduction and MDG attainment in the shortest possible time. The question is to strike an appropriate balance among different roles. UNDP's advocacy role was important and effective in the areas of human rights, judicial reform, elections and local governance. A more pronounced role of advocacy in some other areas, however, is appropriate, for example in the case of socially complex projects demanding long-term improvements in governance conditions. In general, UNDP should consider shifting from the 'project delivery' mode to a more 'advocacy and policy advice' mode with enhanced reliance on local actors such as government offices, NGOs and CSOs for delivering project outputs.

5. The design of the UNDP programme, as well as the projects that constitute it, did not always adequately focus on ensuring sustainability through stronger institutional linkages and capacity development.

First, there is an overriding need to shift from the project mode of operations to seeking more sustainable institutional linkages. The ongoing move from pilot to first generation (UNDP implemented)

to second generation (nationally implemented) reforms needs to be encouraged in UNDP programmatic interventions in Bangladesh. Second, not enough attention was paid to the institutional sustainability of community organizations in Bangladesh. It is critical to ask whether the design of UNDP interventions explicitly includes long-term support to building capacity, institution building and institutional sustainability to community organizations of the poor in rural and urban areas. Third, the capacity building component of some UNDP projects has yet to produce the desired results due to structural and contextual factors. Part of the problem lies in the external policy and institutional environment within which these projects operate.

6. Although UNDP largely succeeded in mainstreaming gender in all its programmes, and UNDP programmes have made substantial and meaningful contribution in terms of addressing practical gender needs, the strategic gender needs of women, especially in vulnerable communities, remain largely unaddressed.

UNDP should be commended for embedding gender concerns across all its projects and programmes and is now well positioned to support national efforts aimed at addressing strategic gender needs. This is a difficult proposition, given the socio-cultural construct of gender roles and divides along the private-public realm. However, it needs, to be emphasized that practical gender needs are the pathways towards meeting strategic gender needs. Moreover in the absence of adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, the pathways towards gender equality cannot be assessed properly.

7. UNDP's initial thrusts on addressing environmental degradation seem to have lost momentum in recent years. This can be attributed to the increasing preoccupation, maybe justifiably so, with programmes related to mitigation and adaptation to climate change in Bangladesh.

Although UNDP started its programmes and

projects in this area by focusing on mainstream environment and energy issues, it is evident from the allocation of funds that it has gradually shifted away from this area and moved on to a climate change agenda related to adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction. Climate change is a very important issue for Bangladesh, and it needs to be addressed properly. However, environmental degradation is still responsible for poverty and the poor standard of living for millions of people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations highlight only the most critical areas in which UNDP could enhance and consolidate its contribution bearing in mind its mandate and comparative strengths as well as what is operationally actionable.

1. To remain relevant, UNDP should continue to align its programme with national development priorities, specifically the Sixth Five-Year Plan and the framework of Joint Country Strategy.

Currently UNDP programmes are based on the PRSP. There has been a shift to medium-term planning (Sixth Five-Year Plan) and long-term planning (Perspective Plan). UNDP should closely follow this shift in approach to planned development in Bangladesh during its future interventions. Also, periodic adjustment using the opportunity of a new country programme to assess the relevance of ongoing projects and alignment to the national planning framework is recommended.

2. Appropriate exit strategies need to be built into the programmes and projects to strengthen the potential for sustainability.

UNDP should redesign the programmes and projects on outcomes and outputs that are achievable and realistically implementable in the time-frame envisaged. Continuance of projects for a long time makes the country aid dependent and also develops a culture of dependency. Appropriate

exit strategies should, therefore, be designed to ensure that benefits continue to flow even after support is withdrawn.

3. UNDP, together with national partners, should undertake periodic adjustments of innovative projects in light of experience.

An example of this would be the governance and poverty reduction projects. For instance, innovative projects such as Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction and Local Government Support Project-Learning and Innovative Component need to be adjusted in the light of new sets of challenges in the areas of persistently weak local governance and lack of adequate coordination among local government, NGOs, CSOs and local communities. This is especially important in the context of new leadership elected in the recently held *Union Parishad* election in 2011 (the previous election was held in 2003). Lessons learned should be incorporated into revising the project design and linked to national entities responsible for policy making.

4. UNDP should strengthen its advocacy role, especially in areas that directly promote UN values such as human rights and gender equality.

Although UNDP is strategically positioned to promote UN values, the advocacy role of the organization in the areas of human rights and gender is extremely critical in countries like Bangladesh. Given the weak nature of accountability of state actors, it is important to strengthen the system of state monitoring and civic advocacy by the civil society at large. It is equally important to ensure transparency and a level playing field in the non-governmental sector as well. Concerns about promoting gender equality need to be adequately addressed in both policy advocacy, especially in compliance with international conventions, and outcome monitoring and reporting.

5. UNDP should try to avoid 'fragmentation effects' by providing adequate emphasis on both developmental and social cohesion needs within and across communities.

This is particularly important for socially complex projects such as Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility, where more emphasis was given to the promotion of micro-grant based income-generation activities and less on building social cohesion. Although the project achieved some tangible results in terms of post-conflict peace efforts, the developmental impact of peace itself may have been compromised by the growing discontent expressed by different ethnicities.

6. The issue of shock prevention to avoid income erosion needs to be given more attention in future UNDP programmes, which currently focus mainly on income generation.

Three major types of shocks experienced by the project beneficiaries are: health related, natural disaster related, and personal insecurity related (related to theft, harassment faced due to institutional malpractices and misgovernance). Each of these shocks demand different prevention strategies. For instance, health related shocks can be addressed by effective micro-insurance in curative health care. Measures related to natural disaster related shocks resist a single solution given the diversities in the sources of natural disasters (flood-prone, coastal and dry-lands will demand different coping methods and mitigation policies). Personal insecurity related shocks require long-term institutional improvements, but they can also be mitigated in the short-term, for instance, through easy recourse to legal aid and human rights aid by civic organizations, strengthening alternative mechanisms for grievance resolution, awareness raising in the criminal justice system, and ensuring access to information (speedy media disclosure of the events of injustice as well as increased rights awareness among the poor and the marginalized).

7. Given its long-term commitment to Bangladesh, UNDP should build on its success in addressing practical gender needs to explicitly move to the more challenging task of supporting strategic gender needs.

The issue needs to be addressed at the political, cultural and economic levels. A paradigm shift is required in the structure of political parties, through the induction of gender sensitive issues and programmes. Members of Parliament as well members of local government bodies need gender sensitization training. The formal domain of politics and policy making need to be demasculinized and made more humane. At the cultural level, the academic curriculum at all levels needs to incorporate gender studies or gender related issues. This is critical to bring about a shift in the popular psyche. At the economic level, budgetary allocations for gender related issues should be increased. Instead of supportive structures, the emphasis ought to be on transformative structures like allocations for women to have entry into the market in non-traditional sectors, which are sustainable and not project dependent.

8. UNDP should play an important role in promoting regional cooperation on environmental and disaster management issues among South Asian countries in general, and between India and Bangladesh in particular.

Environmental issues are interlinked, so it would be useful to develop South-South cooperation between Bangladesh and India. Issues that require immediate attention are water flows between India and Bangladesh, protection of Sundarban and pollution in rivers. UNDP could play the role of a catalyst to promote cooperation within the region.

9. Comprehensive disaster management programmes of UNDP need to focus more on supporting the livelihoods of the poor within an asset livelihood framework (extended by rights to development of the poor) in design when it comes to the issue of revival of the local economy.

Recently, disaster management programmes in Bangladesh have refocused using a systematic approach to identifying vulnerable communities. However, with climate change becoming a reality, the risk and vulnerability of the communities is

likely to be exacerbated. There are communities even in urban locations that are poor and vulnerable. Many communities will lose their livelihood due to climate change risks. The programmes need to focus on new risks and their effects on livelihood, because a livelihood based strategy is likely to succeed in reducing community level risks due to such vulnerability.

10. UNDP should continue to focus on environment-related issues like pollution and degradation of natural resources to ensure sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Mainstreaming environmental issues into policy making will require continued involvement of UNDP on these issues. However, since UNDP has reduced its engagement from the core environmental issues, poverty-environment links have been overlooked. This will adversely affect achievement of several MDGs related to health and environment. UNDP should therefore realign its engagement in this sector to restore environmental focus to its projects and programmes.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The Assessment of Development Results (ADR) in Bangladesh is an independent country-level evaluation conducted by the Evaluation Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2010. Its objectives are:

- Support the UNDP Administrator's accountability function in reporting to the Executive Board. The ADR will be made available to Executive Board members when the new Bangladesh country programme is presented in June 2011.
- Support greater UNDP accountability to national stakeholders and partners in the programme country. Key partners are fully involved in the ADR process through the evaluation reference group. A wider range of stakeholders will discuss the ADR report in the stakeholder workshop.
- Make significant contribution to learning at corporate, regional and country levels. The evaluation has been timed so as to provide feedback into the preparation of the new UNDP country programme document (CPD) for Bangladesh. The UNDP Evaluation Office will facilitate the use of the evaluation at corporate and regional levels.

This is the second ADR to be conducted in Bangladesh. The previous ADR examined two programme cycles, 1996-2000 and 2001-2005. Data collection was undertaken over a long period: it started in mid 2003 with an initial mission and was followed by a second mission in late 2004. The evaluation was thus able to feed into the preparation of the ongoing country programme (2006-2011). This ADR therefore focused on evaluating the ongoing country programme and based its analysis on the

results framework prepared for this programme. Nonetheless, it took into account projects that started before the ongoing country programme and continued into it.

The evaluation covered activities from all funding sources and all execution modalities. The scope goes beyond the formal country programme to include non-project activities, for example advocacy by UNDP country office staff. It also goes beyond the activities undertaken by the country office itself to include interventions made by UNDP on a corporate or regional level (for example, documents produced or workshops organized by the UNDP regional or global programmes). The evaluation covers all five programme components set out in the CPD:

- Economic growth and poverty alleviation
- Democratic governance and human rights
- Reduction of social and economic vulnerability
- Sustainable environment and energy management
- Promoting gender equality and advancement of women

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The ADR examines UNDP contribution to national development results, specifically the agreed upon national outcomes used in UNDP programming documents. The evaluation criteria and associated questions are at the core of the methodology for examining UNDP contributions (Box 1). These define the scope of how UNDP performance in Bangladesh was judged. Evaluators generate findings within the scope of the evaluation and use the criteria to

Box 1. Evaluation criteria

Relevance: How relevant is UNDP to national development challenges and priorities as identified by the government in line with best practices of development?

Promotion of UN values: Did UNDP promote its work from a human development perspective? Did UNDP contribute to an improvement in people's lives, especially among the poorest and most marginalized?

Effectiveness: How effective has UNDP been in achieving its objectives, specifically the outcomes contained in its programming documents?

Efficiency: Has UNDP made good use of its financial and human resources? Could it have achieved more with the same resources or made the same contribution with fewer resources?

Sustainability: Have the results to which UNDP contributes been sustainable?

make assessments. In turn the findings and assessments are used to arrive at the conclusions from the evaluation and to draw recommendations.

Although a judgment was made using the criteria in Box 1, the ADR process also identified how various factors influenced UNDP performance. The following generic list of factors is used across all ADRs to facilitate analysis of why UNDP performed as it did:

- Focus on capacity development
- Incorporation of gender issues
- Promotion of South-South cooperation
- Use of partnerships for development
- Support for coordination of United Nations and other development assistance

In addition, a number of other issues were raised by stakeholders during the design of the evaluation as factors affecting UNDP performance and were taken into account by the evaluation team:

- Degree of national ownership
- Promotion of the aid effectiveness agenda
- Use of knowledge generation, dissemination and management
- Effectiveness of operations (especially procurement)
- Balance between upstream and downstream interventions

EVALUABILITY

Within the scope of the evaluation, an evaluability assessment identified what information was already available and issues related to collecting additional data. This evaluability assessment led to the identification of the data collection methods described in the next section. The Bangladesh country office has successfully implemented a comprehensive evaluation plan ensuring the ADR was built on strong foundations. Specifically, it has completed three outcome evaluations since the start of the ongoing country programme and more than seven project evaluations have been completed for interventions undertaken in the period covered by the ADR. The previous ADR also provides a basis for the present evaluation. After quality assessment, these evaluations represent the building blocks of the ADR.

All projects prepare Annual Project Progress Reports and these are extremely important to understanding the larger, more complex projects. Examples of the more substantial reports include: Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) Project; Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA) Project; and the Support to Monitoring the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Bangladesh Project. Moreover, the country office produced in 2010 an annual results report, 'A Snapshot of Results 2009', to share with all stakeholders. In addition to independent evaluations, the

ADR used the products of self-reporting exercises undertaken through the UNDP corporate results based management system, specifically the Results-Oriented Annual Reports. The county office also made available a number of reviews and strategic documents. While all of the above were useful, as self-assessments of performance, they required validation by the evaluation team.

There were practical issues that needed to be considered in the evaluability assessment. Experience with similar efforts in Bangladesh indicated that stakeholders in the government (central and local) would be willing to engage with the evaluation team. There was a large group of international development partners in the country and a vibrant civil society with whom to engage in the data collection process. The evaluation team also assessed that national statistics were generally adequate for use in the evaluation process.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

An evaluation matrix was at the core of the data collection process and linked each of the criteria and related evaluation questions to data sources and data collection methods to ensure a logical approach to using the evaluation criteria. The evaluation team used multiple methods that included the following:

- Document review including United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), CPDs, country programme action plans (CPAPs), evaluation reports, project documents, annual reports, financial data, and other relevant information.
- Stakeholder interviews were used to fill gaps identified in the evaluation matrix. A strong participatory approach was taken involving a broad range of stakeholders including those

beyond direct partners of UNDP. These stakeholders included government representatives of ministries and agencies, civil-society organizations, private-sector representatives, United Nations organizations, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, and more importantly, the beneficiaries of the programme.

- A number of other data collection methods were used by evaluation team members in the field including small surveys, life-histories of beneficiaries, and community level focus group discussions.²

The evaluation team used a variety of methods to ensure that the data was valid, including triangulation. All the findings were supported by evidence and validated through consulting multiple sources. The evaluation team undertook field trips for interviews, group discussions, surveys and project site observations.³

1.3 PROCESS

The evaluation process was divided into a number of phases. The first phase, the preparation phase, included the design and development of the terms of reference. This allowed the selection of a team leader and the subsequent identification of members of the evaluation team. A team entirely composed of Bangladeshi nationals was selected. It also included the establishment of a reference group consisting of members of the UNDP and development partners from the government, Bangladesh civil society and the international development community.⁴ The second phase, the inception phase, started once the evaluation team was in place and the UNDP task manager worked closely with the evaluation team on detailed design leading to an inception report that was shared with the reference group.

² More on these methods can be found in Section 4.1 (outcome 2).

³ Further information on field trips can be found in Annex 5.

⁴ Members include the External Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance; the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the Ministry of Planning; UNDP and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office; the UK Department for International Development and the European Union; the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies; and the Centre for Policy Dialogue. The group is co-chaired by the External Relations Division and UNDP.

The third phase covered data collection and analysis. At an early stage in the process, the evaluation team participated in the multi-year review of the UNDP country programme as observers. Although the review focussed on project outputs, it allowed team members to get exposed to the results and challenges of the UNDP portfolio of projects. Data collection was guided by the evaluation matrix. Each team member prepared outcome reports according to the division of labour. Although analysis took place in earlier stages, the evaluation team dedicated one week for final analysis. Once the preliminary assessments, conclusions and recommendations were formulated, the evaluation team debriefed the External Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance and the country office to obtain feedback and avoid inaccuracies.

A meeting with the key national stakeholders was organized in March 2011 to present the results of the evaluation and examine ways forward for

UNDP in Bangladesh. The main purpose of the meeting was to facilitate greater buy-in by national stakeholders in taking the recommendations from the report forward and to strengthen the national ownership of development process and the necessary accountability of UNDP interventions at the country level.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Chapter 2 provides the national context and development challenges for the period being examined. Chapter 3 examines UNDP's response to the national context and assesses UNDP's strategic positioning in terms of its relevance and promotion of UN values. Chapter 4 examines UNDP's contribution to national development results through the programme outcomes and makes assessment in terms of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of interventions. Chapter 5 presents conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

COUNTRY CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Since the previous ADR was undertaken in 2004, a series of economic and political changes have taken place both globally and locally that influenced the pace of development in Bangladesh and merit attention in the context of this ADR. While these changes provide the backdrop against which the relevance and effectiveness of the development projects and policies were assessed, they also underpin the new policy realities and new development challenges.

2.1 CHANGING GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONTEXTS

The most striking events that took place during the period covered by this ADR included the global food crisis of 2007–2008, cyclone Sidr in November 2007 and the global financial crisis of 2008—the effects of which are still unfolding. In fact, the combination of natural disasters, food shocks and financial market shocks made Bangladesh particularly susceptible to slippages in meeting the targets of growth, poverty reduction and human development. In this section we adopt the following sequence of context narration: first, we discuss the effects of natural disaster, moving then to the consideration of the likely effects of global economic shocks, and finally we discuss the significance of local non-economic shocks associated with the changes in the political regimes.

CYCLONE SIDR OF NOVEMBER 2007

Cyclone Sidr, which hit Bangladesh on 15 November 2007, was described as the worst storm in more than 15 years. 2007 had already seen above-average post-monsoon flooding, causing extensive agricultural production losses and destruction of physical assets, totalling nearly US\$ 1.1 billion.⁵ Being a downstream deltaic country, Bangladesh is susceptible to flooding almost every other year. However, the resilience of the economy in the face of flooding has increased.⁶ This was not the case, however, with cyclone Sidr.

Although the total number of human lives lost was approximately 5,000 (much less than the estimated 138,000 killed in the 1991 cyclone, due to better disaster preparedness) the cyclone was no less menacing.⁷ It wreaked havoc on the south-western parts of the country—having adverse effects in the already impoverished coastal belt—and moved inland destroying infrastructure, disrupting economic activities and affecting social conditions. Of the 2.3 million households affected by cyclone Sidr, approximately one million were seriously affected. An estimate by the Joint Damage, Loss, and Needs Assessment put the total damage and losses caused by the cyclone at US\$ 1.7 billion—approximately 2.8 percent of Bangladesh's gross domestic product (GDP).⁸ The private (mainly household) sector

⁵ World Bank, 'Damage Assessment', 2007.

⁶ For instance, the economy registered almost zero per capita GDP growth in 1988–1989 as a result of the 1988 flood, while the per capita annual GDP growth rates in the years following the 1998 and 2004 floods were in excess of 2 percent to 3 percent.

⁷ The category of disaster preparedness included a variety of measures, such as improved disaster prevention measures, including an improved forecasting and warning system, coastal afforestation projects, cyclone shelters, and embankments, which are credited with lower casualty rates than what would have been expected in Sidr.

⁸ Government of Bangladesh (Assisted by the International Development Community with Financial Support from the European Commission), 'Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh: Damage, Loss, and Needs Assessment for Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction (Draft Executive Summary)', March 2008.

rather than the public sector bore the major share of the damage: 50 percent of the losses were concentrated in the housing sector, 30 percent in the productive sectors, and 14 percent in the sector of public infrastructure.

As a result of Sidr, growth of agriculture (including crop, livestock and forestry) dropped from the pre-crisis 4.69 percent in 2006-2007 to 2.93 percent in 2007-2008. This dip in agricultural growth however was largely compensated by the growth in non-agricultural sectors. Consequently, the overall GDP growth declined only marginally from 6.43 percent in 2006-2007 to 6.19 percent in 2007-2008.

Sidr brought to the fore the need for earmarking vulnerability coping funds over and beyond the need for creating adequate fiscal space for social protection that can be drawn upon in case of such unforeseen natural disaster emergencies.

GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS OF 2007-2008

2007 and 2008 were marked by dramatic increases in world food prices (as well as for other commodities including oil), creating a global crisis and causing political and economical instability and social unrest in both developing and developed nations. Between 2006 and 2008, average world prices rose by 217 percent for rice, 136 percent for wheat, 125 percent for corn and 107 percent for soybeans.

Initial causes of the 2007 price spikes included droughts in grain-producing nations and rising oil prices, which affected both the cost of fertilizers and food transportation. The increasing use of biofuels in developed countries and an increasing demand for a more varied diet across the expanding middle-class populations of Asia were also among the root causes of the global food crisis. Other causes of global food price hikes during this period were often linked to

financial speculation in the commodities market. The effects of worldwide increases in food prices were palpable in major rice-consuming economies such as Bangladesh. The point-to-point food inflation rate had already increased from 1.3 percent in July 2001 to 6 percent in July 2006. As a result of the crisis, it shot up to 12.5 percent in July 2008—the zenith of the global food crisis. Given the large weight of food items in the consumer price basket—63 percent for rural areas and 49 percent for urban areas—the average consumer price index-based inflation rate of the economy in fiscal year 2007-2008 rose sharply to 10 percent compared to 7 percent in 2005-2006.

The experience of the global food crisis combined with the supply shocks caused by Sidr also exposed the vulnerability of the prevailing food-trading regime, which was heavily dependent on the international markets. The magnitude of adverse poverty effects of the global food crisis depended on the outcome of two tendencies: while net consumers got hit by the rising food prices, net producers benefitted by it. In Bangladesh, most of the poor tend to be net consumers of food, especially rice, even in rural areas. As a result, the rural poverty head-count rose sharply during the period of the global food crisis by about 4 percentage points.⁹

GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS OF 2008-2010

No sooner had the adverse effects of the global food crisis started to fade than the country found itself in another global crisis—a severe and deepening financial crisis. For Bangladesh, the initial adverse effects of the global crisis were experienced primarily through the trade and remittance channels. The export growth rate slowed, with the second quarter of fiscal year 2008-2009 (October-December 2008). Export of non-apparels items also witnessed significant deceleration in growth.¹⁰ Remittance earnings showed steady increase, although the situation

⁹ Hossain M, Bayes A, 'Rural Economy and Livelihoods: Insights from Bangladesh', AH Development Publishing House, Dhaka, 2009.

could worsen as the number of job seekers who left in January and February 2009 halved compared with the same period of 2008.

On the whole, the Bangladesh economy weathered the global financial crisis well. However, GDP growth slowed down due to the global recession, dropping from a high of 6.6 percent in 2005-2006 to 5.9 percent by 2008-2009.¹¹ However, signs of early recovery are discernible: GDP for 2009-2010 was 6 percent.

Almost all the major sectors including exports, imports, and remittances performed well in 2009, despite the shocks of the global recession. In particular, remittances continued to grow at a healthy rate, increasing from the pre-crisis level of US\$ 5.98 billion in 2006-2007 to US\$ 7.91 billion in 2007-2008 and US\$ 9.69 billion in 2008-2009. In comparison to the pre-crisis level of 2006-2007, Bangladesh's overall exports registered an annual increase of 15.8 percent in 2007-2008 and 10.3 percent in 2008-2009.¹² Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves hit a record high of US\$ 10.36 billion at the end of October 2009. As a result of encouraging growth enabled by the performances in the external sector, Bangladesh largely escaped any major retrenchment during this period.

'ONE-ELEVEN' REGIME OF 2007-2008

In the interim between the two ADRs, Bangladesh also experienced shocks of a political nature. The country has remained committed to democratic governance ever since its transition back to

parliamentary democracy in 1991. The transition has been achieved at considerable human and developmental costs as a result of a long period of popular struggle waged against the military rule. In early 2007, the question of democracy was again put to test and 11 days before the scheduled date of the parliamentary election, a military-backed caretaker government came to power on 11 January. The ensuing regime is widely known in the country as the regime of 'One-Eleven'.

There are two key lessons from the One-Eleven type initiatives in the arena of broad governance reforms. First, continued practice of democracy is the only viable political solution to the country's political and development problems whether in the short-run or in the long-run. Any involvement of the military as a potential reforming force to achieve better political governance—whether in the name of a new brand of democracy, an anti-corruption campaign, or reform politics—is likely to backfire in the future as well. While the role of the army has been accepted by the people as a source of strength to be drawn upon in case of development emergencies and for ensuring national security, their presence in politics is widely viewed with scepticism and distrust. Although the caretaker government that came to office in January 2007 was officially presented as a 'military backed' government it has been viewed widely as a military driven government with clear division of tasks between the civic-bureaucratic and military wings.¹³ For instance, routine civic-economic affairs were dealt with the technocrats while the institutional

¹⁰ Rahman M, Moazzem KG, Hossain SS, 'Global Financial Crisis and Bangladesh Economy: Implications for Employment and Labour Market', CPD Research Monograph 4, CPD, Dhaka, 2009.

¹¹ Government of Bangladesh, 'Bangladesh Economic Review 2010', Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, June 2010, p. 259.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 33 and 77.

¹³ Politics of the terms 'military-backed' versus 'military-driven' in describing the character of the caretaker government is also worth noting. The use of the term military-backed caretaker government to a large extent absolves the-then military leadership for the 'excesses' that occurred during the tenure of the caretaker government and passes the entire responsibility on the civilian part of the caretaker government. In contrast, the use of the term military-driven caretaker government holds the-then military leadership accountable for the and, by implication, condones the civilian administration of the caretaker government for such acts. Depending on how one perceives the power dynamics within the caretaker government that followed the political changes of January 2007, one opts for the preferred epithet. On this issue, see Islam N, 'The Army, UN Peacekeeping Mission and Democracy in Bangladesh', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2010, Vol. 45, No. 29, 2010, pp. 77-85.

governance reforms (including the agenda of political reforms) were, in practice, dealt with by the military. This did not lend credibility to these reforms in the eyes of the people. The political commitment of the people of Bangladesh to democracy—even when it is ‘weak’—needs to be recognized by all stakeholders (including the development partners) and seems a matter of non-negotiable first principle given the country’s argumentative civic culture and a long tradition of social and political movements based on liberal-democratic ideals. This is also consistent with the UN values that are upheld by organizations such as the UNDP.

Second, in tackling difficult aspects of governance there seems to be a rationale for relying on a gradual process of institution building through dialogue and understanding by taking the major political stakeholders into confidence. This has important implications for rethinking institutional reforms (including political, administrative and human rights reforms) in the future. Indeed, in many respects, they are as important now as they were before the advent of One-Eleven. The main challenge here is to consolidate the system of democratic governance respecting human rights while improving its performance in terms of development results.

POST-ELECTION NEW BEGINNINGS

The incumbent Awami League Government, which took office in January 2009, arrived with a strong popular mandate, securing more than two-third of the seats in the Parliament. It ran on the vision of transitioning Bangladesh to middle income status by 2021 and renewing the country’s commitment to achieving the MDGs by 2015. The new government also signalled a shift from the three-year Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) to a Five-Year Plan as a development strategy tool, which is a marked departure (even if symbolic) from the institutional approach

to planning pursued in the last decade. The new government also put stronger emphasis on having long-term planning perspectives as embodied in the exercise of the draft Perspective Plan. The successive governments in Bangladesh have displayed structural continuities on major economic policy issues, irrespective of the PRSP or Five-Year Plan, and the policies of the new government imply this will continue.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW CONTEXTS FOR THE ADR

Transition to middle income status as a political imperative underscores the need to pursue a strategy of accelerated growth with improved governance. The economy needs to raise the investment rate from the current low level of 24 percent to 32 percent at the end of the Sixth Five-Year Plan period in order to achieve the target of an average 8 percent growth annually for the next decade. This cannot be achieved by relying on the effectiveness of the old governance structures. Institutions of governance need to be modernized as a condition for the success of an accelerated growth strategy. A sustainable transition to the middle income status also requires a distributionally sensitive social protection strategy in the course of modernization and industrialization.¹⁴

Social protection is also needed because of the susceptibility of the Bangladesh economy to shocks. While the combination of various shocks did not prove disastrous to the country’s growth and MDG performance (the latest economic review shows that Bangladesh’s overall GDP growth performance is back on track, reaching 6 percent in 2009-2010), it is fair to acknowledge that growth opportunities were lost. Slippages in GDP growth and investment targets were due to both external economic circumstances and domestic factors. This points to the need for ensuring human security and social protection

¹⁴ The recent literature on history and policy shows the importance of social protection in England in making successful transition to the phase of industrialization as well as sustaining the process of industrialization through a variety measures such as the Poor Law.

against shocks—whether they are triggered by nature, global market forces, or adverse political developments—as an institutional condition for sustained progress in fighting poverty and improving human development.

2.2 DECENT PROGRESS IN GROWTH, POVERTY AND SOCIAL MDGS

New global and local contexts create new challenges and demand new ways of doing things. As a result, diverse economic, social and political themes emerged in the 2000s. Social protection, inclusive growth, challenges of climate change, responsive governance, tolerant political culture, and improved quality of political democracy are key themes in public debates on development in Bangladesh.¹⁵ Some of these are tractable through policies; others defy easy solutions and may require ‘creative destructions’. The positive economic and social gains of the past decade—despite imperfect political democracy and weak administrative governance—should not be discounted. What is durable, despite economic misfortunes, natural shocks, and political circumstances, is the theme of ascendancy and progress carried over from the 1990s. Sustained commitment to democracy, decent growth, impressive poverty reduction, and striking improvements in some key MDGs are some of the positive development results during 2000-2010. Several features are noteworthy.

First, there has been a further acceleration in overall growth in the 2000s notwithstanding recent shocks. The overall GDP growth was approximately 5.8 percent in 2000-2010—1 percent higher than in the 1990s. The three key drivers of growth performance were agriculture, ready-made garment exports, and overseas remittances. The 2009-2010 provisional growth rate estimate was 6 percent, and 2010-2011 is expected to be 6.7 percent.

Second, there has been a considerable structural transformation with the acceleration of the overall growth rate: while the share of agriculture dropped from 29.2 percent to 20.1 percent between 1990-1991 and 2009-2010, the share of industry (including construction) increased from 21.0 percent to 29.9 percent, with the service sector’s share remaining unchanged at around 50 percent. The openness index has increased from 17 percent in fiscal year 1991 to 33 percent in fiscal year 2001 and 43 percent in fiscal year 2009. Once an agrarian economy, Bangladesh has become increasingly integrated with the global economy through manufactured exports, overseas migration of workers, and as a site of micro-innovations led by its world-renowned social enterprises.

Third, the economy showed remarkable resilience in the face of global food crisis of 2007 and global financial crisis of 2008. The effects of these crises were not as adverse in the case of Bangladesh as in other developing countries. Despite some plummeting of export growth, the recovery was quick. In fact, the ready-made garment sector promises to display robust growth in the coming years based on the edge of low-wage competitiveness as China moves into the export of higher value added commodities and encourages a more domestic consumption driven growth strategy. Remittance earnings were expected to be affected by the global slow-down, but that recovery was also quick.

On the domestic front, the price shocks created new challenges for social protection but provided temporary incentives to the farm producers, as evidenced by the fast recovery of the agricultural sector. The latter was aided by a supporting public policy package that included input subsidies, greater access to credit, and support to farmers’ efforts to grow more crops in unfavourable environments through the spread of drought-resistant, flood-resistant and salinity-resistant crops. Non-crop

¹⁵ Any random sampling of the popular late-night TV talk shows, proliferating sub-editorials in the newspapers, and burgeoning reach of the Bangladeshi bloggers on politics and development would confirm this.

sector such as livestock, poultry and fisheries continued to display robust growth.

As a result of recovery and growth supported by prudent macroeconomic management (with fiscal deficit being maintained at 5.1 percent) the rate of overall inflation (12 month annual average) decreased from its peak at 9.9 percent in 2007-2008 to 6.5 percent in 2009-2010.

Fourth, as a result of strong performance in export growth and remittances, the national savings rate rose to 27 percent. The foreign exchange reserve rose to approximately US\$ 10 billion in 2009-2010, thus providing the policy space for growth financing.

Two key challenges are worth mentioning. The first key challenge is to increase the overall investment rate in the economy, which has remained relatively unchanged at 24 percent during the period between 2003-2004 and 2009-2010. The stagnation in the investment rate is partly due to changes in political regimes, market uncertainties, and lack of improvements in governance conditions. However, there have been some marked changes in the relative composition of the aggregate investment: in the early 1990s, the share of private investment in total investments was approximately 60 percent; this increased to 80 percent by 2009-2010. The second key challenge relates to the virtual stagnation in the overall domestic savings rate in the Bangladesh economy, which has hovered at approximately 20 percent for the last five years. The national savings rate (which is roughly equal to domestic savings rate plus remittance), increased during this period—from 25.4 percent in 2003-2004 to 29.6 percent in 2009-2010. More could have been done in raising the domestic savings rate during this period.

Given the persistent savings-investment gap since 2003-2004, there is considerable room for

improving the investment climate to boost investment and finance additional growth. Supporting measures to increase the investment rate include: a growth-supporting stance in monetary policies, especially ensuring enhanced credit supply for small to medium sized enterprises and agriculture, with due vigil against inflationary pressures; easing constraints on the physical infrastructures by addressing energy scarcities; ensuring adequate road maintenance funds; and developing new communication links both within and between the leading and lagging regions of the country (widely referred to as the 'East-West Divide').¹⁶

Reducing mega-city congestion, supporting medium cities, and fostering small townships can help tap agglomeration economies of large urban concentrations, such as Dhaka and Chittagong, and combine them with the development of small cities to absorb surplus labour from agriculture. Skill constraints also matter and will have increasing affect as the country moves towards its goal of attaining middle income status. Fostering competitiveness by raising the relatively low skill level of the country's labour force has been a neglected arena of economic policy. Improving the skill level of the labour force can lead to increased foreign direct investment inflows (an area where Bangladesh has lagged compared to its South East Asian neighbours), facilitate faster technology transfers, diversify the rather narrow export base, and give momentum to modern sector growth. Agriculture also needs to play a complementary role. Increasing labour productivity in agriculture will enhance its 'surplus-releasing' capacity while addressing the issue of macro food security. All these measures taken together would reduce underutilization of output capacity, develop new domestic markets, and trigger new investments.

Fifth, poverty dropped from 48.9 percent in

¹⁶ New communication links that can boost investment and growth involve fast-track travel routes within Dhaka city to reduce travel time and congestion; building multi-lane highways between Dhaka and Chittagong; construction of Padma bridge, forging growth-links with the lagging southern part of the country; creation of a functional port in Mongla in Khulna division; and building deep-sea ports. Many of these infrastructural initiatives are being actively considered by the present government.

2000 to 40 percent in 2005 as per the latest Household Income Expenditure Surveys. This represented a marked acceleration in the pace of poverty reduction—2 percentage points per year in the first half of the 2000s compared to 1 percentage point in the 1990s. The drop in the rate of extreme poverty appears to be higher compared to the rate of moderate poverty during the period between 1991 and 2005—a phenomenon consistent with other trends such as: the rise in real agricultural wages; tightening of the labour markets with declining under-employment and open unemployment in both rural and urban areas; an increase in the share of operated land under shared and fixed rental arrangements, providing enhanced land access to the poor via tenancy market; an increase in rural non-farm employment opportunities; a noticeable rise in rural-urban migration; and the rapid pace of urbanization. The extent of rural poverty appears to have increased between 2004 and 2007, mainly due to rising food inflation as a result of global food crisis (which also hurt the urban poor), but possibly has gone down again after the first shocks of crisis.¹⁷

Faster poverty reduction was brought about by the growth acceleration in the 2000s. However, the poverty-reducing growth process in 2000s was also accompanied by a disturbing trend of rising income inequality, which remains a challenge. Thus, as per the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data, in rural areas, the Gini index for income inequality increased from 39.3 percent in 2000 to 42.8 percent in 2005. While the 2010 Household Income and Expenditure Surveys evidence for rural areas is currently unavailable, the trend of rising inequality may have continued in the second half of the 2000s, as evidenced by a recently concluded large-scale nationally representative rural

survey carried out by the Institute of Microfinance, which puts the matched figure at 49.4 percent. Preliminary results of the Gini decomposition of per capita income by income sources suggest that non-farm self-employment income, remittance income from abroad, and salaried income are the key disequalizing sources of income—meaning that benefits from these sources went disproportionately in favour of the non-poor.

Spatial patterns also suggest uneven progress in fighting poverty across regions:

- The poverty headcount index for the Khulna division remained virtually unchanged during the period between 1995 and 2005, hovering at approximately 32 percent.
- In contrast, Dhaka and Chittagong divisions experienced rapid poverty reduction during this period: the poverty headcount in Dhaka decreased from 33 percent in 1995 to 20 percent in 2005; and in Chittagong division, it decreased from 32 percent in 1995 to 16 percent in 2005.
- Rajshahi division, with initial adverse poverty conditions, also recorded considerable drop in poverty during 2000-2005—from 42.7 percent to 34.5 percent.
- Sylhet division, with initial favourable poverty conditions, registered modest decline from 26.7 percent in 2000 to 20.8 percent in 2005.
- Poverty remained virtually unchanged in Barisal during the 2000-2005 spell, though it was still lower compared to the level prevailing in 1995-1996.¹⁷

The strong performance of the Dhaka and Chittagong divisions in reducing poverty are a sharp contrast to the performances in the

¹⁷ The rise in rural poverty head-count between 2004 and 2007 is based on the nationwide panel data from 62 villages. See: Hossain M, Bayes A, 'Rural Economy and Livelihoods: Insights from Bangladesh', AH Development Publishing House, Dhaka, 2009. The evidence on subsequent improvements is partially indicated by the subjective well-being data collected from another nationwide sample of the by the Programme for Research on Chronic Poverty in Bangladesh of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies recording a drop of about 6 percentage points during the period between 2005 and 2010.

¹⁷ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 'Household Income Expenditure Surveys 2005', and, 'Household Income Expenditure Surveys, 1995/96 Report.'

Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions. This indicates a highly uneven regional spread of economic and social opportunities.

Sixth, Bangladesh appears to be on course to meet the MDGs on infant and child mortality and has already achieved the social targets of gender parity in primary and secondary education. Recent evidence also suggests that the country is on track in meeting the goal of consumption poverty as well as maternal mortality. The maternal mortality ratio has decreased from 322 per 100,000 live births in 2001 to 194 per 100,000 live births in 2010.¹⁹

Seventh, the country has expanded its reach of social protection, now devoting approximately 2 percent to 3 percent of GDP to assisting the extreme poor. This funding is distributed across 50 safety net programmes—some targeted to the poorest areas—and driven by a heightened political awareness to address extreme and chronic poverty.

All of the progress over the past decade was achieved in the backdrop of a sustained commitment to political democracy punctuated by political shocks along with persistent weak governance. However, ‘staying the course’ is not the answer to country’s pressing development problems. Bangladesh’s development path demands innovative approaches. The country has one of the highest population densities in the world and is constantly exposed to ecological shocks such as flooding, storms, sea-level rise due to climate change, and endemic problems of river-erosion. In the past, these naturally occurring events have often acted as deterrents to long-term private investments. In this sense, Bangladesh defies standard best-practice policy solutions based on known models of growth and development.

High population density, combined with ecological vulnerability for a large section of the

population, makes the case for good governance even more compelling. Progress could have been faster, and more quality-driven outcomes could have been achieved, had there been commensurate improvements in the system of economic, administrative and political governance.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Notwithstanding past progress in growth, reducing poverty and social MDGs, several challenges persist. Some of these challenges are of a systemic nature unaddressed in the past, while others are new challenges that have emerged in the second half of the 2000s. The country’s current GDP growth rate of 6 percent falls short of the required average target growth of approximately 8 percent to be maintained in the coming decade. Increasing this rate is not an easy task if reviewed in light of past growth performance. The Bangladesh economy has experienced average GDP growth acceleration from 4 percent in the 1980s to 5 percent in the 1990s to 5.5 percent in the first half of the 2000s and to 5.8 percent in the second half of the 2000s. Raising the bar to a 10 year average of 6 percent seemed within reach, but could not be achieved in the 2000s. Clearly, raising it to 8 percent average for the next decade (as required to reach the status of a middle income country) would demand an extraordinary feat.

However, the issue is not just about the quantitative growth target to meet the transitional requirement to middle income status.²⁰ A whole set of economic and governance conditions need to be met first to sustain the country’s progress towards the middle income group. There are also risks of ‘development slippages’—situations whereby increasingly more effort would be needed to maintain sustainable growth—to realize the goals and targets articulated under the Vision

¹⁹ The conclusion regarding poverty trends being on track is implied by the unpublished preliminary results of Household Income Expenditure Surveys 2010 carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

²⁰ There is also the added anxiety that the goal of middle income status can shift over time since, unlike the purchasing power parity dollar poverty line, this is a relative concept based on the statistical ranking of countries in the global per capita gross national product table. If the progress is much higher in the existing lower middle income countries (that includes India and China), the goal can be statistically revised upward.

2021, as originally articulated in the Election Manifesto of the ruling party and reflected subsequently in the Sixth Five-Year Plan and Perspective Plans that are under preparation.

These challenges can be grouped into three categories: sustaining progress in economic and social trends; coping with risks and vulnerabilities; and exploiting global and regional trade and investment opportunities.

SUSTAINING PROGRESS IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRENDS

Consolidation of past successes in economic and social indicators is an important challenge. A broader analytical approach—that extends the human development framework further—of growth with rights to development needs to underpin this strategy. This can be seen on many fronts where there are risks of slowing down or slippages.

Economic conditions for growth need to improve. The GDP growth is still 2 percentage points lower than the required 8 percent average for 2010-2020 to reach middle income status. The next five-year period is crucial if this goal is to be achieved. Two key drivers of the planned growth acceleration under the draft Sixth Five-Year Plan are: labour-intensive exports based on low wage competitiveness, and growth in service sectors providing regular employment based on human capital. However, much will depend on the availability of infrastructure. Infrastructure, especially inadequate access to power, natural gas and water for industrial and commercial use, remains a constraint. Production of electricity in the public sector in Bangladesh in 2009 was approximately 4,300 megawatts per day, compared to the daily demand for approximately 7,000 megawatts, indicating the magnitude of the problem.

Social conditions for growth need to improve. Progress on curbing population growth needs to

be faster, as indicated by the stalling contraceptive prevalence rate in recent years. Creation of more and better jobs especially in non-agricultural sectors is important to sustain the momentum in poverty reduction. Growth dividends from educating an increasingly higher proportion of women need to be exploited by creating enabling conditions for higher female workforce participation backed by adequate remuneration, improved work status, and greater ‘voice’ in society. Food, health and nutritional security need to be a priority of the social policy agenda. Agriculture needs to grow at a decent rate to ensure the supply of adequate micronutrients combined with an emphasis on nutritional security by targeting the health of adolescent girls, mothers and children, especially in the child’s first 24 months.

Governance conditions for growth need to improve. Weak governance capacity poses problems for generating adequate internal revenues for financing MDGs and for eradicating extreme poverty. Financing of the expanding programmes of social safety nets and ladders is linked with higher state capacities to generate greater share of revenues at both central and local government levels. As mentioned, allocation for social protection has increased in recent years. However, access, leakage and impact of social protection vary considerably by programme and by poverty targeting status. Only preliminary steps have been made to raise the profile of local governments—rural and urban—in policy and development. Local governance needs to be further strengthened by stronger systems of public monitoring and inclusive community driven development (CDD). Holding of *Upazila*²¹ elections without election commensurate empowerment of the *Upazila Parishad*²² in the face of growing power of the national-level Members of Parliament meddling into areas that are the traditional subjects of local governments has already become a cause of standing concern. There is also the potential

²¹ *Upazila* means sub-district. There are 490 *Upazilas* in 64 *Zilas* (districts).

²² *Upazila Parishad* is a sub-district council.

risk of holding *Union Parishad*²³ elections along party lines leading to excessive politicization of the village economic and social lives.

Inequality conditions need to improve. Inequalities are of diverse order. They can be inter-personal such as between the rich and the poor, or between poor and ultra-poor. They can be spatial such as between advanced and lagging regions, between rural and urban areas, and between ecologically vulnerable (such as coastal and wetlands) and non-vulnerable areas. Bangladesh has witnessed sharp dichotomies on the inequality front in the recent decade. Sharply rising income inequality is a cause for concern. Regional inequality in the form of problems of the poorest and ecologically vulnerable areas needs to be addressed. Given the fast pace of urbanization, much stronger emphasis needs to be given to the problems of ‘urban primacy’ with consequences for congestion and diseconomies. Integration of the urban poor with the overall urban economy has implications for similar kinds of social policies for the rural poor. Further harnessing the strengths in the country’s microfinance institution (MFI) sector for mobilizing savings and investments for diverse clientele—ranging from small to medium sized enterprise financing (the missing middle group) to the extreme poor (the ultra-poor group)—is an important goal for the next decade.

COPING WITH RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES

Successive episodes of crises since 2000 underscore the need for thinking ahead of new crises. Disaster preparedness needs to be more firmly built in the system of economic governance. Development of adequate and preventive social protection systems in the face of sudden and unpredictable shocks such as macroeconomic risks (periodic slow-down in trade revenues and remittances) and domestic risks (natural disasters) is important for both sustained growth and

for mitigating the potential adverse effects of the shocks. It is also crucial to have a long-term plan for addressing risks posed by climate changes, especially for the coastal and wetland areas.

Inclusive and participatory development in settlements with marginalized population groups and ethnicities, such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and other tribal population groups, is necessary to address grievances and improve social cohesion, especially in the context of partial implementation of the CHT Treaty. Peace and development are synergistic and both are necessary for confidence building among the CHT communities. Peace without development of the marginalized communities is unsustainable; development without confidence building across communities will only bring about further inequalities and divisions and disrupt the CHT peace process.

The negative impact of weak democratic governance marked by corruption (political, bureaucratic and business), and the ‘winner takes it all’ attitude in political governance lapsing into long periods of political instability and chaos, can hardly be overemphasized—especially in the context of the One-Eleven and events that led to it. Unfortunately, early signs of political distrust among the major political parties are already visible. There has been a continued polarization in politics with the sharpening of intolerance between the ruling and the opposing political camps. This can lead to dysfunctionality of the political system again in the future and have a strong affect on the quality of human security and democratic governance.

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Globalization poses not only risks for growth, but also new opportunities. Three aspects are noteworthy. First, rising real wages in China—especially in the competing sector of ready-made garments—offers a new opportunity for growth in

²³ *Union Parishad* is a local council.

the ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh. Low wage competitiveness of ready-made garment exports from Bangladesh is already being seen in the upsurge in work orders redirected from China to Bangladesh during the last six months. The medium-term ready-made garment export outlook for the country appears encouraging.²⁴

Second, Bangladesh can benefit from a pragmatic stance that balances ‘look West’ and ‘look East’ policies, thus benefiting both from regional and sub-regional cooperation within the context of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and from the closer ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China. Third, Bangladesh can mobilize additional external resources to mitigate climate change risks and aspire to access more external funds for financing the MDGs. In both cases, domestic governance constraints need to be addressed first.

2.4 ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

The focus of the major development partners (including UNDP) is generally aligned with the country’s declared development objectives and planned goals, as articulated in the successive PRSPs and the Sixth Five-Year Plan that is currently underway. However, mere alignment is a necessary but not sufficient condition for enhanced aid effectiveness in the recipient’s country.

Four points are noteworthy. First, the disbursed official development assistance (ODA) as a proportion of Bangladesh’s GDP has dropped from 5.6 percent in 1990-1991 to 1.9 percent in 2008-2009. The amount of per capita ODA

disbursement has fallen from US\$ 15.75 to US\$ 12.01, while the relative share of grants decreased from 48 percent of ODA to 30 percent, during this period. However, the importance of ODA cannot be judged by the quantitative flows alone. Given that the ODA flows are generally associated with improved quality of projects, it has indirect influence on the governance quality of public spending.

Second, ODA for education and public administration has registered a sharp rise between 1999-2000 and 2000-2009: the share of education has increased from 8 percent to 13 percent and public administration has increased from 2 percent to 23 percent. This is in line with the changing emphasis of the Government of Bangladesh and the donors on improving human capital and administrative governance. However, the intrinsic worth of enhanced allocations for public administration needs to be examined closely given the modest improvements in administrative governance over the past two decades.²⁵ More importantly, other relevant MDG sectors did not move in a desired direction: allocations for health and population decreased from 10.3 percent to 9.8 percent, while agriculture declined from 6.1 to 3.6 percent with implications for food and nutritional security.²⁶

Third, there is the issue of further enhancing coordination among the donors—and not just between individual donors and the government. The link between the donors and civil society is also important in mobilizing support to scale-up development practices with proven track records. There is also the issue of learning from the past failures and pitfalls, which often mark innovative experimentations initiated by the donors. A recent evaluation paper on the

²⁴ This is supported by the recent encouraging trends in ready-made garment exports available from the Export Promotion Bureau.

²⁵ Successive annual governance reports of the Institute of Governance Studies of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee and the successive Transparency International Bangladesh reports have voiced concerns over the commensurate lack of improvements in administrative governance.

²⁶ Government of Bangladesh, ‘The Millennium Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report 2009’, General Economics Division, Planning Commission, undated, pp. 126-127.

Joint Strategic Framework of the four largest donors accounting for about 56 percent of total aid flows in Bangladesh—the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Japan—raised questions about aspects of aid coordination. The paper suggested that “progress following the significant contributions of the Joint Strategic Framework partners in 2005 was disappointing. Beyond the immediate context of development partner/government discourse there was little knowledge of the Joint Strategic Framework. Civil society and private sector informants were unaware of the Joint Strategic Framework and even amongst the four partners funding and policy dialogue with non-state actors was not significantly informed by it.”²⁷ The paper also voiced concern over the fact that “a larger group of development partners continues to engage each other and the GoB [the Government of Bangladesh] through the instrument of the Local

Consultative group” and not “pursue a common approach and framework jointly with GoB [the Government of Bangladesh]” as implied by a Joint Cooperation Strategy.

Fourth, aid effectiveness needs to be addressed in a straightforward manner in the context of the country’s weak economic governance. There is a rather weak system of monitoring and evaluation within and across donor agencies, even for projects that are supposedly scrutinized by them. Adequate resource provisioning needs to be made to enable retrospective and prospective (including randomized) evaluations. There is also a need for independent evaluations of donor-sponsored projects by reputed national and international civil society think-tanks for the major aid-funded projects, including the provision for periodic citizen report card based monitoring of the quality of services provided under the donor-sponsored projects.

²⁷ ‘Donor Coordination and Harmonisation in Bangladesh. A Joint Evaluation Paper’, 11 October 2009 (Final Draft), pp. 5-7.

CHAPTER 3

UNDP'S RESPONSE AND STRATEGIC POSITION

Bangladesh has a long history of partnership with the United Nations having joined the organization in September 1974. It has participated generously in UN peacekeeping and has made many other significant contributions including initiating the annual UN General Assembly resolution on a culture of peace, and as a founding member of both the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. UNDP began working in Bangladesh in 1973 and has been working since to support national development efforts.

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first describes the development of the ongoing country programme (the scope of this evaluation), how it evolved over time and examines management issues; the second assesses the strategic positioning of UNDP in Bangladesh.

3.1 THE UNDP COUNTRY PROGRAMME 2006-2011

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

In 2005 the UN Country Team established the UNDAF 2006-2010 (later extended to 2011) based on a comprehensive Common Country Assessment conducted in 2004. It brought the UN system together to respond to six national development priority areas set out in Table 1.

The development of both the Common Country Assessment and the UNDAF were based on a broad and comprehensive process of consultation. The priorities were based on the gaps and challenges highlighted in the first Bangladesh MDG Progress Report 2005, and in the Bangladesh PRSP 'Bangladesh: Unlocking

Table 1. National Priorities and UNDAF Outcomes, 2006-2010

National priority	UNDAF outcome
Democratic governance and human rights	The human rights of children, women, and vulnerable groups are progressively fulfilled within the foundations of strengthened democratic governance.
Health, nutrition and sustainable population	Survival and development rights of vulnerable groups are ensured within an environmentally sustainable framework.
Education and pro-poor growth	The most vulnerable groups have improved life conditions, skills, services, and decent job opportunities.
Social protection and disaster risk reduction	Human security is strengthened and vulnerability to social, economic and natural risks is reduced.
Gender equality and advancement of women	Societal changes are realized to reduce discriminatory practices and to pursue equity and empowerment for women and girls.
Prevention and protection against HIV/AIDS	Current low prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS is sustained through preventive measures and the needs of the affected and infected people are met.

Box 2. Sustainable Human Development in Bangladesh: Context and Challenges

1. Human poverty has declined over the past decade, yet rising inequalities in the dimensions of human development raises concerns about how to sustain the growth momentum of the last decade and how to prevent the reversal of the gains thus far achieved.
2. On the macro side, fuelled by uninterrupted economic growth during the last decade, Bangladesh has also been able to move away from being an aid-dependent economy to becoming a trade economy that is increasingly integrated into global markets. Sustaining this momentum depends on how well Bangladesh is able to support and strengthen the factors that contributed to the growth performance of the last decade (namely, growth in the non-tradable sector in the rural areas, export of manufactured goods and the rise in remittances from migrant labour), while managing and reversing the intense pressure on the environment and ecology generated by this growth spurt.
3. These tendencies are embedded in a deteriorating governance situation. The weak capacity of the public administrative system and corruption are compounded by an increasingly dysfunctional parliamentary system and escalating institutionalized political violence and *hartals*. This continues to pose significant difficulties for channelling resources to alleviate human poverty and sustain human development.

Table 2. Proposed Allocation of Resources by CPD Thematic Area, 2006-2011²⁸

	US\$ thousands			Percentage of total		
	Regular	Other	Total	Regular	Other	Total
Achieving the MDGs and reducing poverty	14,776	30,530	45,306	41%	39%	40%
Fostering democratic governance	8,677	19,571	28,248	24%	25%	25%
Energy and environment for sustainable development	6,323	13,308	19,631	18%	17%	17%
Crisis prevention and recovery	5,074	11,743	16,817	14%	15%	15%
Responding to HIV/AIDS	1,177	3,131	4,308	3%	4%	4%
Total	36,027	78,283	114,310	100%	100%	100%

Source: CPD Annex

the Potential—National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction’, finalized in October 2005.

UNDP developed its programme within the framework of the UNDAF linking its outcomes to those of the UNDAF. It was also influenced by the context analysed within the common country assessment but also took into account the specific human development context that was summarized by the ADR 2005 and set out in Box 2.

The six priority areas were detailed when UN organizations prepared their CPDs and CPAPs.

The UNDP CPD was approved by the UNDP Executive Board in June 2005 and a CPAP was then prepared and signed with the government in September 2006.²⁹ Below are the five key areas of intervention in which UNDP would contribute.

- Economic growth and poverty alleviation
- Democratic governance and human rights
- Reduction of social and economic vulnerability
- Sustainable environment and energy management
- Promoting gender equality and women’s advancement

²⁸ These figures were indicative in the executive board approved CPD but were revised during the preparation of the CPAP. The difference between the two is minimal and the proposed relative allocation of resources approximately the same.

²⁹ This is unusually late as a CPAP is usually prepared and approved in the period between approval of the CPD and the start of the new county programme.

Although the programme covers all of the main focus areas of UNDP, the CPD noted that issues of democratic governance would receive priority attention. However in terms of resource allocation, the area of achieving the MDGs and reducing poverty received the largest share of resources, representing 40 percent of the total as compared to 25 percent for the area of fostering democratic governance (Table 2). The proposed allocation to energy and the environment was 17 percent although the CPD notes that “interventions to improve environment can change people’s lives directly while linking with other sectors” and that this presents the opportunity to mainstream environment and energy considerations into other sectors.

EVOLUTION OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

UNDP programmes are not designed to be static but flexible to respond to emerging challenges,

changes in context and country demand. Therefore the country programme evolved since its design in late 2004/early 2005. The CPD and CPAP set out 13 and 12 outcomes respectively, but in 2008 a decision was made to reduce the number to nine (see Table 3). Country office staff stated that this was based on the need to remove some areas where no progress had been made and to adjust the programme to the new UNDP corporate strategic plan.

Annex 4 sets out the evolution of the outcomes. While the majority have remained the same, a number of key changes took place including the removal of the gender-specific outcome. Issues related to the UNDP strategy for promoting gender equality are further discussed in Chapter 4.

Most important, the implementation of the country programme covered a period of political uncertainty under successive caretaker governments (that lasted from 2006-2008). This led

Table 3. Programme Components and Outcomes
Economic growth and poverty alleviation
1. Enhanced national and local capacities to plan, monitor, report and evaluate the MDGs and related national development priorities, including within resource frameworks
2. Strengthened capacities of local governments and other stakeholders to foster participatory local development service delivery for the MDGs
Democratic governance and human rights
3. Electoral laws, processes and institutions strengthen inclusive participation and professional electoral administration
4. Legislatures, regional elected bodies and local assemblies have strengthened institutional capacity, enabling them to represent their constituents more effectively
5. Strengthened national, regional and local level capacity to mainstream human rights in government policies and institutions
6. Effective, responsive, accessible and fair justice systems promote the rule of law, including both formal and informal processes, with due consideration on the rights of the poor, women and vulnerable groups
Reduction of social and economic vulnerability
7. Strengthened national capacities, including the participation of women, to prevent, reduce, mitigate and cope with the impact of the systemic shocks from natural hazards
8. Post-crisis socio-economic infrastructure restored, economy revived and employment generated; crisis affected groups returned and reintegrated
Sustainable environment and energy management
9. Strengthened national capacities to mainstream environment and energy concerns into national development plans and implementation systems

Source: UNDP Country Office

to disruptions in UNDP work and consequently affected its development contribution. During the programme period, UNDP also had to respond to the key events described in Chapter 2 not envisaged when the programme was formulated. Three events were especially important and illustrate UNDP responsiveness:

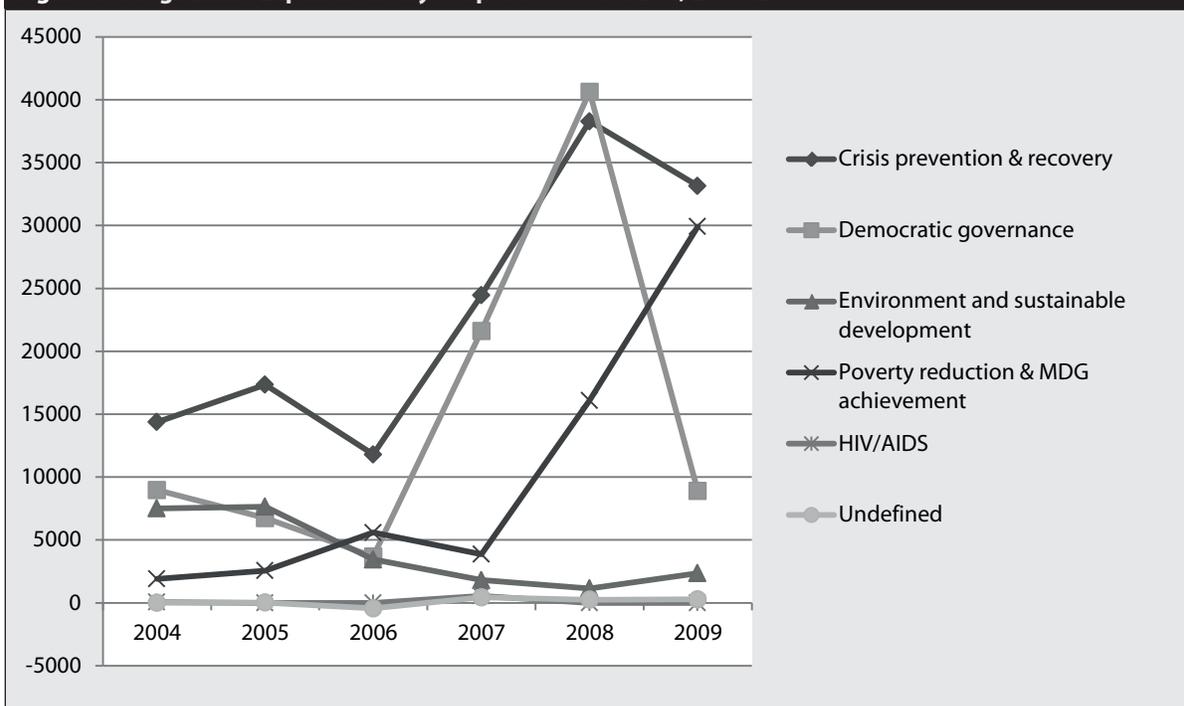
- Cyclone Sidr (November 2007): UNDP led the multi-agency UN team of 13 members representing UNDP, UNICEF, World Food Programme and World Health Organization to undertake an assessment of the damage caused by the cyclone. With total financial support of US\$ 30 million, UNDP focused on providing shelter, non-food assistance and early recovery support for the most vulnerable families in the hardest hit districts.
- National Parliamentary Elections (December 2008): Although UNDP had envisaged support to the election process and had ongoing projects with the Electoral Commission, it had to react quickly to the announcement of the election, the willingness of the authorities to undertake reform

and the willingness of donors to support a comprehensive set of interventions.

- Global food and financial crises (2007-2008): UNDP addressed these issues through its ongoing poverty reduction programmes such as REOPA by raising daily money wage rates from 70 taka to 100 taka under its safety net programme.

Expenditure patterns also changed over time as illustrated in Figure 1. The large increase and then decrease in democratic governance expenditures reflects the role played by UNDP in the 2008 elections. Equally, the major increase in crisis and disaster management expenditure can be explained by the response to Sidr. Expenditure on poverty related projects has increased rapidly while expenditure on the focus area of the environment has decreased steadily since 2004 and by 2009 environment expenditures represented only about 1 percent of total expenditures compared to 17 percent envisaged in the CPD.

Figure 1. Programme Expenditure by Corporate Focus Area, 2004-2009



PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

In line with the size of its programme, the UNDP Bangladesh country office is a large office with a total staff of 74, of which 14 are international.

Execution modalities

One of the key lessons used in the formulation of the CPD and CPAP was that “interventions have better prospects for impact, sustainability, and micro-macro linkages when delivery is channelled through existing government structures using clear and consistent procedures.” This was partly to be achieved through increased use of the national execution (NEX) modality.³⁰ The proportion of NEX projects increased from 60 percent of approved budgets in 2001 to 76 percent in 2004. Out of 32 ongoing projects, only two projects still use the direct execution (DEX) modality but these are major ones: the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF) and REOPA.

Results orientation and learning

The previous Bangladesh ADR noted that “strengthening UNDP’s contribution to development effectiveness is only possible if there is rigorous use of available evidence about what works and what fails.” UNDP has made efforts to strengthen its results orientation and established a dedicated Results and Resources Management Cluster in 2007. Coverage of evaluation has improved with three outcome evaluations completed during the implementation of the CPD together with project evaluations undertaken in accordance with the county office evaluation plan. In addition to evaluation, the office has undertaken a number of reviews and strategic assessments of its work.

3.2 UNDP STRATEGIC POSITION

RELEVANCE AND THE PROMOTION OF UN VALUES

The ADR focuses on UNDP strategic positioning in Bangladesh and on the challenges

that need to be addressed. Strategic positioning is about achieving the most impact on human development goals and priorities of the country with the limited organizational capacity and resources of UNDP. Hence, it is important to identify the niches so that synergies and interlinkages are maximized. Judging from this perspective and using the relevant evaluation criteria to make an initial assessment, it is clear that at an overall level, the UNDP programme is well positioned. In terms of the stated outcomes to which it will contribute, the programme is relevant to national development priorities, being deliberately aligned to national development strategies. However as noted, the period since the design of the ongoing country programme has seen political change and consequently a change in the priorities of the government. At the same time, it builds on its comparative strengths of neutrality and closeness to government in providing support to address difficult issues.

The UNDP programme clearly promotes UN values in its programming with a core component of support to addressing gender mainstreaming, supporting national efforts to promote human rights and emphasis on the MDGs. It targets much of its assistance to helping the poor and marginalized either directly or through relevant capacity development and policy support. For example, UNDP’s much acclaimed contribution to the 2008 election illustrates the potential strong areas of UNDP in Bangladesh.

First, UNDP played an active and visible role in advocating for a credible and timely election. The involvement of UNDP in the election process in a politically divisive society created public support for the election. UNDP’s unequivocal support for a timely election was helpful in neutralizing anti-election forces in a non-democratic regime.

Second, UNDP support for the electoral reform programme facilitated mobilization of resources from other development partners. Third, UNDP

³⁰ A national execution manual of simplified rules and procedures prepared in December 2004 is being used by the country office and national counterparts.

technical experts provided significant inputs in areas of information and communication technology (ICT), national ID cards, voter list, and delimitation of constituencies. Fourth, timely procurement of ICT equipment and election materials was a crucial factor in holding of smooth elections.

Finally, according to assessment of election officials, UNDP interventions in the electoral process was characterized by flexibility and quick response. A review of portfolio of programmes and projects in Bangladesh in Chapter 4 suggests that the potentialities of UNDP are best utilized when UNDP and government agencies act in union. The success is also contingent on inclusion of comparative strengths of UNDP in project design.

A second example relates to gender equality. Despite the strong visibility of women at the top political leadership positions, at the societal and political levels, Bangladesh remains a state strongly grounded in patriarchal principles. The notion of empowerment cannot be translated into power unless there is genuine democratization of values and system. The women's movement in Bangladesh has long anchored itself upon networking, regional and international conventions, and multilateral and international organizations. UNDP, with its strong mandate of gender parity and mainstreaming gender in all its programmes, provides women as well as marginalized communities with a strong tool to carry forward their cause of equality, justice and system transformation. This is important from the human rights perspective as well. The contribution of UNDP in the democratization of society through gender parity is worth noting.

PARTNERSHIPS

Government

The Government of Bangladesh is the key partner for UNDP and the two work closely together. The democratic election of a new government in late 2008 opened new opportunities for engagement and partnership.

As a trusted partner, UNDP has been able to advocate for change, but country office staff recognize that the organization's policy impact has been limited in comparison to the size of its programme. Efforts have been undertaken to address this issue through strengthening the Policy Support and Communications Cluster. The majority of UNDP work is downstream, although there are examples of good macro-micro linkages such as in the area of local governance.

UNDP has played an important role working with the government and other members of the international development community in strengthening the aid effectiveness agenda within the framework. It actively participated in the development of the Bangladesh Joint Cooperation Strategy (2010-2015) and heads a number of working groups within its framework.

Civil society and the private sector

UNDP worked closely with civil society across a number of its projects. For example, the Sustainable Environment Management Programme with 21 partner agencies within the government and civil society was the first programme in the history of Bangladesh in which so many government, private and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were involved to link environment with major development and poverty reduction strategies of Bangladesh (see Chapter 4). There are, however, fewer examples of partnership with the private sector in Bangladesh.

The UN system

Partnership with other UN organizations is important for UNDP. There are ten resident UN organizations and six non resident organizations with ongoing programmes in Bangladesh, that together with a variety of other UN organizations with *ad hoc* activities in the country, perform the United Nation's development and humanitarian work in Bangladesh. Although the UNDAF plays the key role in coordinated programming, in order to increase the coherence of its work, the UN Country Team in Bangladesh

adopted a strategy called ‘UN System Reform in Bangladesh—Energy, purpose, impact’ in October 2006. Originally conceived as a two-year strategy (2007-2008) but subsequently extended by a third year, the strategy committed the UN system to reforms in four broad areas:

- Toward one programme
- UN normative and analytical work
- Collaborative behaviours
- Common systems and premises

A review of the strategy undertaken in late 2009³¹ concluded that the UN system’s normative and analytical work in Bangladesh has been highly effective, leading to Bangladesh’s adoption of many international conventions and protocols. It noted that joint analysis led to greater UN coherence in a number of areas and that UN joint analytical work helped the General Economic Division of the Planning Commission prepare and publish regular MDG progress reports and institutionalize monitoring of the MDGs. It also highlighted the excellent UN collaboration in response to the enormous natural disasters in 2007 and in support for the 2008 parliamentary elections and the success in reducing Government of Bangladesh transaction costs through joint annual reviews of development results.

There is, nonetheless, a perception among some

key donors of a lack of coordination and missed opportunities for greater collaboration among members of the UN Country Team. UNDP does engage in a number of joint programmes with other members of the UN Country Team with mixed success. The challenges to greater collaboration through joint programmes may be attributed more to generic institutional problems than lack of willingness or capacity of UN organizations in Bangladesh to work together. A 2009 independent review of UN system joint programming in Bangladesh³² concluded that “there appears to be little value added in insisting that UN agency collaboration fit itself into a tight Joint Programme modality if that modality requires greater togetherness than UN agencies are ready for (due to different corporate business processes, HR rules, incentive systems, etc.).”

International development partners

UNDP works closely with international development partners in the government coordination frameworks already described and has been successful in mobilizing resources. Programme delivery increased from US\$ 34 million in 2005 to a height of US\$ 96 million in 2008 and US\$ 74 million in 2009 (Table 4). This is compared to an anticipated delivery of approximately US\$ 114 million for the five years of the 2006-2010 country programme. It has achieved this growth through significant resource mobilization,

Table 4. UNDP Bangladesh Programme Delivery, US\$ Thousands

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 (expected)	Total
Total delivery	32,848	34,310	24,064	52,178	96,379	74,651	75,000	389,430
Regular resources	19,813	16,248	11,397	16,737	8,622	14,268	16,500	103,585
Other resources	13,035	18,062	12,667	35,441	87,757	60,383	58,500	285,845
Regular resources	60%	47%	47%	32%	9%	19%	22%	27%
Other resources	40%	53%	53%	68%	91%	81%	78%	73%

Source: ATLAS (the UNDP enterprise resource management system) for years 2004-2009; 2010 numbers are based on UNDP country office estimates.

³¹ United Nations Country Team in Bangladesh, 'Review of UN System Reform Strategy in Bangladesh 2006-2009', Dhaka, December 2009.

³² Benbow-Ross C, 'Review and Analysis of Joint Programmes in Bangladesh', Dhaka, May 2009.

reaching a non-core to core ratio of more than 10:1 in 2008.

Although UNDP has developed partnerships with a wide range of international development organizations, the European Union and the United Kingdom (through DFID) together represent more than 80 percent of resources mobilized for years 2006 through 2009. Expenditures in two programme areas representing two large donor funded projects, namely the UPPR (US\$ 120 million) and the Development and Confidence Building in the CHTDF Project (US\$ 160 million) claimed most of the resources.

The importance of donors coming together to reduce transaction costs, increase national ownership, and increase efficiency and effectiveness

of support to the Government of Bangladesh deserves special emphasis. For example, in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation through the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme, the pooled funding of six donors help fulfil the Paris Principles, while demonstrating synergistic effects between donors to deliver results at community levels while being anchored in national policy and strategy under government ownership. Other examples included the Preparation of Electoral Roll with Photograph Project (nine donors for the successful elections), CHTDF, REOPA, UPPR, and Local Government Support Project - Learning and Innovative Component, which taken together, can qualify globally as 'good practice' from an aid effectiveness perspective.

CHAPTER 4

CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

This chapter is divided by the five themes of the UNDP country programme. Within these themes, the nine outcomes currently used by the country office for results based management (and listed in Chapter 2) are examined. Although not among these nine, gender equality and women's empowerment remains an important crosscutting element of UNDP work, so a tenth outcome related to gender³³ has been included in the analysis.

Within each outcome the specific context is provided (if not covered by Chapter 2) together with UNDP's strategy to support national efforts aimed at contribution to the outcome. The specific project interventions are then identified and an assessment is made by the evaluation criteria set out in Chapter 1. Finally, for each outcome factors were identified to explain the level of performance. The purpose of this section is not to list all outputs of all projects but rather to assess what contribution has been made to the agreed outcomes. Nonetheless, boxes highlighting the key outputs in a number of areas are included throughout the chapter.

4.1 ECONOMIC GROWTH AND POVERTY REDUCTION

OUTCOME 1: ENHANCED NATIONAL AND LOCAL CAPACITIES TO PLAN, MONITOR, REPORT AND EVALUATE THE MDGS AND RELATED NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES, INCLUDING WITHIN RESOURCE FRAMEWORKS

MDG targets form the core of the planning process in Bangladesh. This is true for the first PRSP that was done for the period of 2004-2007 titled

'Unlocking the Potential: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction' and for the second one done in 2008 (and revised in 2009) titled 'Steps Towards Change: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II'. The current process of preparing the Sixth Five-Year Plan also pays due attention to MDGs. The serious commitment of the successive governments of Bangladesh to MDGs has been reflected in the Medium Term Budget Framework and Annual Development Plan as the main resource channelling tools to attain MDG targets. The progress made on MDGs is noteworthy in this regard, as the country seems likely to reach several key MDG targets by 2015, including infant and child mortality, enrolment at primary (and secondary) level, gender equality in primary and secondary levels, and income-poverty and child nutrition. Proper monitoring of MDG attainment should also provide important feedback in the form of analysis of policy, assessment of policy impact, lessons learned and analysis of poverty dynamics and trends.

The other important aspect is to enhance the capacity for MDG monitoring. This requires, among other capacity-building needs, improved capacity for e-governance. E-governance has received renewed emphasis in the context of the current government's commitment to implement e-connectivity as embodied in the epithet of 'Digital Bangladesh'. ICTs, as a tool for e-governance, are necessary for ensuring government accountability, decentralization and providing effective service delivery. Additionally, bidirectional information flow between citizens and the government can provide the power of consensus building within a society.

³³ The outcome used comes from the results framework included in the CPAP 2006-2010.

UNDP strategy and project intervention

UNDP has emphasized supporting the MDG process in Bangladesh. It is a key player at the global level for the campaign on MDGs. Such support is consistent with UN values and norms. The MDGs also provide UNDP an effective entry-point to engage with the planning and governance process in Bangladesh, since it is a non-controversial route—MDG targets being widely seen as *sine qua non* for development.

To implement this strategy, UNDP works through supporting two main projects: (1) Support to Monitoring the Poverty Reduction Strategy and MDGs in Bangladesh (MDG Monitoring Project) initiated and implemented by the General Economics Division with support from UNDP for strengthening monitoring activity; and (2) the Assistance to Strengthening ICT for Strengthening Planning Division, External Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance, Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division through ICT (ASICT Project) carried out under the UNDP MDGs and Pro-Poor Development Cluster. ASICT supports three divisions: Planning, External Relations, and Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation.

The MDG Monitoring Project is broad and ambitious in scope. Its main components are: MDG needs assessment and costing analysis, MDG localization, capacity development, policy reform and development, institutionalization of MDG monitoring, and advocacy. The ASICT Project outlines four areas of support: strategic inter-connectivity among government institutions, network-based e-government applications, ICT capacity building and training of government officials and staff, and re-engineering business processes for more efficient functioning of the government. The upshot of all these efforts is reflected in the project's ultimate objective, which is "to create a more efficient and transparent governance system through strengthening and inter-connecting key policy making institutions of the country."

Assessment by criteria

The outcome objective is highly relevant, as the present system of planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluating MDGs and related national priorities on the part of the government is highly deficient.

The MDG needs assessment and costing exercise conducted under the MDG Monitoring Project influenced and informed the revised PRSP-II, which was finalized in 2010. Eight out of 18 background papers prepared for drafting the Sixth Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh were also prepared by the project. The strong MDG focus of the draft plan reflects the human development concerns by those background papers. At the national level, an MDG progress report based on an extensive assessment of MDG status and gaps was prepared by General Economic Division and the UN Country Team with support from the project. The report, for the first time, contains chapters on governance (Millennium Declaration) and partnership (MDG 8)—two of the cross-cutting drivers of MDGs. The gap assessment and progress analysis was directly informed by the DevInfo based data repository installed at the General Economic Division. At the subnational level, 41 *Upzillas*, for the first time in Bangladesh's history, developed MDG based local development plans and started implementing them. In the process of preparing the plans, 487 local level government officials were trained on MDGs, local level planning and project formulation. This is already an important contribution to the outcome.

But while both the projects have components that have been implemented well, other components have not received desired attention. The focus of the ASICT Project is illustrative in this regard. The project is narrowly focused on developing ICT capacity in three divisions (Planning, External Relations, and Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation), and—in that regard—it has been quite successful. However, the project did not always seek broader impact from its efforts, for example using ICT as an entry point to engage in issues such as non-ICT capacity. In

cases where it tried to do that—for instance developing a pilot Aid Management Information System to improve aid effectiveness at the External Relations Division and an online-development project submission and approval system—the results were promising. However, the main focus of the project is not on the wider planning process where the Finance Division plays a no less important role compared to the Planning Division in the development planning, resource mobilization and resource allocation process.

The effectiveness of the ASICT Project has been undermined by design. The project is characterized by a narrow focus on enhancing ICT systems and capacities, which implicitly assume lack of ICT has been the binding constraint. This is a simplistic assumption about the institutional governance process, as is the belief that efficiency and transparency will automatically increase once the new technology is adopted. A number of points are noteworthy in this respect.³⁴

First, the project did not include other important government agencies vital to the planning process, such as the Finance Division. The latter is implementing public financial management reform where application of ICT would have been critical. Second, the ASICT Project could easily be extended to look into broader system needs in the planning process, including the need for strengthening development planning, resource mobilization, allocation and monitoring.

Third, UNDP could use ASICT as an entry-point to strengthen its presence in aid coordination and extend its current support to the External Relations Division through a multi-donor funded programme to improve aid effectiveness and strengthen the Government of Bangladesh's aid management capacities. Some progress has already been achieved in this regard through the piloting of the Aid Management Information

System, but more could be done. In addition to the External Relations Division, the Planning Division and the Finance Division could be involved in training activities to increase the Government of Bangladesh's ability to align foreign aid with its development plan and domestic budget.

Identification of explanatory factors

In general, the contribution to the outcome objective—as implemented through the MDG Monitoring and the ASICT projects—has been diminished by lack of attention to strengthening the role of planning in the development process and by lack of adequate stress on institutional strengthening of the planning machinery. There are several reasons for this.

First, the emphasis of the intervention is to support the capacity of the Planning Commission to prepare annual MDG reports as well as help monitor the progress in MDGs. Effective traction at the policy level to influence actual progress on policies and institutional changes that could lead to faster improvements in MDGs has not been the prime focus of the intervention.

Second, it is difficult to see how the capacity building for MDG monitoring can be internalized without first building the economic governance capacity within the Planning Commission. PRSP or planning has been undertaken for the better part of the last two decades without having a well-functioning Planning Commission. The current UNDP intervention failed to change this. UNDP has missed the opportunity to engage national decision makers in a sustained policy dialogue on developing institutions of economic governance at the macro level, specifically, on rebuilding the Planning Commission in a way that is best suited to the era of globalization. The issue at stake goes beyond just the Planning

³⁴ The ADR team agrees with the main conclusions in this regard of the report, UNDP, 'Review of UNDP's Project Assistance to SICT for Strengthening Planning Division, the External Relations Division, IMED through ICT', prepared by Jorg Nadoll, September 2009.

Commission. Currently, virtually all the major institutions of economic governance suffer from weak internal capacity. While some initiatives have been undertaken to address these issues, they are slow in implementation and inadequate to the needs. The UNDP programme objective of MDG and related development priorities strengthening should thus focus broadly on rebuilding institutions of economic policy-making and governance in general.

Third, the evaluative database for development monitoring in general and MDG monitoring in particular in the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and in the relevant line ministries is still deficient. Without reliable and high-frequency data, MDG monitoring and evaluation cannot be meaningful. There is also the additional need for generating data at the subnational (district and *Upazila*) level and by poor and non-poor groups. This objective has only partly been addressed by the MDG localization component of the UNDP-supported MDG Monitoring Project. A disturbing trend has been observed in recent years: some of the routine surveys—beyond UNDP's mandate but very relevant to MDGs—which used to be carried out on a periodic basis have been discontinued. For instance, Child Nutrition Surveys used to be carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics on a subsample of the Household Income Expenditure Surveys and provided the basis for calculations of maternal and child nutritional indicators by poverty and other socio-economic status. As the external funding source for this survey was stopped, the Child Nutrition Surveys was not carried out in the 2010 Household Income and Expenditure Surveys. As a result, the Sixth Five-Year Plan and the Perspective Plan of the country will not be able to reflect the most recent state of nutritional MDGs and other relevant health indicators. The MDG strengthening component of the UNDP should thus take a holistic look to include clear data mapping through various surveys so as to provide an adequate evaluative basis for MDG monitoring and, if necessary, mobilize support for some data gathering exercises that may have been left out from the planning horizon

of the donors or national policymakers.

Fourth, one of the gaps in local-level planning in Bangladesh is the near absence of any data below the *Upazila* level. Even the poverty mapping exercise is done (for valid statistical reason) only up to the *Upazila* level. However, there is a large population concentration in each union (more than 35,000 on average). In order to address developmental needs at the union level, the system of administrative governance needs access to periodically updated information.

The MDG localization component of the MDG Monitoring Project supported by UNDP can play an important transformative role in this regard. It can encourage collection of key social and economic development data under the supervision of the local (*Upazila*) level officers—after all, there are more than 22 government departments at the *Upazila* level—with the support from the *Union Parishad* (including ward) members. The idea would be to generate the information base at the union or village level for the sake of local-level planning and MDG monitoring.

Fifth, MDG monitoring should not be executed through a public agency alone, given the weak capacity of the public monitoring agencies. There is also increasing politicization of MDGs in the context of political points scoring, which can lead to biased results and hence require cross-check. These issues can be partly addressed by encouraging MDG monitoring by civil society and think-tanks outside the direct influence of the ruling party.

Sixth, clearly one or two projects such as the ASICT and MDG Monitoring projects alone cannot achieve the key outcome of building “enhanced local and national capacities to plan, monitor, report and evaluate the MDGs and related national development priorities”, and nor are they expected to. Nonetheless, the key reasons for the under-performance relate to the institutional context within which a particular capacity-building project operates. In the case of Bangladesh, the emerging institutional context for effective planning, execution and monitoring

relates to factors such as poor administrative governance, lack of interest of the government to conduct relevant surveys in regular intervals, relative absence of trained planners and economic analysts in the apparatus of the Planning Commission, and the overarching absence of decentralization of planning.

OUTCOME 2: STRENGTHENED CAPACITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO FOSTER PARTICIPATORY LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY FOR THE MDGS

Context and UNDP strategy

The commitment to poverty reduction is fundamental to the UNDP mandate, which as lead UN development agency is supporting the Government of Bangladesh in developing, implementing and sustaining poverty reduction schemes in innovative and inclusive ways. In recent years, significant progress has been made in rural areas. However, rapidly growing urban centres present new development challenges as many people continue to live beyond the reach of basic services. UNDP, through its poverty reduction portfolio, works to empower vulnerable groups in rural and urban areas to achieve sustainable livelihoods. UNDP work involves supporting the government's pro-poor policy development and planning by opening up UNDP's global knowledge base to Bangladesh.

The two outcomes under the theme 'economic growth and poverty reduction' for the current ADR are complementary in nature. While the first outcome is focused on enhancing the effectiveness of the government's institutional capacity to plan, coordinate, finance, implement and monitor the MDG targets at the macro level, the second outcome looks at managing project outcomes on the ground for achieving MDG targets at the micro level. The second outcome was assessed through three stages: project choice, project relevance, and project effectiveness and sustainability. The contribution of the projects to realizing the overarching outcome objective and their implications

for future strategy were also analysed.

Interventions

Four projects supported by UNDP that relate to the overarching objective of influencing poverty reduction and social MDGs were considered. These are: REOPA, UPPR, CHTDF, and LGSP-LIC.

The main aim of REOPA is to reduce rural extreme poverty by targeting the poorest women. In the short-term, the project provides women with income support by involving them primarily in road maintenance activities; however this is not the prime benefit. In the medium-term, the aim is to augment women's resource base by fostering savings and encouraging supplementary investment activities that could help them reach a point where they can pursue livelihood pursuits on their own to gradually climb out of poverty. To aid this process the programme has a mandatory 30 percent savings programme for their daily wage of 100 taka for a period of two years (called a 'cycle') and provides training for income generating programmes that may be handy in their future livelihood pursuits. At the end of the two-year cycle, a typical REOPA beneficiary will accumulate approximately 22,000 taka to jump-start income generating activities.

The main aim of UPPR is to assist the urban poor and the extreme poor in partnership with local urban government (municipalities) throughout 30 townships and cities including Dhaka City Corporation. The project is focused on combating feminization of poverty with at least 50 percent of the intended beneficiaries being poor women residing in slums and low-income urban settlements. The key channel for helping the urban poor and the poorest operates through building community organizations (called community development centres or CDCs). The other key channel is to link these community-based organizations to public and NGO service providers. The project has two main components that focus on building community infrastructures (through a social infrastructure fund) and social development

programmes (through a social empowerment fund).

CHTDF has two objectives of building peace and promoting development in the post-conflict context in the three districts of the CHT, which is a home to the Paharis comprising of 11 indigenous groups and settler Bengalis. A CHT peace accord was signed in December 1997 bringing to an end two decades of insurgencies. As in other conflict contexts, the policy solution was sought through both confidence building through decentralization and community empowerment, and economic development of the lagging communities through enhanced access to service delivery and an improved investment climate. Out of a programme budget of US\$ 160.5 million, UNDP contributes US\$ 12.3 million; the rest is provided by the European Union (US\$ 65.3 million), Canadian International Development Agency (US\$ 14 million), Danish International Development Agency (US\$ 3.7 million) and AusAid (US\$ 0.3 million). UNDP was chosen for the role of implementer of CHTDF due to its widely perceived image of being neutral in a complicated post-conflict setting.

The main aim of LGSP-LIC is to develop the capacity of the local state, i.e. local governance capacity of *Union Parishad*, to deliver more and better local services in a participatory way. The key mechanism under LGSP is to provide performance grants to Union Parishad (7 lakh taka)³⁵ subject to certain eligibility criteria; the LIC provides supplementary block grants to those targeted *Union Parishads* that meet further eligibility criteria based on performance. In a typical *Union Parishad* in the Sirajganj district, the supplementary grant under LIC

would be 7 lakh taka, making the total grant amount received under LGSP-LIC 1.4 million taka per eligible *Union Parishad*. LGSP-LIC is working in six districts.³⁶ The five objectives of the programme are: increase financial resources made available to *Union Parishads*; develop improved public expenditure systems for *Union Parishads*; implement enhanced mechanisms for local accountability; establish more effective frameworks for capacity development; and implement policy development informed by lessons learned.³⁷

Each of the above interventions is reviewed in turn. The evidence is culled from secondary (project reports including published and unpublished project-level data) as well as primary findings based on small surveys, field visits, life-histories of beneficiaries, community-level focus group discussions, and interviews with central and field-level project officials, local government functionaries and key informants in the project areas.

Assessment by criteria

The key strategy and policy papers of the government—as reflected in the Interim PRSP, PRSP-I, PRSP-II and the draft Sixth Five-Year Plan—highlight the need for pro-poor growth and inclusive growth. In that context, it stresses the need for accelerating the rate of poverty reduction in general and decreasing the level of extreme poverty in particular. Other policy papers of the government also underscore the need for providing not only temporary safety nets—or more durable safety ladders—but also explicitly recognizes the role of building capacities of the poorest and the poor (individually or as a group) to graduate out of poverty through their own initiatives. In this context, REOPA is

³⁵ 1 million taka is equivalent to 10 lakh taka, where 1 US\$ is equal to 70 taka.

³⁶ LGSP and LIC are two distinct projects. LGSP owes its origin to Sirajganj Local Government Development Project, which started on a pilot basis in a few unions in 1998 and completed in 2006. By 2010, the idea of LGSP had been accepted by the government as a progressive move and is now being implemented with varying degree of progress in all the districts. UNDP with support from other donors had added a LIC component starting with 2008, which is currently implemented in six districts: Sirajganj, Habiganj, Narsingdi, Feni, Borguna and Satkhira.

³⁷ UNDP, 'Joint Programme Fact Sheet on Bangladesh LGSP-LIC', 2010.

an extremely relevant project since it targets the poorest women. So is UPPR, with its focus on the urban poor and poorest.

Government documents also highlight the need for inclusion of disadvantaged communities in the process of nation-building and development. In this context, CHTDF is clearly aligned with the plan objective. Similarly, local governance is one key pillar in the PRSP and in the draft Sixth Five-Year Plan, and is viewed as a key channel to ensure service delivery at the local level. Even when centrally driven agencies—such as the Local Government and Engineering Department and social welfare, rural development, education and health departments of the respective line ministries—are in charge of providing services to the rural populace, the functioning local government such as *Union Parishad* can play at least a supporting role in helping deliver these services. The *Union Parishad* can serve as a monitoring or facilitating agency at the local level for screening the beneficiaries of the centrally sponsored programmes, and in the case of capacity-enhanced context, its role can be broadened to a potential implementer.³⁸ In this regard, the LGSP-LIC Project is highly relevant. This is evidenced by the government's recent decision to introduce the performance grant based LGSP Project nationwide.

Some of these projects seem to have graduated from the pilot stage to a first generation model. In the case of UPPR (2008–2015), the idea started in 2000 in the form of the Local Partnership for Urban Poverty Alleviation Project (2000–2007) when the focus was almost exclusively on

building community infrastructure and less on the urban poorest. In the case of LGSP-LIC, the idea was initially tried in the form of a pilot project in Sirajganj from 2001 to 2007 before it took the form of LGSP in 2006 and the LIC component was added in six districts in 2008. Such transitions signal learning-based evolution of the initial project ideas—from being a pilot to being replicated on a wider scale, sometimes nationwide—and all clearly show the relevance of the projects

The main test for relevance is not whether a given project is consistent with the planned objective of the government, but how the project is perceived in the eyes of the people. From this perspective, it seems all the projects under review would be highly endorsed.³⁹

However, being highly relevant does not automatically establish the case for being highly effective. Nor does it ensure the sustainability of the project impact. For growth and poverty projects, this depends on three considerations: whether the projects have managed to reach the target groups (as defined by the project); whether the target groups benefited adequately from them; and whether the benefits (however defined) accruing to the target groups could have been enhanced under the current resource provisioning.⁴⁰

Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets - REOPA: REOPA was highly effective—and would be even higher if a few changes were made in the project design. This assessment is

³⁸ This may not always be the case in development practice. However there is little disagreement on the potential role of local governments in a capacity-enhanced context as a matter of good governance principle, which is what relevant here in judging the issue under consideration.

³⁹ For comprehensive assessment of this aspect of relevance for the projects under consideration. See: Sen B, Yunus M, 'Poverty and Vulnerability in Adverse Ecological Environments: Evidence from the Coastal Areas of Bangladesh', BIDS, Mimeo, 2010.

⁴⁰ These are difficult questions to address even with a carefully designed evaluative framework, which is beyond the scope of the present assessment. Here we rely on our analytical understanding of the nature of the projects that we subjected to repeated crosschecks with the local community through focus group discussions, by drawing a random sample of life-histories of the project beneficiaries, and by interviewing a diverse set of the key informants, including comparing the views of the project functionaries with those who are at a distance from the project by personally visiting the project areas. In addition, we used the field expertise and people skills of a small study team who were temporarily posted in a randomly selected project area for a period of one week..

based on eight considerations, comparing and contrasting the experience of former and current members of REOPA in the Narsingdi district.⁴¹

First, breaking the cycle of poverty one needs a big push; breaking the cycle of extreme poverty one needs an even bigger push. This is because those who experience the constant pressures of extreme poverty simulate the conditions of multiple equilibria and poverty traps.⁴² REOPA provides the right amount of support to break the traps of poverty—with 100 taka per day (70 taka as money wage and 30 taka as cash savings) for a two-year period, the aggregate monetary investment per beneficiary is approximately 72,000 taka (a little more than US\$ 1,000). Since 30 taka savings per day is received only at the end of the project cycle, each beneficiary has 22,000 taka initial capital to start up their business venture after a period of just two years. Since the focus of the project is to develop capacity for the future investment needed to graduate out of poverty, this built-in aspect of the program is a very clever idea. None of the other three projects reviewed under the ADR has this built-in advantage. In fact, none of the ultra-poor programmes practiced in rural or urban Bangladesh has this built-in feature of threshold-level investment-orientation.

Second, much depends on the entrepreneurial talent of the REOPA members to make use of the project savings of 22,000 taka. Focus group discussions conducted with the former members of REOPA, found that most of the members could put this money to productive and profitable use. In the case of current village conditions, three of the most profitable ventures for destitute women (provided they have capital) are: renting-in/mortgaging-in agricultural land; cattle, goat and poultry rearing; and petty trading. What was striking that the poor women were getting land

from households higher in their income status than the REOPA beneficiaries, indicating the route of reverse tenancy and/or mortgage as a key path of upward mobility of the extreme poor. Households who are in urgent need of cash to send their members abroad usually rent out (or mortgage out) land to the former REOPA members. Linking REOPA members with agriculture via the use of accumulated project savings may be singled out as one of the factors of success of REOPA.

Third, while the project savings component is the driver of REOPA's success in promoting graduation from the poorest economic group, the activities to enhance human capital already prepare members well for their eventual entrepreneurial role. This is borne by the experience of current REOPA members.

Fourth, the income generating activities component needs to be strengthened further, especially for REOPAs located in remote unions within a district. Focus group discussions revealed that REOPA investment activities were much less effective in remote unions.

Fifth, the project needs further changes in the design before it can be replicated nationwide. For example, some project components—such as Component 2 of the REOPA Project aiming at generating wage employment of the able-bodied female and male workers in earth construction works—could be left to other agencies outside the project. In addition, the maintenance work supported by REOPA (earth work) needs rethinking. The kind of road maintenance work needed to support year-round activities for the REOPA brigade is often in short supply. UNDP is already researching how to improve the quality of maintenance work and experimenting with jute geotextiles

⁴¹ Altogether, the evidence is culled from six focus group discussions—three for former REOPA members, and three for current REOPA members—done in two unions (one advanced and one remote) of Narsingdi. We also crosschecked the results with the results of the two life-histories—one on the former REOPA member, and the other on the current REOPA member.

⁴² On the elaboration of the poverty trap argument in Bangladesh, see Sen B, Hulme D, 'Chronic Poverty in Bangladesh: Tales of Ascent, Descent and Marginality and Persistence', BIDS and IDPM, University of Manchester, 2006

to check erosion and rehabilitating an earthen mound cyclone shelter. Initial results show that this is a feasible option. Roadside tree plantation (best done during monsoon season when other earth work is difficult) is another option.

Sixth, the project is currently aimed at people aged 18 to 45 years, with preference given to female widows and abandoned women. It is important to include women at least up to the age of 55 years, since vulnerability—for the same set of circumstances—is greater at the older age.

Seventh, the MFI link between REOPA and NGOs needs to be seen in a positive light beyond the immediate link with partner NGOs for income generating activities training. MFIs for REOPA members could be potential sources for financing their future investment needs much the same way one would view a prospective private sector entrepreneur who takes recourse to banks and financial institutions only when such capital-augmenting need arises. Some considerable number of the currently enrolled members of REOPA either previously have been, or subsequent to passing out from REOPA have become, members of the MFIs. This is not at all a problem for the REOPA programme from the targeting perspective, as MFIs have now developed a larger reach already and it may be difficult to avoid the inclusion of some of the MFI members in the REOPA membership in the subsequent project cycles.

Eighth, the REOPA experiment is against 'tokenism' in addressing the cause of the rural or urban poorest. On average, most income transfer programmes do not exceed three to four days of agricultural wage labour at the daily wage rate of 100-150 taka. The monthly primary educational stipend for kids coming from poor households is equivalent to one to two days of agricultural wage labour (this may partly explain the high dropout rate of primary school boys from the poorest households). These indicate an undeniable tokenism associated with the implementation of the conventional income transfer schemes for the poor and the poorest. Although REOPA requires a larger amount of resources, it provides a durable income and savings platform that enables people to escape poverty through intelligent livelihood efforts.

The main conclusion is that the REOPA Project, currently executed in only six districts of Bangladesh, merits further deepening (i.e., more coverage of the beneficiaries within each union) and replication (i.e., nationwide spread) to assist rural female poor in graduating from extreme poverty. It certainly produces much more durable results compared with various government-led transfer programmes available for the female destitute in rural areas.

Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction - UPPR: UPPR makes two claims. First, it highlights the role that it plays in building community

Box 3. Highlights of UNDP Contribution to Rural Poverty Reduction Through REOPA

- Two years of regular wage employment for 24,444 destitute women who are the breadwinners for their households, resulting in improved socio-economic conditions and household food security.
- 1.4 million work days created in 388 *Union Parishads* for about 103,000 poor labourers during agricultural lean seasons.
- Over 40,000 poor rural households benefitted from improved basic service delivery related to livestock, agriculture, livelihoods support, clean drinking water, and health and sanitation. Livelihood services enhanced for poor communities by establishing strong relationships with local service delivery offices
- 24,500 km of important earthen roads maintained year-round and over 1,500 public assets including embankments, irrigation canals, culverts, roads, markets, and school grounds rehabilitated, benefitting rural communities in 388 *Union Parishads*.
- Women appointed to chairperson positions in over 2,000 project committees at 388 *Union Parishads*.

infrastructures in the slums. Second, it stresses the gains in forming organizations of the poor in the urban slum areas as the institutional vehicle for fighting against poverty through endogenous initiatives: “the community-based mechanism has proved to be highly effective in promoting the kind of development local communities want.”⁴³ However, its effectiveness in contributing to the stated outcome is mixed.

First, the project’s implicit view that savings and loan activities of the CDC would be able to meet the entire credit need of the urban poor and the poorest is not very realistic. The statistic for Narayanganj UPPR—an area chosen because of the long period of project operation—shows that only a small proportion of UPPR members have been able to get access to credit from CDC; the amount of the loan received is also of relatively modest size. CDC savings funds are not enough to release the credit constraint to the income growth of the urban poor. A more explicit effort to link the CDC members to urban MFI activities would have been beneficial for both UPPR and partner MFIs. The dual membership of CDC and MFI is already happening in UPPR; focus group discussions revealed that approximately 25 percent to 35 percent of the female CDC members are already members of urban MFIs.

Second, one could argue that releasing the capital constraint to growth and poverty reduction is not the key objective of the UPPR; the goal is to create a viable organization of the urban poor and the poorest as a self-help group. Currently,

all UPPR CDCs are registered with the municipalities, so there is a legal basis for them at the local level. In addition, one federation representing 196 CDCs in Chittagong and five clusters representing 60 CDCs in five towns are registered with the government. UPPR CDCs are not, however, registered as independent bodies in the Ministry of Social Welfare where voluntary organizations are required to register. Without such registration these CDCs do not have any legal basis for applying for formal bank loans and initiate formal credit activities beyond what they are currently doing inside the CDC. However, this does not mean that their existence is “illegal” since they are after all recognized by municipalities as legitimate partner organizations, but only for the UPPR project activities. Once the project life is over and if they intend to stay and expand their savings/credit activities as independent community-grown NGOs then they would require registration with the Ministry of Social Welfare. And, if they need foreign grants, they would need to register with the NGO Bureau. It is therefore important to address strengthening the legal framework for the functioning of UPPR CDCs beyond the life of the project. National registration requires government commitment to provide tenure security, so CDC registration requires long term advocacy.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility - CHTDF: While CHTDF is assessed positively by its beneficiaries, the project runs several risks. First, the confidence building component of the project seems to be under-developed. Confidence

Box 4. Highlights of UNDP Contribution to Urban Poverty Reduction

- 2.3 million urban poor, especially women and children, benefitting from better living standards through local-level infrastructure, particularly improved water and sanitation.
- Over 200,000 urban poor mobilized into more than 1,200 CDCs that plan and implement community contracts worth over US\$14.6M
- More than 90 percent of all office bearer posts in community-led committees held by women.
- 256 CDCs formally registered as social development organizations with government District Social Service Departments; all CDCs are recognized and accredited with the municipality government.

⁴³ UNDP Newsroom, ‘In Bangladesh, Poverty Eradication Efforts Ripple Through Communities’, UPPR, July 2010.

building is a cross-cutting theme throughout the project and there is a specific confidence building component with activities that include organizing sports and cultural programs, involving all ethnic groups. Nonetheless, the project aspires to infuse developmentalism without adequately building cross-community (ethnicity) social interactions. This has been evidenced from focus group discussions with Bengali and Pahari communities residing in CHT areas as well as through interviews with local leaders. Even if this claim is exaggerated, it is crucial to address inter-ethnicity confidence building as a matter of policy priority, especially in the current difficult political economy and institutional contexts. A comprehensive survey of opinions sampled across ethnicities in CHT, done by a nationally credible agency, on issues that divide and unite the diverse ethnic communities is needed to seek solutions to building cross-cultural social capital and revitalizing inclusive development from below.

Second, the micro-grant component is rated positively by both Pahari and Bengali communities. However, in several instances the Para Development Committees (PDCs) broke down as there were misperceptions that the UNDP project may not be funded in the future, indicating an issue of sustainability.

Third, the micro-grant component needs to be strengthened. The current practice of providing a flat grant of 4 *lakh* taka per PDC—irrespective of the size of community—needs to be revised. The size of the micro-grant should vary according to the size of the community.

Fourth, one key objective of the project is to link the community with the service delivery. This has been a mixed experience. In both Pahari and Bengali communities in Khagrachari and Rangamati districts, the local PDCs were asked to rate the quality of service delivery. The responses are instructive: the public health agency got the worst rating, followed by the local government, while partner NGO and UNDP

project staff got decent ratings. This shows that the service delivery of government institutions in the CHT is in general weak and that, despite efforts, the linkages with service delivery agencies have not been enough to address the quality and reach of services. Organizations have limited capacity and the service delivery models used are often similar as practiced in the plain lands of Bangladesh, so not applicable to the CHT context. CHTDF is addressing this issue by designing and piloting models adjusted to the CHT, such as multi linguistic education learning materials for pre-primary and primary schools, system of Basic Community Health workers, mobile health clinics and farmer field schools.

Fifth, the project is supporting the institutions established by the Accord the CHTDF Project could have included a more explicit advocacy function . There is a great deal of scepticism about the future of the peace process in CHT, as the 1997 Peace Accord has not been implemented in letter or spirit. In fact, the Peace Accord implementation is not on the priority list of the current government, although it was once a signatory to it. The question of settlers looms large, especially in the context of changing demographics in CHT, which are evolving fast in favour of the Bengali settlers. To exacerbate the situation, the long-standing land question—giving the Paharis rights over their ancestral lands—has remained unresolved, and the recently constituted Land Commission seems to be taking steps that are widely perceived to be misdirected.⁴⁴

All these external circumstances adversely influence the effectiveness of the CHTDF Project. The UNDP project is seen as mediating between the state and the local inhabitants, but although it includes an advocacy component to argue for the speedy implementation of the Peace Accord in line with the fast changing reality on the ground, there are limitations on what can be achieved in light of the above context. This effects the sustainability prospects of the project and means the CHTDF Project (and UNDP) runs considerable

⁴⁴ This was evidenced by the recently held round-table dialogue organized by the leading Bengali Daily Prothom Alo on the CHT Treaty Implementation, where two members of the current ADR team participated.

Box 5: Highlights of UNDP Contribution to Reducing Poverty and Building Confidence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

- 625,000 direct beneficiaries in the CHT of more than 5,000 small scale income generating and livelihood training schemes worth US \$14 million, implemented by CHT development committees.
- Support to improved community health services in the CHT through 80 mobile satellite health clinics and a network of more than 800 community health workers, expanding basic health coverage to 860,000 people across 15 *Upazilas*
- Support to improved access to basic education through support to community-run School Management Committees for school building or renovation, the recruitment and training of new teachers, and development of multilingual mother tongue education methods and materials in seven local languages.

reputational risk in the context of aggravating local political context. What would be required is direct engagement in advocacy at the national level once the environment is conducive. This would require its engagements to be redefined from just a project based developmental approach to a greater advocacy based approach to facilitate the peaceful implementation of the 1997 Treaty in the changing CHT context.

Local Government Support Project - Learning and Innovation Component - LGSP-LIC: The LGSP-LIC Project is relevant given that it represents a serious and much awaited institutional attempt to address structural weaknesses in the system of local governance in rural areas that are claimed to be elitist (dominated by the traditional rural power structure), exclusionary (decision making is devoid of direct participation by the community), anti-developmental (corruption-prone and wasteful), and anti-poor (benefits are not only usurped by the non-poor but also often damaging to the interests of the poor) in both process and development outcomes.

The key emphasis under the project is to fix the key governance institutions that are supposed to oversee, coordinate, monitor, manage and deliver local services in rural areas. Strengthening the governance capacity of the *Union Parishad* is a necessary first step in realizing this goal. The project demonstrates that performance-based block

grant transfers can work. The *Union Parishads* can be incentivized to become more fiscally responsible to generate both their own revenues and be more accountable in their spending behaviour.

Union Parishads are by and large traditionally ranked low in terms of their taxing and spending powers as well as in respect of accountability to community. However this need not be the case. While some of these negative tendencies still persist in LGSP-LIC areas, counter examples have started to emerge. In Sirajganj—the site of our field investigation—there are 82 *Union Parishads*, 60 of which are enrolled under LGSP-LIC. Of these 60, 30 are rated as good performers (or ‘A category’, as one *Union Parishad* Chairman put it); 15 are moderate (B category); while the rest are bad performers.⁴⁵ Having 50 percent of members ranked as good performers is a very positive achievement, given the initial adverse perceptions and low expectations.

Performance might have been even better in a setting with more active political competition; however there has not been any election at the *Union Parishad* level since 2003. The project effectiveness is thus influenced by this external political factor as communities residing in bad performing *Union Parishads* did not have the chance to elect better representatives.

However, five problem areas need addressing.

⁴⁵ There appears to be a consensus on this, as the distribution of good and bad performers seem to hold ground through various interviews and cross-checks, including the admission of the project staff and the *Union Parishads* chairmen across political spectrum interviewed.

First, the block grants disbursed under LGSP-LIC are supposed to be open-ended in their potential use according to the preferences of the communities. However, the bulk of the schemes (approximately 70 percent of the total block grant) supported by LGSP-LIC were village-level infrastructure projects dominated by the construction of earthen roads and culverts. These were followed by projects aimed at removal of water-logging (which in some instances freed considerable land for cultivation purposes), construction of public latrines, education and other activities. One could argue that earthen roads and culverts facilitate movement of people and goods, and hence stimulate local growth and encourage employment creation and poverty reduction. However, this claim is yet to be established by evidence from UNDP's interventions in Bangladesh.

Second, Ward Development Committees have generally failed to become a durable social platform for discussing development problems facing the community beyond specific schemes. Focus group discussions showed that Ward Development Committees did not meet regularly after the initial meeting to select the community scheme. Ward Development Committees have not become a vehicle of CDD—a major gap in the LGSP-LIC. Thus, there appears to be ample space for the meeting grounds of local governance approach and CDD approach in the context of LGSP-LIC.

Third, the monitoring of LGSP-LIC is weak. There is only one UNDP staff (District Facilitator) supporting one Deputy Director of Local Government at the district level, which makes it virtually impossible to undertake regular visits to all the *Union Parishads* in a district, let alone monitor the pace of progress. The project design stipulates the support of a central government cooperative officer posted at the *Upazila* level who is also supposed to be undertaking regular visits at the *Union Parishad* and village level. The majority believe that this system is not working. Chairmen of a number of *Union Parishads* interviewed in

connection with this study opined that they would like to see a more functional system of project support at the *Upazila* level.

Fourth, focus group discussions with communities disclosed a strong interest in having a greater say over the overall allocation of resources that are made at the *Union Parishad* level over and beyond the boundary of LGSP-LIC. There is a need for frequent information exchanges between *Union Parishad* and the village community. Although the Ward Member (who is an elected representative to the *Union Parishad*) is supposed to hold quarterly meetings in the ward, this rarely takes place. The provision for open ward meetings on the burning issues of the community and linking the latter with various local level service providers can be addressed much more seriously in the context of LIC. LIC has begun to emphasize, at least on paper, ward and para level planning as a way of deepening community involvement, but progress is still at a rudimentary stage.

Fifth, one of the key criteria for success of LGSP-LIC lies in judging whether or not the revenue generation capacity of the *Union Parishads* has increased over time. So far, this has been unsatisfactory. Only a few *Union Parishads* in Sirajganj displayed some progress in mobilizing their own revenue. Of course, the electoral consideration was one of the factors of deterrence. However, we believe that the project did not adequately emphasize this, even under the LIC phase. Given the local growth momentum in various areas of Bangladesh, such revenue mobilization could have been an important sign of maturity of the project. With greater internal revenue mobilization, the *Union Parishads* could undertake additional anti-poverty programmes on their own to exert a more positive role in accelerating progress towards MDGs at the local level. Regular *Union Parishad* elections might create a more conducive demand-driven climate of political competition in supplying anti-poverty programmes as local public goods. This poses the biggest institutional challenge in the current phase of LGSP-LIC.

Box 6. Highlights of UNDP Contribution to Decentralization

- Support to reduction in political tensions across UZPs reduced through national dialogues, involving the Prime Minister and 22 Ministers, and training support for 1266 *Upazila* Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen
- More than 7000 development schemes that improve local infrastructure and access to services implemented in UPs across 6 districts involving over 4,500 participatory planning and more than 500 open budget sessions. The programme's benefits reach approximately 10 million people living in the six partner districts.
- Supplementary Block Grants for local infrastructure projects disbursed to a growing number of *Union Parishads* over four fiscal years (from 80 to 362 *Union Parishads*), worth US \$9 million, including 30 percent earmarked for schemes prioritized by women for women
- 12 Rules of *Upazila* covering budgeting, contracting and business processes to complement the *Upazila* Act 2009 drafted, 6 approved in 2010

Identification of explanatory factors

In the area of poverty and social MDGs, the key focus of the UNDP projects was to respond to the immediate needs of the poor and less so on developing sustainable linkages with the local government and partner NGOs beyond the life of the project. This is most starkly seen in the case of UPPR, where such linkages seem to be quite weak. Involvement of NGOs could have been an integral part of the LGSP-LIC as well. In the case of REOPA, a stronger link of the former beneficiaries with NGOs would have been helpful in further sustaining the graduation process beyond the project life.

In all the projects (except REOPA), one key feature was to develop the organizations of the poor.⁴⁶ This has been a recurrent theme in UPPR (with focus on CDC), CHTDF (with focus on PDC) and LGSP-LIC (with focus on Ward Development Committees). Such social mobilization and community empowerment works best if the community organizations created by the projects had a legal basis, by way of registration, and hence a more durable institutional structure as community-based organizations.

The value for money could have been greater for poverty reduction if the grant component of the UNDP projects was freed from the almost

exclusive orientation on building community infrastructure and the funding was put to use for financing the diversified development needs of the communities they serve. This is especially true of the LGSP-LIC grant, which has an almost exclusive focus on building earthen road and culvert schemes.

It is important to stress both developmental needs as well as social cohesion within and across communities. In the case of CHTDF, more emphasis was given to the promotion of micro-grant based income generating activities and less to building social cohesion across different ethnicities as a pre-condition for sustainable peace. The capacity building component of some of the UNDP projects is yet to produce tangible results. For instance, in the case of LGSP-LIC, while the spending ability of the *Union Parishad* has increased, the revenue generating ability has registered only modest growth during the entire decade of its operation. Part of the problem lies in the incentive structure, whereby greater taxing ability of the local government is possibly compromised by electoral considerations.

Some of the UNDP projects, in particular REOPA, represent genuine attempts to go beyond the conventional anti-poverty programmes marked by mere tokenism of income transfer. Although REOPA requires a larger

⁴⁶ Lack of systematic organization of the poor by the poor in the case of REOPA can be explained by the fact that the beneficiaries live in widely scattered areas, which makes such organization along the lines of UPPR, LGSP-LIC and CHTDF very difficult. REOPA beneficiaries are selected by categorical targeting and lottery, and not based on their proximity to each other.

amount of resources (US\$ 1,000), it provides a durable income and savings platform that enables women to escape poverty.

The issue of shock prevention to avoid income erosion needs to be given more attention in UNDP projects that focus mainly on income generation. One needs a range of other institutional conditions, including access to social protection against shocks (especially health), that can lead to downward mobility. The use of shock-prevention for the poor and the poorest needs to be addressed as a generic public policy issue where UNDP can carry out a much more pronounced advocacy role using the lessons from its interventions.

4.2 DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

OUTCOME 3: ELECTORAL LAWS, PROCESSES AND INSTITUTIONS STRENGTHEN INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION AND PROFESSIONAL ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION

Elections constitute an essential component of human rights. “The will of the people,” asserts the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, “shall be the basis of the authority of government, this will be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or equivalent free voting procedures.” Elections are the link between legitimacy of political governance and liberty of human beings. UNDP has, therefore, a vital stake in helping Bangladesh hold genuine elections. The litmus test of the ‘genuineness’ of an election is not, however, the success in declaring the winner according to the rules of the game but providing “loosing parties and candidates with incentives to remain

participants in the process.”⁴⁷ Electoral process breaks down whenever winners believe that they can perpetuate their rule through manipulation and the defeated parties lose hope of ever winning through the electoral process. Loss of trust in the genuineness of elections unleashes a vicious cycle of confrontation, violence and undemocratic activities.

Bangladesh has experienced 11 major democratic elections at national and local levels during last 135 years⁴⁸—the rest suffered from various degrees of manipulation. The electoral process in Bangladesh has been tainted. There have been several non-democratic spells of governance⁴⁹ that continue to haunt the nation. Successive Election Commissions have failed to protect their image as independent bodies. The popular fury against rigged elections culminated in a mass explosion in 1996, which forced the government to introduce the system of a caretaker government. For the first time in the history of democracy, the incapacity of the elected government to hold a free and fair election was acknowledged by the politicians themselves and a system of a non-elected caretaker government for running an impartial election was established. The Human Development Report 2000 described the caretaker government system in Bangladesh as “an important advance in new democracy.”⁵⁰ However, the practices of illiberal democracy were revived and expanded by myopic elected governments and subservient Election Commissions, so much so that even the caretaker government system was discredited in 2006. The country was again plunged into a spell of non-democratic governance.

UNDP strategy

During the recent crisis (2007-2008), UNDP played a very active advocacy role in restoring

⁴⁷ Cheema GS, ‘Building Democratic Institutions, Kumarian Press, Bloomfield CT’, 2005.

⁴⁸ 1885, 1919, 1935, 1946, 1950, 1973, 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2008. See: Rahman AT, ‘Bangladesh in the Mirror’, University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2006.

⁴⁹ 1958-71, 1975-81, 1982-89, and 2007-08.

⁵⁰ UNDP, ‘Human Development Report, 2000’, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, P. 65.

democracy and introducing electoral reforms. UNDP involvement in electoral reform in Bangladesh is not new. Since 1996, UNDP has been supporting the Bangladesh Election Commission in electoral reform through technical and financial assistance. The goals of UNDP involvement in the electoral process were spelled out in CPAP 2006–2010. The main justification for UNDP involvement is its political neutrality. UNDP will support the legal, policy and institutional framework. It envisaged support for making the electoral process free and fair and more inclusive of women and backward sections of the community. Democratic governance is also the number one priority of UNDAF in Bangladesh (2006–2010) and one of the four major areas of the UNDP mandate.

Interventions

UNDP electoral reform programmes in Bangladesh aimed at supporting the 2008 election consisted of the following.

- Support to Electoral Process Project at an estimated cost of US\$ 4.16 million
- Preparation of Electoral Rolls with Photographs at a cost of US\$ 78.7 million
- Transparent Ballot Boxes Project at a cost of US\$ 6.2 million
- Construction of Server Stations for the Electoral Database at a cost of US\$ 47.2 million

The Support to Electoral Process in Bangladesh Project was launched in 2005 in order to: strengthen the Election Commission technical capacity for greater operational transparency with improvements in the electoral framework and changes in the relevant laws, regulations, systems and procedures; develop the Election Commission's substantive capacities for oversight of election processes; strengthen the role of Election Training Institute in order to train polling officials, the electoral enquiry committee, party polling agents, election observers, and civic and voter education agents; and create mass awareness of the electoral and democratic

processes of the country by providing the voters with relevant information to allow them to vote effectively, with special emphasis on women, disadvantaged and other sections of the population who have not participated in elections to their fullest extent.

Originally conceived as a bridging mechanism for transition from UNDP's 1996–2005 election assistance process into a full-fledged project, Support to Electoral Process in Bangladesh commenced in 2005 with a modest allocation of US\$ 150,000. After a brief suspension in 2007, it was developed into a full-fledged five-year project with an allocation of US\$ 4.16 million. In the process of revision, the outcomes and outputs of the project were radically altered to take into account the changed political atmosphere. The project was used to support 2008 elections, along with three other UNDP election related projects: preparations of voter lists with ID Cards, an IT project, and the Translucent Ballot Box Project.

The Support to Electoral Process in Bangladesh Project was ingenious and flexible in responding to emerging needs in a changed political environment. It directly assisted the implementation of an ambitious roadmap of the Election Commission for holding a free and fair election on the basis of a new voter list and new rules within two years. However, the preoccupation of the project with the election emergency impeded UNDP's support for the institutional development of the Election Training Institute and of the Election Commission and its secretariat.

Preparation of an Electoral Roll with Photograph Project was launched in July 2007 under the aegis of the Bangladesh Election Commission in response to a heightened national demand for an accurate and authentic electoral roll before the Ninth Parliamentary Poll. The expected results were: a credible national electoral roll with photographs completed; central and country-wide technology infrastructure for updating the photo voter list established and maintained; and ICT skills and capacity development at the central and field levels. This project involves

nearly US\$ 80 million and was funded jointly by the Government of Bangladesh and development partners through a 'pool fund' mechanism coordinated by UNDP.

As part of a series of reforms in the electoral process, the use of transparent ballot boxes was included in the caretaker government's free, fair and transparent Ninth Parliamentary Election Pledge and roadmap. The Transparent Ballot Boxes Project was launched to help the Bangladesh Election Commission restore public confidence in the credibility of elections. The total estimated expenditure of the project was US\$ 6.05 million, of which US\$ 4.56 was earmarked for procuring ballot boxes and seals, and approximately US\$ 1.18 million was set aside for training and various contingencies. The project document was signed on 11 June 2008. Within three months of signing of the project document, ballot boxes started arriving and procurement was completed within another two months.

The Construction of Server Stations for Electoral Databases, valued at US\$ 30.8 million, was an attempt to decentralize voter registration and to facilitate citizens' access to the electoral process. It was designed to construct three to four rooms in all 481 *Upazilas* in Bangladesh to serve as *Upazila* Server Stations for the election database, as well as 16 *Thana* Server Stations in city corporations and 5 multi-storied regional server stations. These centres served as points of interaction between the Bangladesh Election Commission, the voting public and local representatives from stakeholder organizations, contributing to decentralizing the electoral process. These server stations are intended to eliminate the dependence on national and local government for storing computer data. They are also expected to serve as permanent offices for inclusion of new voters and updating the particulars of old voters, and for enquiries regarding voter registration and other election related activities.

Assessment by criteria

The parliamentary election in 2008 was a

watershed event. It assured a smooth transition from an extra-constitutional non-elected government to an elected democratic government through a process of free, fair and impartial election. As an impartial and non-political development partner, UNDP was required to play a vastly expanded role (at very short notice) in preparing an electoral role with photo ID for more than 80 million voters, assisting the Election Commission in amending rules and regulations, fair and acceptable delimitations of constituencies, procuring translucent ballot boxes, and establishing an electronic network in 505 *Upazilas* and stations concerned with the election. Through its advocacy and timely assistance, UNDP helped the Bangladesh Election Commission achieve its ambitious target of holding a credible election within the shortest possible time.

UNDP electoral reform projects in Bangladesh were highly relevant to national development priorities. They were also deeply rooted in UN values. Although the projects were implemented on an emergency basis, procurements were completed in time without any noticeable complaint. Compared to previous expenditure by the Election Commission for similar purposes, the projects also appeared to be reasonably efficient. The following achievements highlight the effectiveness of these projects: registration of more than 8 million voters with photo ID with a 99 percent inclusion and 98 percent accuracy rate of the voter list (according to an independent audit); the elimination of approximately 12 million duplicate and ghost voters; fresh delimitation of constituencies reflecting the demographic changes resulting from immigration; procurement of 2,40,000 translucent ballot boxes and other election materials in time; technical assistance for removing loopholes in election laws; political party registration requirement; and a free and fair election with 87 percent voter turnout.

A major spin-off of the electoral process was the national ID card. The electoral reform process with its IT network and the database with

photographs and finger prints of more than 50 percent of the population have demonstrated that the introduction of a universal national ID card is administratively feasible and financially viable.

The electoral reforms undertaken so far are likely to be sustainable if adequate resources for operation and maintenance are available. However, continued involvement of UNDP in the Construction of Server Stations for Electoral Database Project until 2012 will consolidate the gains of the project. The successful implementation of the UNDP supported Electoral Reform Programme is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for holding free, fair and impartial national elections in the future. The first generation reforms that were needed prior to introduction of electronic equipment have been completed. This will ensure the elimination of ghost voters from the voter list. Second generation reforms (such as detection of electoral frauds and irregularities by using computerized scrutiny and checking the consistency of various kinds of data) should be undertaken. UNDP may remain involved in this area by supporting a strong research and training centre for the Bangladesh Election Commission.

Identification of explanatory factors

Electoral reform is a sensitive area for bilateral donors. As UNDP enjoys the reputation of an impartial player in the development process, UNDP was invited by the Government of Bangladesh to participate in the electoral reform process. UNDP involvement with the election process in Bangladesh started in 1996 with the launching of Strengthening of Election Commission for Improvement in the Electoral Process. However, a major crisis erupted in 2006, when power was handed over to a caretaker government headed by the partisan president. The Election Commission was staffed by hand-picked personnel of the ruling party. The voter list prepared by the Election Commission was declared illegal by the Supreme Court. Two

successive caretaker governments appointed by the President failed to create an environment for a free and fair election. A third, army backed caretaker government took over on 11 January 2007 and assigned itself the task of cleaning up politics. The controversial Election Commission resigned and a new Election Commission took over, which prepared a roadmap for elections.

The new government and Election Commission sought the assistance of UNDP in implementing the roadmap. The time-frame of the roadmap was two years. The roadmap was ambitious by the standards of previous reforms in Bangladesh. Any minor slippage from the roadmap could have caused major dislocations to the election process. Derailment of elections would have been a major setback to timely restoration of democracy in Bangladesh.

The UNDP country office undertook a significant challenge by championing electoral reforms in Bangladesh. The success in holding a free, fair and impartial election in December 2008 represents a significant achievement of the Government of Bangladesh and the development partners. The 2009 evaluation of UNDP's electoral programmes concluded that "without the UNDP managed programme and the country office's efforts it is unlikely that national elections would have been held in 2008 or they would have met international standards for credible elections."⁵¹ Obviously, UNDP's role was critical. However, it would be unjust to minimize the roles of counterparts in the Election Commission and the Government. UNDP performance in the following areas merits special attention.

- *Advocacy and resource mobilization:* The UNDP mid-term evaluation of progress toward outcomes in governance mentions that "the CO [country office], in particular the UNDP Resident Representative played an active and visible role in advocating for credible and timely electoral processes and procedures and the institutional support for

⁵¹ UNDP Bangladesh, 'Electoral Reform Programme Evaluation Report', 2009.

the process.”⁵² Because of the esteem in which the UN system is held in Bangladesh, UNDP support to electoral reforms was useful in creating public support. UNDP support for a timely election also acted as a brake on anti-election forces in a non-democratic government. UNDP support for the electoral reform programme also facilitated mobilization of resources from other bilateral donors, and UNDP played a crucial role in coordinating the multi-donor funded programme.

- *Technical assistance for legislative and public reform:* UNDP provided very useful assistance at very short notice. Technical experts provided significant inputs in areas of ICT, national ID cards, voter list development, delimitation of constituencies, preparation of server station plans, and tender documents for ICT. In most of these areas, national expertise is limited. The chairman and members of the Elections Commission particularly lauded the services of the expert on constituency delimitation and acknowledged that without UNDP assistance they could not have redefined the boundaries of constituencies so successfully within such a short time. UNDP also provided useful inputs for amending laws related to political parties.
- *Procurement:* Another significant contribution of UNDP was timely procurement of ICT equipment and election materials. There are two reasons why timely procurement should be considered a major success. First, the whole electoral process could have been delayed if timely procurement did not take place; in fact, a similar ID card project undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh failed due to contract failures. Delay in procurement is often the main reason for time and cost overruns in most government projects. Second, the procurement for elections in Bangladesh was challenging even by

UN standards. Normally, the procurement in such nationally executed projects is done by the national authorities. Apprehensive of the procurement problems, the Bangladesh Election Commission requested UNDP undertake this work at very short notice.

- *Flexibility and responsiveness:* Election officials in Bangladesh praised UNDP for its flexibility and quick response to requests for assistance. Despite the involvement of the army in the decision-making and implementation process, UNDP succeeded in maintaining excellent working relationships with all.

However, the election in 2008 was an event, not a process. The focus should now shift to institution building. The major lesson of UNDP participation in the Electoral Reform Programme was summarized by the UNDP Bangladesh ERP [Electoral Reform Programme] Evaluation Report: “The success of the Electoral Reform Programme shows what can be accomplished when there is the convergence of national and international political will, support and commitment for a genuinely democratic system of elections.”⁵³ Unfortunately, in most cases such convergence of political will is lacking. It may, therefore, be difficult to replicate such programmes in the future.

OUTCOME 4: LEGISLATURES, REGIONAL ELECTED BODIES AND LOCAL ASSEMBLIES HAVE STRENGTHENED INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY, ENABLING THEM TO REPRESENT THEIR CONSTITUENCY MORE EFFECTIVELY

The greatest challenge confronting a democratic system in Bangladesh is to convert the responsible government into a representative government. In a responsible government, elections serve primarily to choose a government and only secondarily, if at all, to reflect the preferences

⁵² UNDP, ‘Final Report UNDP Mid-term Evaluation of Progress Towards Outcomes in Governance in Bangladesh’, Mimeo, Dhaka, 2009.

⁵³ UNDP Bangladesh, ‘Electoral Reform Programme Evaluation Report’, 2009, page 35.

or opinions of citizens. In contrast, elections in a representative government are viewed as instruments in the hands of the public to signal preferences to competing representatives and secondarily to fulfil the functions of choosing the executive.⁵⁴ The degree of representativeness of a government in a parliamentary democracy depends on the authority and capacity of the members of the Parliament to be in the cockpit of the state. However, the Presidential system which lasted from 1975 to 1991 in Bangladesh rendered the Parliament into a rubber stamp.⁵⁵ While ostensibly replacing the presidential form of government by a parliamentary form, the powers of the Chief Executive were kept intact by subtle constitutional amendments in 1991.

The state of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh is weak because of its structure. The Bangladesh Parliament has traditionally played a secondary role *vis-a-vis* the executive, which has dominated the Parliament and limited the development of effective oversight and scrutiny mechanisms. Furthermore, the Members of Parliament have very limited access to the necessary research and library services.

The need for support to strengthen Parliament remains essential for a number of reasons: the historic lack of using and developing Parliament's effective scrutiny and accountability mechanisms particularly by the opposition; the need to develop opportunities for multi-party dialogue; the lack of an independent, strong and well resourced and capable secretariat for the Parliament; and the pre-dominance of newcomers in the Ninth Parliament elected in December 2008.

UNDP strategy

Representative democracy is not merely a political right; it plays a vital role in protecting the economic and human rights of weaker sections

of the community. The first national priority of the UNDAF in Bangladesh, 2006-2010 (later extended to 2011) is democratic governance and human rights. The expected UNDAF outcome is the progressive fulfilment of human rights of women, children and vulnerable groups within the foundations of strengthened democratic governance. The UNDAF also stipulated that "the legislative and representative capacities of the Parliament will be strengthened and parliamentary committees will be supported to enable them to perform credible oversight functions in an unbiased and non-partisan atmosphere."⁵⁶

The objectives for strengthening Parliament were spelled out in the CPAP 2006-2010. The main outcomes are: improvement of Parliament's legislative capacity, oversight functions and democratic practices through revision of rules of procedure, orientation of Members of Parliament, staff training, and improved research and logistic support; reform of the Parliamentary Committee System and establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Analysis Unit; examining and ensuring resource flows to the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the budget process and PRSP; establishment of Parliamentary caucuses on women and children; digitization of and access to important documents at the Legislative Information Centre; generation of informed dialogue among policy makers, civil society organizations (CSOs) and local government with special attention to MDGs and gender mainstreaming; and support to establishment of an Institute of Parliamentary Studies.

Similar emphasis on Parliamentary reform was given in 'Parliament in Steps Towards Change: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II'.⁵⁷ It stipulated that "the Parliament would hold the government accountable through

⁵⁴ Mueller DC, 'Public Choice-II', Cambridge University Press, New York, 1990.

⁵⁵ Rahman AT, 'Bangladesh in the Mirror', University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2006.

⁵⁶ UNDAF in Bangladesh, 2006-2010 (later extended to 2011).

⁵⁷ 'Parliament in Steps Towards Change: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II', revised.

legislative debates, articulating citizen's feedback and strengthening democratic institutions including the media." Thus strengthening the Parliament is one of the major priorities of both UNDP and the Government of Bangladesh.

Interventions

The Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy Project, a UNDP-Bangladesh Parliament joint endeavour to institutionalize parliamentary democracy in general, and strengthen the Parliament in particular, was initiated in 1997. It has identified gaps and weaknesses in the system and recommended steps to overcome them. Building on the experience and the lessons learnt from the Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy Project (1997 to 2007), a Preparatory Assistance Project (2009-2010) was designed to provide immediate technical support to the newly elected Members of Parliament and the Secretariat, and to use the immediate post-election phase to conduct stakeholder and situation analyses in order to design a multi-year technical assistance programme for Parliament that commenced in early 2010 and planned to finish in 2014.

According to the project document, the main justifications for launching a new programme—despite the fact that more than a decade of reforms have produced few results—are: improvement and development of Parliament's scrutiny and accountability mechanism; development of opportunities for multi-party dialogue; increased independence and professionalism of the Parliament Secretariat; improved performance of new comers in the Ninth Parliament; greater engagement by the Parliament with the public through the operations of Standing Committee; and digitization of parliamentary records, reports, bills and acts.

Before evaluating the project, some features of project design should be understood. First, there are major constitutional and structural limitations of Parliament that can impact the project. Though most of the project outputs are sensible, they may not be implemented fully without the continued political commitments

at the highest level. Without this commitment, building drafting capacity in the Parliament Secretariat may not be fully realized. How will the committee influence policies regarding public expenditure when they are barred by Rules of Procedure to discuss the budget? International treaties, according to the Government of Bangladesh, fall in the domain of the Executive. Has the government agreed to provide the relevant facts to the Parliament? The government has already decided that the ministers and members of parliament will not be required to disclose their assets annually. This makes the project output on asset statement redundant. UNDP has been discussing the independence of Parliament Secretariat during the last thirteen years. Is there any agreed definition of the independence of the Parliament Secretariat? Will town hall meetings be held if a major political party boycotts it? On most of the issues clear understanding with the government and major political parties is needed. There are reasons to suspect that many of the proposed reforms may turn out to be political orphans and are likely to remain unimplemented.

Second, the project is not fully consistent with CPAP 2006-2010. CPAP envisions enhancing capacities in examining and ensuring resource flows to the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the context of the budgetary process and the National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction. No such measure is possible without revision of rules of procedure. The CPAP stipulates that "CSOs and local government representatives on issues of responsive governance by specifically integrating the MDG as a major priority concern in legislation, including the creation of a mechanism to oversee MDG related issues and progress towards MDGs." This concern was not reflected in the project document.

Assessment by criteria

Strengthening Parliament is highly relevant in the national development agenda of Bangladesh. It also promotes UN values of democratic governance. However, the national ownership of this goal is weak because the precise nature of reform has not been clearly delineated. The

UNDP approach, based on international best practices, ignores the constitutional and political economy realities in Bangladesh. Within the country, there is no real champion of parliamentary reform.

The project is efficient in the sense that there are no major complaints in audit or media reports for wastage of financial resources. However, while recognizing that UNDP does not contribute to the outcome alone, there is nonetheless potential for overlap in the activities of UNDP, the United States Agency for International Development (Progati project) and the World Bank (Project on Public Accounts Committee).

Despite some initial steps—like establishing a standing committee on ministries, sharing the chairs of committees with opposition parties, timely appointment of standing committees, a few parliamentary hearings on vital national issues and strengthening the security system in the Parliamentary building—legislative and oversight activities continue to be ‘business as usual’. There are, however, complaints of conflict of interests in the standing committees, poor implementation of recommendations and disowning some of the activities by the Chief Executive.

The greatest weakness of the Bangladesh Parliament is its total subjugation in budgetary issues to the Executive. Although Standing Committees on Ministries in the United Kingdom, India and Canada hold regular hearings on the budget of ministries, rules of procedure in Bangladesh bars the Standing Committee from holding such hearings. Given the overwhelming power of the Executive in financial affairs, the Parliament can hardly play any meaningful role in attaining the project objective of progressive realization of human rights of women, children and vulnerable groups.

Finally, UNDP’s involvement in Parliamentary

reform started in 1997 and is expected to continue up to 2014 (with interruption of about two years during 2007-08). With a view to discouraging dependence on external resources, it is essential to redefine the feasible goals and to integrate the project outputs into normal activities in the Parliament as early as possible.

Another major gap is the absence of an effective forum for a meaningful dialogue between the Parliament, CSOs and vulnerable groups. It is feasible to establish such a forum by amending Rules of Procedure of the Parliament and Secretariat Instructions.⁵⁸ However, it is unclear if there is a champion of such reform. It is obvious from the last 13 years that the goals of the project for improving parliamentary governance may not be fully achieved by 2014.

There are three major preconditions for the sustainability of this project. First, the Constitution should be amended to curtail the unlimited powers of the Executive and to enhance the power of the legislature. It is unlikely that the Executive will cede its own powers. As a result, the authority of the Parliament will continue to be fragile. Second, there must be change of heart in the Executive toward parliamentary reforms. Identifying champions of reform is a challenge, which implies that the reforms implemented so far could be reversed. Finally, the divisive and hostile political environment poses serious challenges to the sustainability of reforms.

Against this backdrop, UNDP may pursue a two-pronged strategy. First, UNDP should implement a feasible exit strategy that would protect already implemented reforms. No project should be allowed to continue indefinitely, and although support to Parliament is necessary, an exit strategy is needed for infusing a sense of direction in the project and for reminding the stakeholders the imperative for ensuring value for money. Second, UNDP should continue with a

⁵⁸ Khan AA, ‘Friendly Fire, Humpty Dumpty Disorder and Other Essays: Reflections on Economy and Governance in Bangladesh’, University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2010.

suitable advocacy programme so that issues of an effective Parliament are kept alive.

Identification of explanatory factors

There are two schools of opinion on the overall impact of parliamentary reforms. According to one school, there was significant success in parliamentary reforms in Bangladesh.⁵⁹ The achievements cited include: establishment of a Standing Committee on each ministry; Standing Committees were convened within 10 days of the opening of the Ninth Parliament; no minister chairs the committees; opposition parties chair 7 out of Parliament's 48 committees; committees are beginning to challenge the ministries' expenditures and activities⁶⁰; and a number of vital issues have been raised by the Standing Committees.

The UNDP mid-term evaluation of progress towards outcomes in governance listed two outcomes of the Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy Project as successes: Parliamentary Committees and orientation training for newly elected Members of Parliament. However, major concerns have been raised in the newspapers about the effectiveness of Standing Committees and the role of Members of Parliament, including the following:

- *Conflicts of interest.* There are widespread allegations of conflicts of interests.⁶¹ Newspapers report that many Members of Parliament are misusing their positions to further their interests. Some have direct business interests in the activities of the ministries. Furthermore, the ministries are required to organize study tour abroad for such committees.
- *Lack of interest of Members of Parliament in legislative functions.* In the first 20 months,

Parliament approved 113 bills; 40 bills were passed in less than 5 minutes. Apart from the absence of a major opposition party, indifference of lawmakers to legislative functions contributed to the lack of legislative scrutiny.

- *Poor performance of Standing Committees.* In most cases, hearings do not culminate in specific recommendations. From a case study of the Committee on Estimates in the Eighth Parliament, it was found that only 18 recommendations were made, of which 11 dealt with small administrative matters such as release of funds and creation of posts. Only three related to policy recommendations and only four related to financial recommendations. It is, therefore, not surprising that most of the recommendations of Standing Committees remain unimplemented.

Supporters of the project maintain that the Parliament is undergoing a learning process and initial mistakes will be rectified over time. However, critics maintain that no initiative for reform is coming from within the Parliament and the project is making the Parliament dependent.

While the sustainability of the fragile and marginal reforms described above could be debated, the weaknesses of the project are glaring in regards to poor women, children and vulnerable groups. The CPAP envisaged the following two direct interventions for the progressive realization of human rights of women, children and vulnerable groups: "(1) examining and ensuring resource flows to the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the budget process and PRSP and (2) generation of informed dialogue among policy makers, CSOs and local government."⁶² Most of the CSOs in Bangladesh want these goals to be achieved. Specifically, the Unnayan

⁵⁹ Nizam A, Obiiaullah ATM, (editor), 'The Working of Parliamentary Committees in Westminster System', University Press Ltd, Dhaka, 2007; Rahman T, 'Parliamentary Control and Government Accountability in South Asia', Routledge, London and New York, 2008.

⁶⁰ According to the UNDP Evaluation report on governance, over 90 percent of Standing Committee challenges focused on the past government and not present government.

⁶¹ *Prothom Alo*, 1 August 2010.

⁶² CPAP 2006-11.

Samunnay and Manusher Jonno Foundation circulated specific proposals that could be implemented without any change in the Constitution and laws for giving adequate opportunities for meaningful participation of the stakeholders in the budget process.⁶³

OUTCOME 5: STRENGTHENED NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL CAPACITY TO MAINSTREAM HUMAN RIGHTS IN GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS

A recent Human Development Report has observed that “the history of human rights is the history of human struggles.”⁶⁴ Seldom has a nation struggled so hard to secure human rights as Bangladesh. The bitter experience of blatant violations of human rights in the past was reflected in the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. Of 153 articles in the Constitution, 38 relate directly and indirectly to human rights. Bangladesh is also a signatory to all major international human rights agreements.

Despite this commitment to human rights, Bangladesh today is “weighed down by a significant level of human insecurity... [with] disturbing crime situation, troubling shortcomings of much legislation, the law enforcement operations, the court system and the prisons.”⁶⁵ The government failure in human rights in Bangladesh can be categorized as failures of omission and failures of commission. The failures of omission relate to the incapacity of the State to enforce the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The failures of omission refer to legal gaps and implementation gaps.

The legal gaps arise from the fact that “for most people living in poverty, the law is not often a liberating force but a means of oppression that perpetuates their deprivation, exclusion, insecurity and voicelessness.” Many poor people regard the law as something to be avoided.⁶⁶ The UNDP Report on Human Security in Bangladesh lists the following legal gaps: repressive laws like The Special Powers Act of 1974; anti-poor bias in the bail system; sweeping power for arrests without warrant; a legal system that discriminates against victims of rape and sexual violence; extra legal confinement of women and children in the name of safe custody; and discrimination in laws relating to dispossession of immovable property, public nuisance and vagrancy against the poor.⁶⁷ Implementation gaps arise from lack of capacity of law enforcing agencies and courts, lack of resources and deep distrust in law enforcement agencies.

State agencies entrusted with the enforcement of human rights themselves violate human rights. These may be classified as failures of commission. Serious abuses by the state machinery include extra-judicial killings, custodial death, arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, harassment of journalists and politically-motivated violence.⁶⁸ Such wrongdoings by law enforcing agencies undermine the rule of law in the country.

UNDP Strategy and Interventions

Against this dismal background, UNDP in its 2006-2010 country programme took the initiative to promote human security and protect human rights in Bangladesh. Emphasis was placed upon reforming the police and strengthening the National Human Rights Commission

⁶³ Khan AA, ‘Friendly Fire, Humpty Dumpty Disorder and Other Essays: Reflections on Economy and Governance in Bangladesh’, University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2010; Khan AA, ‘People’s Participation in Budgetary Process in Bangladesh’, Shamunnay, Dhaka, 2008.

⁶⁴ UNDP, ‘Human Development Report, 2002’, Oxford University Press, New York, 2002.

⁶⁵ In the words of the 2002 UNDP National Human Development report.

⁶⁶ Khan I, ‘The Unheard Truth: Poverty and Human Rights’, VIVA Books, New Delhi, 2009.

⁶⁷ UNDP, ‘Human Security in Bangladesh: In Search of Justice and Dignity’, Dhaka, 2002.

⁶⁸ U.S. State Department, ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bangladesh’, 2009.

(NHRC). These interventions are described and evaluated below.

Following the publication of the report on human insecurity in Bangladesh in 2002, a comprehensive needs assessment report on strengthening the Bangladesh police was completed in September-October 2003.⁶⁹ A project at an estimated cost of US\$ 17.12 million was approved on 11 January 2005. The project was later renamed Bangladesh Police Reform Programme (PRP). Initially the implementation of the project was slow; it gained momentum after the assumption of office by the army-backed caretaker government. The project ended on 30 September 2009. A joint mission of UNDP and DFID evaluated the project in 2008 and recommended that PRP should be extended for five to six years. In October 2009, PRP Phase-II was launched at an estimated cost of US\$ 29 million. The project will end on 30 September 2014.

The main components of PRP Phase-II include: strategic direction and organizational reform; human resource management and training; investigations, operations and prosecutions; crime prevention and community policing; promoting gender sensitive policing; and ICT.

When the PRP was first drawn up in 2005, it was anticipated that successful police reform would require a nine to ten year time-frame involving at least three phases of UNDP and development partners' support. About half of the anticipated programme period is now over. The following are the main achievements of the programme so far:

- A Community Police Strategy was developed and 20,000 community police forums were established. Although the strategy has been awaiting government approval since 2008 it is being actively implemented by the Bangladesh Police.
- PRP piloted new service delivery procedures in 11 model *thanas*; six more model *thanas* are being built. The willingness to report crime to police has increased from 40 percent in non-model *thanas* to 89 percent in model

thanas. The outside influence in model *thanas* decreased from 72 percent to 55 percent. However, UNDP Mid-Term Evaluation of Progress Towards Outcomes in governance (2009, 24) observes, "However, the survey was completed when the overall law and order situation, because of the military backed CTG, was abnormally good". (add footnote here) Further evaluations of benefits of model *thanas* are warranted

- A pilot victim support centre was established and 644 victims received support (February 2009 and August 2011). The Bangladesh Police are planning to establish a further six such centres in divisional cities. Partnerships with ten NGOs on legal aid, medial support and counselling have been established.
- The Bangladesh Police Women's network is now functioning.
- A National Police Training Board was established and a number of police training programmes have been completed.
- The Bangladesh Police Crime Prevention Strategy has been drafted and a crime prevention centre has been established at police headquarters.
- A trafficking in human beings unit has been set up in police headquarters. It is manned by specially trained personnel.

The establishment of a NHRC is a significant milestone in the Bangladesh-UNDP partnership. The enactment of NHRC Act in 2009 by a democratically elected Parliament represents a victory of a 14-year long advocacy programme of UNDP. In April 1995, the Institutional Development of Human Rights in Bangladesh was launched with the active support of UNDP. It formulated a draft bill in 1999. The caretaker government first established the Human Rights Commission by promulgating an Ordinance. The UNDP country office provided significant support to the Government of Bangladesh in preparing the draft legislation. The Commission was first established

⁶⁹ UNDP, 'Human Security in Bangladesh: In Search of Justice and Dignity', Dhaka, 2002.

by the government on 1 December 2008. The law was reenacted by Parliament in 2009 and the newly elected government has constituted the NHRC in the light of new law.

The functions of NHRC are three-fold: promote human rights through education and outreach; protect human rights through *suo moto* and complaint-triggered investigation; and legislate audit and policy advice on implementing core international human rights instruments. Considering the urgency of making this Commission effective, UNDP in cooperation with the Danish International Development Agency and NHRC conducted a Need Assessment Study of NHRC. In May 2010, UNDP, Danish International Development Agency, Swedish International Development Agency, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation jointly financed a project of US\$ 6.94 million for the capacity development of Bangladesh NHRC. The project will provide support to NHRC for five years.

Assessment by criteria

In terms of relevance, the CPAP 2006-2010 identified police reform as one of the key areas of reform in Bangladesh. It is also consistent with the revised 2009 PRSP goal of ensuring human rights, promoting good governance and expanding opportunities for participation of women, children, disadvantaged and excluded groups. However, the latest PRSP (2010) does not explicitly commit the government to police reform, though the 2006 PRSP contained strategies of police reforms explicitly. Though it does not signify any shift in government strategy, it suggests that government thinking on police reform has not yet crystallized. Particularly with regard to police reform and regulations. A project document for PRP Phase-II acknowledged this: "There is an impressive degree of national ownership, but this is limited in depth." This refers to rank and file police officers who are

mostly concerned with issues of pay and working conditions.

The effectiveness of the measures introduced under the PRP was measured by a public perception report titled 'Police Attitude Follow-up Survey Report' in August 2009. The main findings of this report were: incidence of crime in model thana areas has decreased; the victim support programme is gaining popularity; police corruption has decreased; the community policing forum has become popular although it is still in its infancy; and level of awareness of human trafficking has increased. However, there are three major weaknesses of this survey, which is used extensively to claim victories for PRP. First, the survey was conducted in late 2008 when the country was ruled by the army-supported caretaker government. It is extremely difficult to disentangle the effects of the emergency on police performance from the benefits of police reforms. Second, there are major inconsistencies in the findings of the Police Attitude Follow-up Survey Report.⁷⁰ Nonetheless a number of reports by Saferworld, A.C. Nielsen and Transparency International support small but meaningful improvement in police performance. Despite these trends, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of police reforms in Bangladesh. Several rigorous surveys over a period of at least five years are needed to draw any meaningful conclusions.

UNDP participation in PRP is, however, a significant achievement for two reasons. First, the host governments usually try to shield the police as their exclusive preserve. Since UNDP has succeeded in convincing the government of the imperatives of police reform and in moving a large project team into police headquarters, it should try to consolidate this gain. Second, police are an important instrument for ensuring human security. The UNDP country

⁷⁰ For example, it was suggested that there was relatively higher reduction of crime in model thanas (88 percent) as compared to that in comparator thanas (78 percent). However, it fails to report that the performance of model and non-model thanas according to this survey is the same – the percentage of what the report calls "higher view of diminishing incidences of crime is same in both model thanas and rural areas (all rural thanas in the sample are non-model thanas)." However, further corroboration of data is needed.

programme would be incomplete without meaningful police reform. Police reform should continue as an urgent agenda of UNDP in Bangladesh. Because of the long gestation in police reform, it is too early to analyse sustainability of this programme. There are, however, some early warning signs which should be addressed by the programme.

- *Ownership.* The UNDP Mid-term Governance Evaluation Report states that though the programme is owned by middle management, there are weaknesses in government commitment and hesitations and ignorance at lower ranks of the police force. The report notes: “Early indications, especially under CTG [caretaker government], were encouraging; although some reform initiatives were weakened after the assumption of power by the elected government.”⁷¹ Other examples include the delay in enacting the Police Act, the conspicuous omission of police reforms in the PRSP revised by the new government, and the 2010-2011 Budget Speech of the Finance Minister. The programme is not likely to succeed unless it is owned by the top political leadership as well as the rank and file of the police. Similarly, the programme will not be sustainable unless the necessary legal and regulatory changes are conducive to reform.
- *Focusing on key elements.* Much emphasis has been placed on training and equipping the police. However, these interventions are unlikely to be effective unless the police are staffed with the right sort of people. Though recruitment on a merit basis is one of the main elements of police reform, there has so far been no significant progress in this area.⁷² A new charter for the police and an independent oversight agency for the police are essential preconditions for police reform. The Police Act of 1861 has been rendered

anachronistic by the separation of the judiciary from the executive, and a new police law has not been enacted as yet. No progress has also been achieved in creating specialized independent oversight of the police.

In short, there are four major gaps: lack of a new law for the police, since the Police Act of 1861 has been rendered anachronistic by the separation of the judiciary from the executive; absence of independent oversight of the police; absence of merit based recruitment; and lack of an effective disciplinary system in the police. As a result, complaints of about extra-judicial deaths, tortures and human rights abuses are rampant. The PRP has a mandate to work in all four areas but little progress is evident due to a lack of government will to tackle the most sensitive political issues.

- *Weaknesses of community policing.* Community policing is regarded as one of the innovative components of the PRP; 20,000 community police forums have already been established throughout the country. The main goals of community policing are described in the National Strategy of Community Policing: “deliver police services through a customer-focused approach, utilizing partnerships to maximize community resources in a problem identification and solving format to prevent crime, to reduce the fear of crime, apprehend those involved in criminal activity and improve community’s quality of life.”⁷³ Though community police constitutes the lynch pin of police reforms, there are some weaknesses of this strategy.⁷⁴

First, given the historical legacy, it will be difficult to remove the distrust in police. According to the 2002 UNDP report on human security, 80 percent victims are reluctant to seek remedies

⁷¹ UNDP, ‘Final Report UNDP Mid-term Evaluation of Progress Towards Outcomes in Governance in Bangladesh’, Mimeo, Dhaka, 2009.

⁷² According to newspaper reports (Amader Somoy, 21 September 2010), the current rate of bribe for recruitment to police force vary from 2 to 4 lakh taka (equivalent to 2 to 4 years’ gross emoluments). No training would be effective unless the anomalies in recruitment to police are removed.

for fear of bad treatment by the police, fear of harassment by the police and fear of accused illegally influencing the police. Unless such mistrust could be removed, police-led community policing may not be effective.

Second, community policing is likely to work in areas where social capital and mutual trust is high. As various surveys suggest, social capital in Bangladesh is low. It does not provide an appropriate environment for community policing. As Bayley argues, “community policing is not a universal prescription for democratic policing”. Community policing should, therefore, be undertaken on a pilot basis in affluent areas and in areas where social capital is high.

Third, it is difficult to resist politicization of community police in a highly divisive society like Bangladesh. This issue was discussed in the ‘UNDP Mid-term Evaluation of Progress Towards Outcome in Governance’. Intermediation between criminals and corrupt police officials is conducted by a group of local influential people who are known as *touts*. No credible strategy has yet been formulated to curb the problems of politicization and widespread infiltration of *touts* into community police.

It is too early to assess the Bangladesh National Human Rights Capacity Development Project, which was launched on 1 May 2010. However, the relevance of the project is obvious. In the Revised National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction, the importance of the NHRC was acknowledged. It is important for UNDP because it promotes UN values and the NHRC can play a seminal role in implementing Bangladesh’s commitments with respect to human rights under international conventions and treaties. However, at this initial stage, three elements are crucial for effectiveness and sustainability: political commitment of the government;

capacity of the Commission to withstand pressures; and low salary of the staff.

Identification of explanatory factors

Both the PRP and the project for capacity building of NHRC embrace a wide range of issues. However, a report of UNDP on human security in Bangladesh suggests two gaps in the UNDP portfolio in Bangladesh. First, the need to improve the prison system in Bangladesh and curb human security and human rights violations inside jails. Overcrowding, living conditions in prison and the operational environment and management of prisoners are also issues. Though the newly established NHRC can address some, the problems of prisons merit more attention. Second, there are legal gaps in enforcing the rights of women, children and weaker sections of communities. However, UNDP intervention in this area is limited. UNDP in cooperation with NHRC should renew its efforts in this sector.

OUTCOME 6: EFFECTIVE, RESPONSIVE, ACCESSIBLE AND FAIR JUSTICE SYSTEMS PROMOTE THE RULE OF LAW, INCLUDING BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL PROCESSES, WITH DUE CONSIDERATIONS ON THE RIGHTS OF THE POOR, WOMEN AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The justice system in Bangladesh was rated by investors as the worst among the countries surveyed by the World Bank in 2005, with 83 percent expressing lack of confidence in Bangladeshi courts in upholding property rights. World Development Indicators from 2009 report that the time required for enforcement of a contract in Bangladesh is 1,442 days while the corresponding global average is 613 days. Such dysfunction of the judiciary not only impairs economic growth by discouraging investment but also hurts the poor. Some of the main maladies of Bangladesh judiciary include: extraordinary delay

⁷³ National Strategy of Community Policing.

⁷⁴ Khan AA, ‘Friendly Fire, Humpty Dumpty Disorder and Other Essays: Reflections on Economy and Governance in Bangladesh’, University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2010.

in disposal of cases; very low rate of conviction; corruption; reluctance to seek legal redress; rural elite-unscrupulous lawyer nexus; and pricing out of the poor in the judicial system.

One of the major goals of UNDP in Bangladesh is the progressive fulfilment of human rights of children, women and vulnerable groups within the foundations of strengthening democratic governance. UNDP's portfolio of interventions, therefore, emphasized greater access to justice for the marginalized groups of people in Bangladesh. In line with this goal, UNDP has focused its attention on activating village courts and promoting access to justice and human rights.

Interventions

The project for activating village courts in Bangladesh was undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh in partnership with UNDP. The estimated cost of the project is US\$ 14.9 million and is jointly financed by UNDP and funds from the European Commission and the government. The project started on 1 January 2009 and is expected to be completed by 2013. The expected project outcome is "improved access to justice and enhanced human rights systems and processes in Bangladesh." The key objectives of the project are: to empower women, the poor and disadvantaged groups to seek remedies for injustices and to enable justice institutions to be responsive to claims; to prevent and protect human rights-based approach to development in programming and delivery; to empower citizens to resolve their disputes at the local level in an expeditious, transparent and affordable manner; and to strengthen local government institutions to be responsive to local needs and offer appropriate legal service through well-functioning village courts.

The project is still in an early stage of implementation and at the time of data collection for this evaluation was not yet in a position to influence the lives of marginalized groups. However, the

main achievements of the project so far include: 500 *Union Parishads* (spread over 74 *Upazilas* in 17 districts) have been selected for reactivation of village courts, which will cover approximately 11 percent of unions and 15 percent of *Upazilas*. By November 2010, 12 village courts had started functioning on a pilot basis. In addition a base-line survey on village courts in Bangladesh has been completed; a study tour was conducted; orientation workshops have been organized for *Union Parishad* chairmen; and a meeting for developing a strategy of NGOs was held.

The project was mentioned in the UNDP mid-term evaluation of progress towards outcomes in governance in Bangladesh: "The project to activate village courts has only started very recently in 2009, it has potential to help enhance access to justice for marginalized groups, especially if meaningful checks and balances can be built into the design and implementation of the project, for example by giving monitoring and evaluation roles to NGOs with proven track records in helping marginalized groups' access to justice. However, no significant step has been taken as yet to design adequate checks and balances in the project."⁷⁵

The Promoting Access to Justice and Human Rights in Bangladesh Project was undertaken in July 2007. The purpose of the project is "to establish an institutional framework for protection of human rights and dissemination of [human rights] status particularly of the disadvantaged." The estimated cost is US\$ 3.0 million. There are two main components: access to justice, which includes justice sector wide needs assessment, enhancing the oversight functions of Supreme Court, improved awareness of international human rights, a network of *pro bono* lawyers, establishment of Legal Resource Network, improved access to legal information, and State sponsored legal aid schemes; and human rights, which includes the establishment of a NHRC, improved professional integrity

⁷⁵ UNDP, 'Final Report UNDP Mid-term Evaluation of Progress Towards Outcomes in Governance in Bangladesh', Mimeo, Dhaka, 2009.

and competence of Public Law Officers, and improvement in quality and quantity of human rights reports.

In some UNDP documents the following projects are linked to the outcome of “effective, responsive, accessible and fair justice systems, including both formal and informal processes, and promotion of rule of law with due consideration on the rights of the poor and vulnerable groups.”

- Civil Service Change Management Project (2008–2012) with estimated cost of US\$ 5.0 million
- Access to Information Programme (2006–2010) with estimated cost of US\$ 3.89 million
- ASICT Project (2008–2010) at a cost of US\$ 2.87 million
- Capacity building for Management of Foreign aid in Bangladesh (2006–2010) at a cost of US\$ 0.2 million
- ICT for Development Thematic Trust Fund (2010) at a cost of US\$ 0.2 million

These projects have no direct relevance to access to justice for the poor. They were classified as public administrative projects in the UNDP mid-term evaluation of governance. Only the first two projects have the potential to benefit the poor—though not specifically in the area of access to justice. While theoretically some quick win e-governance initiatives may help the poor, the benefits of such initiatives should be assessed.

Assessment by criteria

As noted, the village court project is in the early stages of implementation and it is too early to learn from the pilot courts that started in late 2010.

However, the evaluation team feels that since the project has opportunities for changing course, an evaluation of the design of the project would be useful. The design of the project may be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: government ownership; gaps in present design; options for

redesigning the project, and; the way forward.

The performance of the Access to Justice Project is mixed. The establishment of NHRC is a significant achievement of UNDP efforts to improve the human rights situation. It provided critical inputs for drafting the law on NHRC. It also provided crucial logistic and administrative support during the initial phases of NHRC and has already launched a project for strengthening its institutional capacity. However, the progress of the project has been slow in other areas. Other achievements include the belated establishment of *pro bono* legal services forum in three districts, training of law officers, and ICT development of the Attorney General’s office. The significant slippages include failure to increase the oversight function of the Supreme Court, improve integrity of public law officers and establish a meaningful Legal Resource Network.

While the human rights component of the project has achieved its goals, the access to justice component did not make significant progress. An evaluation of the UNDP governance portfolio in Bangladesh in 2009 concluded that implementation of the access to justice component was pre-empted by institutional tension between the Supreme Court and Ministry of Law. The project was extended by a two year period from July 2010 to June 2012 with the following components: institutional management consisting of institutional management strategy and enhanced to access legal information; improved legal aid comprising increased access to legal services for the disadvantaged and improved professional capacity of lawyers; and administration of justice and legal reform including legal reform and enhanced capacity of law commission.

While the access to justice component achieved much less than what was expected, UNDP has drawn three useful lessons from this project:

- Because of the overwhelming importance of access to justice for the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, UNDP presence in the judicial sector must continue.

- “It is both necessary and opportune to refocus the project on outcomes and outputs that are achievable in the current and outcomes that are realistically implementable given the current project structure and state of the justice sector.”⁷⁶
- UNDP together with a number of donors is working on designing a justice sector support facility that seeks to improve the capacity of the government. The sector wide approach is most appropriate for the justice sector in Bangladesh. It was also observed that “extension of the project can only be justified on the basis that the refocused project will have a revised strategy vision and focus and institutional support for timely implementation.”

Identification of explanatory factors

UNDP has played a significant role in selling the concept of NHRC, drafting its legislation and nursing it in its infancy. The advocacy role of development partners like UNDP for the separation of the lower judiciary from the executive also created a conducive environment for this momentous reform. Despite these major achievements, the tasks of judicial reforms in Bangladesh are daunting. Because of a sudden flurry of changes in the wake of Supreme Court directives to separate the judiciary, there is still considerable tension in the government. There are also differences in perceptions on some major issues between the government and UNDP. Furthermore, many of the problems are complex and cannot be addressed in the short term.

Against this backdrop, UNDP interventions in the Access to Justice Project in Bangladesh are cautious and are based on three highly realistic assumptions. First, blueprint projects are not likely to succeed in this deteriorating hostile environment. In most projects in the judicial sector, there is built-in flexibility to adjust to realities taking into account the lessons learnt during implementation. Second, UNDP is pursuing a sector wide approach in judicial reforms.

Third, the project focuses on outcomes and outputs that are achievable and are implementable. Given the complexity of situation, these are steps in right direction.

The advocacy role of UNDP in areas of human rights is extremely critical in countries like Bangladesh. Advocacy activities must not be crowded out by other project activities. Specifically, more attention should be paid to following gaps, which have been included in the revised Access to Justice project document finalized in June 2010:

- Corruption in judiciary
- Increased attention to protection of rights of excluded groups such as slum dwellers and inhabitants of chars and wetlands
- Innovative activities of NGOs
- Increased use of traditional alternative dispute resolution mechanisms
- Effective legal aid for the poor and disadvantaged

4.3 REDUCTION OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY

OUTCOME 7: STRENGTHENED NATIONAL CAPACITIES, INCLUDING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN TO PREVENT, REDUCE, MITIGATE AND COPE WITH THE IMPACT OF THE SYSTEMIC SHOCKS FROM NATURAL HAZARDS

Bangladesh experiences regular natural disasters. The fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that Bangladesh will feel the effects of climate change in two ways: in the short term, the report predicted severe changes in weather patterns resulting from global warming that would lead to increased frequency of natural disasters such as droughts, floods, tornados and cyclones; in the long term, as many as one million people in Bangladesh are expected to be climate

⁷⁶ ‘Access to Justice Project Document’.

refugees by 2050 due to rising sea levels in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna basins.⁷⁷

Disasters and their consequences pose a major challenge to the development of Bangladesh. The country has been known for its ability to absorb the negative impact of disasters. However, historically adopted coping systems are becoming overwhelmed by the increased frequency of disasters due to climate change. The need to manage disasters cannot be exaggerated for Bangladesh.

UNDP strategy

In this context, the UNDP country office began developing the CDMP with the active participation of DFID. In 2003, the Government of Bangladesh entered into an agreement with UNDP and launched the CDMP. After the flood of 1988 and the cyclone of 1991, the concept of acting only after the occurrence of disaster was replaced, with UNDP's continuous support, by the concept of total disaster management— involving prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and development.⁷⁸ The Standing Order of 1997 laid the foundation for involvement of other local agencies, community based organizations and NGOs during, after and prior to disasters. The government's increased commitment to reducing human, economic and environmental costs of disasters by enhancing overall disaster management capacity was a turning point. This so-called 'paradigm shift' has fundamentally changed the approach to disaster management in Bangladesh, which has been supported by UNDP.

Interventions

CDMP has shown itself to be an appropriate mechanism to address the convergence of climate change and disaster risk reduction. It is a practical

vehicle for translating the hard science of climate change prediction into tangible, community-level actions to support adaptation to increasing hydro-meteorological hazards.⁷⁹ CDMP produced guidelines for assessing community risks due to disasters, provided training to community people in terms of preparation during disasters (including preservation of food), developed and implemented curriculum on disaster risk reduction at the school level, and empowered communities with a group of volunteers to organize, manage and alarm communities on disasters. In short, it has enabled the Government of Bangladesh to fill gaps in disaster management through community involvement.

Under the new approach, the Government of Bangladesh has been working with communities to prepare them to face the challenges of the disasters through: creating shelters to take refuge during disasters; developing awareness to deal with the ultimate calamities during and after a disaster; and reducing the vulnerability of people.⁸⁰ Disaster risk reduction is now a part of the national plan for disasters.

The impact of CDMP has been recognized in the agreement between UNDP and the Government of Bangladesh while signing Phase II of the project in 2009. The document states:

The project has achieved a great deal to put disaster risk reduction on the agenda in Bangladesh. Challenges still remain, though, in reaching a complete paradigm shift within government. The existing funding for CDMP will end in 2009, but there is a common agreement across the GoB [Government of Bangladesh] and the project's principal development partners that a second phase should be taken forward, one that will build on the substantial progress and achievements already recorded. It is important to stress

⁷⁷ Haque, E. A. Living with Disasters. Retrieved October 10, 2010, from The Daily Star Website: <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=88787>, 19 May, 2009.

⁷⁸ Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, 'Country Report on Bangladesh 2003—Disaster Management in Bangladesh', 2003.

⁷⁹ Government of Bangladesh and UNDP, Comprehensive Disaster Management Plan II (2010-2014) Project Document, Dhaka, 2009.

⁸⁰ Government of Bangladesh, 'National Plan for Disaster 2010-2015', 2010.

*that the second phase, which this document describes, is intended to build on the achievements, and learn from the lessons of the first phase, as part of a continuum.*⁸¹

UNDP has been working with the government to promote human security, reduce human vulnerability, and improve the capacity of the government, local communities and local institutions. Given the increased risks faced by the people of Bangladesh due to climate change, this is an important intervention from both human security and vulnerability aspects. Between 2006 and 2010, 85 percent of the UNDP budget was allocated for this focus area. Within this focus area there were two sub-areas: disaster response and management, and MDGs and pro-poor growth. There were 18 projects in these areas; eight of them fall into the sub-area of disaster response and management.

There are three broad categories of projects: compliant projects—projects supported by UNDP to ensure that Bangladesh (being a least developed country) can successfully implement projects and meet its obligations under UN charters, protocols, conventions, etc.; capacity building projects—projects that are relevant for Bangladesh because of its national and international commitments (such as poverty reduction and disaster mitigation) and projects that are designed to increase the capacity of the government, local institution and the people; and awareness building projects—projects designed to raise the level of awareness in government and society to deal with problems such as disasters, climate change, etc.

Assessment by criteria

The objectives of the Disaster Management Bureau of the Government of Bangladesh include: increase awareness at all levels of society to reduce disaster risks and losses; strengthen national institutional capacity for disaster management up to district, *Upazila* and union levels;

establish disaster action plans in the most disaster prone districts and *Upazilas*; enhance the knowledge and skills of key personnel having disaster management responsibilities; promote proven local-level risk reduction ('proofing') measures; and improve the effectiveness of warnings and warning dissemination systems.

The projects funded by UNDP under this outcome are quite relevant to the government's objectives. The MDG status report on environment states:

*...it is the poor and the infirm who fall easy prey to disasters and it is also they who may take the longest to recover from the adverse effects. Also, during a natural disaster the poor are more numerous among those killed because they are least prepared to face such events and they are generally more concentrated in the hazard-prone areas of Bangladesh. Death of the earning member of a poor family brings lasting misery to its members. Thus the gains in poverty reduction suffer a setback. The other direct effects due to natural disasters include damages caused to residential housing, housing goods, crops, fisheries, and livestock. Damage done to transport and communication facilities, capital assets including stocks of food both at the household and the state level have significant indirect adverse effect.*⁸²

Dealing with natural disasters in Bangladesh has been a priority, and UNDP supported Bangladesh through a number of projects in refocusing the intervention strategy from disaster relief to disaster risk reduction (CDMP is an example).

It has been stated in several government documents that environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, depletion of resources, and natural disasters critically limit the ability of the poor and marginalized populations, living in degraded land and in coastal areas, to graduate out of poverty. UNDP supported programmes were specifically designed to include these groups of people and increase their ability to

⁸¹ Government of Bangladesh and UNDP, 'Comprehensive Disaster Management Plan II (2010-2014) Project Document', Dhaka, 2009.

⁸² Government of Bangladesh and UNDP, 'A Situation Analysis on Environment (Goal 7) Bangladesh - Baseline need assessment and costing', General Economic Division, Planning Commission, (Not dated)

deal with natural disasters and reduce their dependence on natural resources. Therefore, the programmes supported by UNDP are also relevant to the vulnerable groups of people living in degraded land and in coastal areas.

Programmes and projects supported by UNDP Bangladesh were implemented by the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management and its agencies. Effectiveness of the projects in terms of achieving their outcomes depend on several factors: selection of the appropriate government agency to implement the programme or project; selection of the right group of beneficiaries or target group; capacity of the institutions; and the implementation strategy. It is also important that projects be designed properly to achieve the desired outcomes.

The flagship project related to outcome 7 is CDMP. It has been implemented with support from several key donor partners (such as DFID and the European Union) along with UNDP. The success of the project in its first phase has led to follow up projects in its second phase. CDMP developed the Community Risk Assessment through the Participatory Rural Appraisal approach and it has been widely appreciated in developing intervention strategies for disaster prone areas. CDMP also developed a core group of trainers at the government agencies and among NGOs to implement this in their activities. It also used local communities to organize under an organization dealing with natural disasters. They were trained to raise awareness and developed skills to alert others during disasters.

Overall, projects supported by UNDP were rightly placed in terms of selecting the correct government agencies. Selection of target groups in some cases was excellent. For example, CDMP selected a local ethnic community that was not included under a cyclone shelter and yet was living within 40 meters of the coast.

The effectiveness of these projects and programmes could have been even further improved if the right set of training and awareness

programmes were included. Under the current strategy of implementation, the volunteers trained by the CDMP are not linked with other community level organizations like Red Crescent Society Volunteers or the Union Disaster Management Committee. They are, however, mentored by the local *Union Parishad* member. Creating an official linkage with the Union Disaster Management Committee would significantly improve the effectiveness of the project. It would have increased access to resources when the project ends and hence effectiveness of the programmes. The problem, however, lies in the design of the project.

Efficiency of achieving the desired outcome from projects depends on several key factors: design of the project or programme, strategy of implementation, and capacity of the stakeholders. UNDP supported projects were implemented in remote rural locations where the government has little physical presence. As a result, it is important the projects are designed to ensure that local people (target groups) are trained properly to implement the project activities with minimum supervision. It is also important that logistic support for the projects is built-in and includes material as well as intellectual support.

Projects were supported by people with relevant technical knowledge and the level of interaction between project personnel and the target groups was appropriate. It is important to note that the project participants included men and women with little or no education, no previous experiences of collective works, no formal training in bookkeeping and accounting, and no technical skills to plan ahead. They were mostly poor, marginalized and socially exploited groups. As a result, the efficiency of the projects in achieving the outcomes depended on the level of interaction, training and management skills provided during the project period.

CDMP used Community Risk Assessments to select project sites, train local people and house the facilities under a community organization (usually a school or religious centre). Other projects used

local NGOs to implement part of the programmes with support from the government. This allowed communities to develop capacities to prevent, reduce and cope with the impact of the systemic shocks from natural hazards. Thus, the projects and programmes were managed efficiently.

Sustainability of the projects depend on a few factors: internalization of the project activities and/or the capacity of communities and government agencies, leadership quality at the community level, and the exit strategy. Project documents should clearly spell out the conditions required for sustainability of the project after the project period. UNDP supported programmes are expected to build or strengthen capacity of the government agencies and the communities.

The strategy to equip local, community based institutions and build their capacities to deal with natural disasters was quite effective. The strategy also envisaged that these institutions would take responsibility and run services efficiently. This assumption could be questioned on several grounds. First, the communities were poor and had only a minimum ability to support their own facilities, such as religious centres. The project extended the scope of their work and some communities may not have had resources to maintain this. For example, during a field visit, it was observed that one of the shelters was originally developed with support from Caritas (an NGO) in 1993. The facility had degraded and CDMP had renovated it to make it usable as a shelter again. In another example, a tubewell was found to be inoperative and the community organization reported that they had fixed it twice but do not have funds to restore it again. These examples only speak about inability of the community (mostly poor households) to maintain them. As such, the project should have built a liaison with mainstream departments to ensure maintenance of the facilities.

Field observations suggested that while some communities had the ability to sustain project activities, some did not without active support from government agencies. The implementing staff of the projects in some cases cleverly formulated

an implementation plan and engaged local religious institutions to continue to provide support to local communities during disasters (in the case of CDMP). They should be commended for this strategy.

Identification of explanatory factors

Disaster management in Bangladesh used to be managing cyclones but the flood of 1988 was a wakeup call for Bangladesh to understand the severity of other types of disasters. Climate change has made Bangladesh vulnerable not only to flood but also saline water intrusion, draught and temperature changes. These disasters were never at the forefront of Bangladesh's disaster management strategy. The assessment tool developed and used in CDMP has allowed the communities to evaluate all types of risks faced by the community so the intervention strategy is more holistic in nature.

UNDP supported programmes like CDMP have helped Bangladesh achieve the five priority areas set by the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005. It has enabled communities to effectively address the poverty reduction strategy while living with disasters. CDMP has developed capacity in the community, local institutions and at the national level. The new government has further committed to CDMP through the newly framed disaster management policy of Bangladesh 2010.

However, it was evident that communities would feel more comfortable once they are recognized and their role is clearly defined in the new documents of the government. This problem is mostly linked with the design of the project, which was corrected in the second phase.

OUTCOME 8: POST-CRISIS SOCIO-ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE RESTORED, ECONOMY REVIVED AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATED; CRISIS AFFECTED GROUPS RETURNED AND REINTEGRATED

People residing in environments prone to flood, river erosion, cyclones, drought and salinity face

Box 7. Highlights of UNDP Partnership in Disaster Management

UNDP's disaster management portfolio supported a paradigm shift in Bangladesh, from emergency relief to disaster risk reduction. The provision of policy advice, technical assistance and community-level intervention helped to improve the capacity of the government, the local communities and local institutions to prepare, respond to and "build back better" from natural disasters. Results of this partnership include:

- National disaster policy & legislative framework in place (including Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan; National Adaptation Programme of Action; Standing Orders on Disaster), supported by UNDP with technical assistance
- Disaster Management Committees established in three tiers of local government to contribute to disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts in their communities, including building the capacity of 27,000 government officials at all levels
- Village-level Community Risk Assessments and Action Plans benefited more than 600,000 people, through initiatives such as plinth-raising to protect against floods
- Over 15,000 disaster resilient houses "built back better" for highly vulnerable Sidr-affected families (30 percent women-headed)
- Helped approximately 250,000 people get back on their feet following cyclone Sidr and 2007 floods with cash-for-work, early recovery livelihood opportunities, and emergency relief support

chronic risks, affecting their level of investment, portfolio choice, and long-term well-being. This has special significance for Bangladesh.

First, there is a well-known interface between adverse ecology and higher intensity of poverty. Areas with higher exposure to adverse ecology are also areas of greater poverty. This is typically true of the low-lying lands of the north-western districts as well as pockets of *haor* areas in the North-East of Bangladesh, which are prone to frequent and sudden flooding and unpredictable river erosion.

Higher poverty has also been observed in the case of the coastal belt of Bangladesh in the South: approximately 8 percent of the country's population resides in coastal *Upazilas*. Households residing in coastal *Upazilas* experience approximately 10 percent higher incidence of spatial poverty in 2005 than non-coastal *Upazilas*—even after controlling for characteristics such as initial human capital endowment, initial population density, and the inter-census population growth.⁸³ Two recent natural disasters—the cyclones Sidr in 2007 and Aila in 2009—have further revealed the additional vulnerabilities of the coastal belt to cyclone and tidal upsurge.

Second, in the last decade, there has been additional attention to the problem of low-lying areas of southern Bangladesh due to concerns about the possible long-term adverse effects of climate change. Bangladesh is cited as a classic example where the climate change can cause disastrous consequences for human settlements in the high-risk areas.

Third, some environmental risks are aggravated by man-made development disasters. This includes the 'engineering approach' to flood control and drainage—with a focus on cordoning the rivers of the deltaic Bangladesh—to build embankments. Such an approach often aggravates the plight of the local populace rather than alleviating their distress. This approach has been contrasted with the 'living with the flood' approach that focuses on risk mitigation, preparedness and coping capacity.⁸⁴

Fourth, vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters has adverse consequences for human settlements by causing dislocation and distress migration often spilling across national borders.⁸⁵ In 1995, global environmental refugees totalled at least 25 million people, compared with 27 million traditional refugees⁸⁶ (people

⁸³ Sen B, Yunus M, 'Poverty and Vulnerability in Adverse Ecological Environments: Evidence from the Coastal Areas of Bangladesh', BIDS, Mimeo, 2010.

fleeing political oppression, religious persecution and ethnic troubles). The total number of environmental refugees could double by 2010 and increase steadily as growing numbers of impoverished people put more pressure on overloaded environments. In this context of environmental vulnerability, national security concerns acquire a hitherto unknown 'environmental security' consideration.

Fifth, reducing vulnerability is linked with the capacity to manage disaster, and thus indirectly linked with the broader idea of 'governmentality' of the modern state.⁸⁷ Like the 'government of poverty' the state acquires political legitimacy by being a 'government of natural disaster'. By acting on behalf of the poor and affected citizens, the government aims to achieve political legitimacy. There is also a security aspect, as failure to act against the adverse effects of natural hazards is considered a failure of national security. In a democracy, such public action can be the difference between winning and losing an election. In short, undertaking disaster mitigating projects is also important from the political point of view, providing the basis for the 'reason of state'.

In light of these concerns, this ADR addresses the relevance of UNDP environmental projects to address the plight and vulnerability of population groups affected by severe exposure to environmental risks.

UNDP strategy and Interventions

It is natural for UNDP to adopt issues of human security in the sphere of environmental

vulnerability. Reducing social and economic vulnerability in the context of exposure to natural hazards is responding to a systemic need. Addressing the concerns of the population affected by natural disasters is also consistent with UN values of helping populations at highest risk. These initiatives are also popular with the government, who is equally concerned about its role in national disaster management—given the capacity and resource constraints it faces and the unpredictable nature of diverse ecological shocks regularly experienced in Bangladesh. From this perspective, the disaster management initiatives supported by UNDP in the form of CDMP-I, CDMP-II, disaster risk reduction facility and skill enhancement projects warrant special attention.

The key element of the UNDP strategy in this area is to involve people in the choice, implementation and ownership of the disaster mitigation initiatives once the project life is over. In this strategy, the government plays a supportive role and hence additional focus of the UNDP strategy is to enhance the capacity of central government and local government agencies for better environment management to enable the local people to perform their ownership role *vis-a-vis* environmental projects.

Assessment by criteria

The projects are extremely relevant in their intent and purpose. However, they are not comprehensive in scope and coverage. This is for two reasons.

First, ecological shocks in Bangladesh are diverse

⁸⁴ Islam, N, 'The Open Approach to Flood Control: The Way to the Future in Bangladesh', *Futures*, 33 (8-9), 2001, pp. 783-802.

⁸⁵ Myers N, 'Environmental Refugees: A Growing Phenomenon of the 21st Century', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of Biological Sciences*, 357 (1420), 2002, pp. 609-613. On the cross-border environmental refugees specific to the Indo-Bangladesh corridor see Ahmed I, 'Environmental Refugees and Environmental Distress Migration as a Security Challenge for India and Bangladesh', *Facing Global Environmental Change*, Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace, Vol. 4, Part III, Springer Link, 2009.

⁸⁶ Myers N, 'Environmental Refugees: A Growing Phenomenon of the 21st Century', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of Biological Sciences*, 357 (1420), 2002.

⁸⁷ Dean M, 'Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society', Sage, London 2010. The idea of 'governmentality' (a term originally appeared in Michel Foucault's writings) is, in turn, linked with the idea of the 'pastoral power' in the functioning of the modern state.

in nature, and CDMP-I (and CDMP-II) are addressing only a portion of these shocks. For instance, these initiatives have only partly focused on the special problems of river-erosion areas, low-lying areas, salinity-prone areas and drought-prone areas marked by unsustainable livelihoods.

Second, the focus on the poor and the poorest—the population groups who are the most vulnerable—is not always at the centre of these projects. While natural disasters are in the nature of covariate risks, the aftermath of disasters is especially severe for the poorest. The special concerns of the poor and the poorest need to be addressed better in the context of CDMP type programmes.

While the above-mentioned projects generally serve their population groups in the catchment areas well, there is room for improvement. Four points are noteworthy.

First, the CDMP type projects need to focus more on supporting the livelihoods of the poor—within an asset livelihood framework—in their design when it comes to revival of local economy and supporting the ascent of the affected groups in the aftermath of crisis. A comparison of coastal and non-coastal areas of the southern districts of Bangladesh shows higher concentration of illiterate and non-salaried workers in disaster-prone coastal areas. The poor lack portable assets such as human capital and financial savings compared to the non-poor residing in the coastal areas. Hence they experience magnified vulnerability in the aftermath of crisis. Enhancing access of the poor to portable assets needs to be considered in the pre-crisis stage of project design rather than as an afterthought in the post-crisis phase.

Second, the environmental projects need to find a way of working more closely with projects that are operative at the national and subnational level (such as monga and CDD projects supported by the Social Development Foundation) to prevent seasonal unemployment and hunger. Since the worst part of the Monga-affected population relates to those who are also affected by river erosion, there is an obvious causal link between

disaster mitigation and Monga-prevention projects. Similarly, Social Development Foundation supported projects are located in six disaster prone districts in the north-west. The Social Development Foundation also worked for the disaster risk reduction activities in the context of post-Sidr. Such potentially fruitful causal interfaces between disaster management and poor area development projects through Monga prevention and CDD need to be explored more in the context of CDMP-II.

Third, knowledge about environmental poverty is a requirement for reducing vulnerability of the population groups affected by natural disasters. Statistics on environmental poverty are extremely scarce and more work is needed in the context of project implementation to understand the nature of environmental poverty such as coastal and river erosion belts. The existing poverty maps at the district and *Upazila* level are only a preliminary guide to understanding the nature of environmental poverty in diverse ecological settings. This is because there is tremendous variation across unions and villages within *Upazilas* over and above the problem of relatively high standard errors for some *Upazila* level poverty estimates in the spatial poverty map based on the 2005 Household Income and Expenditure Surveys.

Fourth, the long-term way out from disaster mitigation lies not in serving the population by keeping them in the disaster-prone environments but enhancing their exit potential by supporting their human capital build-up and encouraging migration to areas of higher earnings with less volatility. The population density of disaster-prone belts in Bangladesh is very high and does not show much difference between disaster-prone and non-disaster areas. The intercensal population growth between 1981 and 2001, for example, has been almost identical in coastal and non-coastal districts. This shows the importance of placing more emphasis on building long-term human security by supporting measures of human capital, decentralized urbanization, and gainful/

sustainable livelihood migration in the context of CDMP type programmes.

Two points having adverse effects on long-term sustainability are noteworthy.

First, the presence of NGOs and the private sector (such as banks and insurance) is much less in the disaster-prone areas, explaining the relatively high interest rates in the informal financial markets and limited credit access in those settings. This aspect of strengthening disaster management goes beyond the immediate project jurisdiction but will affect long-term sustainability of these projects. Special incentives may be provided by the government (and supported by donors) to encourage NGO-led microfinance and private financial institutions to set up branches in areas of adverse ecology.

Second, development of the early warning system and disaster mitigation also requires initiatives that go beyond the national boundary. The progress made so far in promoting sub-regional cooperation in the areas of water sharing, environmental security, dam construction, and sharing of information about flooding as part of the early warning system has not been satisfactory. This has a negative influence on the sustainability of the projects. UNDP can play an important role in the sphere of environmental and disaster management cooperation in this sub-region, especially between India and Bangladesh.

4.4 SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY MANAGEMENT

OUTCOME 9: STRENGTHENED NATIONAL CAPACITIES TO MAINSTREAM ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY CONCERNS INTO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEMS

The Government of Bangladesh approved the

Environment Act in 1995 and the Environment Rule in 1997. Consequently, the primary task of the government was to strengthen the newly established Department of Environment. In 2001, the Task Force on Environment of Bangladesh listed the major environmental issues in Bangladesh.⁸⁸ The list highlighted, among others, the degradation of natural resources, the implementation of rules and regulations and disaster management. The Asian Development Bank's Country Environmental Analysis report of 2004 also highlighted pollution in rivers, waste disposals, air pollution, arsenic in groundwater, land and soil degradation, riverbank erosion, loss of wetland, forests and biodiversity, and climate change as the major environmental problems of Bangladesh.⁸⁹

Interventions

Sustainable environment and energy management is the third largest thematic area in the UNDP budgetary allocation. Within this area, projects include sub-areas such as Energy and Climate Change, and Environment and Sustainable Development. However, by 2010 UNDP emphasis will be shifting out of this sector due to erosion of UNDP resource allocation in this area. The portfolio of UNDP projects on environment has reduced from nearly 20 percent of expenditure in 2004 to less than 2 percent in 2009. In this context, UNDP financed one of the largest programmes in Bangladesh called the Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP) with 21 partner agencies within the government and private sector including NGOs. This was the first programme in Bangladesh to involve such a large number of government agencies, private agencies and NGOs, linking environment with major development and poverty reduction strategies. There were approximately 28 projects under this thematic area.

Assessment by criteria

One of the stated objectives of the 2005 PRSP is

⁸⁸ Centre for Policy Dialogue, 'Policy Brief on Environment: CPD Task Force Report', Dhaka, 2001.

⁸⁹ Asian Development Bank, 'Country Environment Analysis', Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2004.

environmental sustainably⁹⁰ and addressing pollution issues and that limit the poor's access to resources. The report states:

*... kinds of pollution have a strong human health impact, a major cause of erosion of human productivity and of death in many instances, particularly among the poor and marginalised communities. The combined pressure from the shrinking resource base and worsening living conditions weaken the productive capacity of the poor, make them more marginalised over time, and eventually trap them in what is often referred to as the 'vicious circle of poverty.'*⁹¹

It further states:

*Biodiversity is an asset population pressure, conversion of forestland and wetland into agricultural land, overexploitation of forest products and excessive withdrawal of water, relentless wetland depletion due to overexploitation of both flora and fauna are causing great harm to our biodiversity.*⁹²

Taking into consideration the PRSP projects and focus area, UNDP projects and programmes are highly relevant for Bangladesh and support the government's efforts to achieve MDGs 1, 2, 3 and 7. Bangladesh is a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol and so can be a 'host country' under the Clean Development Mechanism. Bangladesh is also a signatory to the Montreal Protocol and the Vienna Convention on Reduction of Ozone Depleting Substances. Bangladesh is also committed to participating in the Bali Roadmap and the Conference of Party meetings. These international commitments require Bangladesh to be prepared with documents and other policies for the purpose of compliance. UNDP has helped the government with expertise in developing relevant policies, position papers, etc. UNDP programmes are relevant to ensuring that Bangladesh can effectively participate in international negotiations

and comply with international conventions and protocols.

It appears that projects (awareness building projects and capacity building projects) are specifically designed to ensure that the marginalized and the vulnerable population are included. Under the Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP), several components look after the issues of poverty-environment linkages and vulnerable population. In addition, the Coastal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Programme (CWBMP), for example, has also targeted the marginalized population who were dependent on the degraded natural resources and turned them into stewards for protecting the resources. SEMP provided a set of tangible results: successful demonstration of community based waste management (it was later replicated nationally and internationally); integration of environmental aspects in the national educational system at the primary and secondary levels; demonstration of renewable energy technology options; large scale awareness on environmental issues among media and people in general; and pioneering endeavour in creating environmental database and accounting.

Natural resources in developing countries are under constant threat from people with power. These groups tend to use their strength to exploit resources. As a result, natural resources like wetlands and forests are degraded and depleted. As such, the Government of Bangladesh declared 20 protected areas and 12 Ecologically Critical Areas. Ecologically critical areas are already degraded areas and need special protection and care. Protected areas are protected because of biodiversity and cultural heritages; however, there is no law to manage these areas. The CWBMP is a step toward developing a management policy for these areas. Experiences from this project are

⁹⁰ Government of Bangladesh, 'Unlocking the Potential - National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction'. General Economics Division, Planning Commission, 2005.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

expected to contribute towards developing a protected area management rule.

UNDP supported programmes promoted: appropriate management of these areas; participation of local stakeholders in the management of resources; and building capacity among people and government offices to ensure sustainable use of resources in the area. Thus UNDP promoted core UN values and upheld respect for nature in Bangladesh.

Programmes and projects supported by UNDP in Bangladesh were implemented by a number of agencies and ministries. For example, CWBMP was implemented by the Department of Environment. The effectiveness of projects in terms of achieving outcomes depended on several factors: selection of an appropriate government agency to implement the project; selection of the right group of beneficiaries or target group; capacity of the institutions; and the implementation strategy. However, it is also important that projects are designed properly to achieve the desired outcomes.

Overall, UNDP projects selected the appropriate government agencies. In some cases, selection of target groups was excellent. For example, in the Coastal Fisheries Project the fisheries communities previously dependent on extracting fish fry and larvae were targeted to improve their skills and provide resources to reduce their dependence on collection of fish larvae.

The effectiveness of these projects could have been improved with amendments to project design. For example, at the end of the Coastal Fisheries Project (implemented by the Ministry of Fisheries), CWBMP was implemented by the Department of Environment and the same community was adopted. This ensured that the benefit of the previous project was sustained.

However, there was no integration of financial resources with the new project, which could lead to the community splitting between fisheries and biodiversity groups.⁹³ Nonetheless, while project designers ignored the sequential nature of implementation of the project, implementing partners showed significant maturity and ensured that the outcomes were achieved effectively.

Efficiency of achieving the desired outcome from projects depended on several key factors: design of the project; strategy of implementation; and capacity of the stakeholders. UNDP supported projects were implemented in remote rural locations where the government has little physical presence. As a result, it was important that projects were designed to ensure that local people (target groups) were trained properly to implement the project activities with minimum supervision. It was also important that logistical support for the project was built-in and includes material as well as intellectual support. Finally, it was important to ensure the right personnel with the right skills supported the projects.

Projects were supported by the right set of people with relevant technical know-how and the level of interaction between project personnel and the target groups was also appropriate. The project participants included men and women with little or no education, no previous experiences of collective works, no formal training on bookkeeping and accounting, and no technical skills to plan ahead. They were mostly poor, marginalized and socially exploited group. As a result, the efficiency of the projects in achieving the outcomes depend on the level of interaction, training and management skills provided and also practiced during the project period.

Sustainability of the projects depended on several factors: internalization of the project activities;

⁹³ Under the fisheries project, the groups had mobilized resources and generated both income generating activities and also saving deposits from the members. CWBMP's biodiversity groups also banked on the similar groups of people (dependent on fisheries resources in coastal areas) and they also received resources and began income generating activities. However, the two groups are legally separate entities. The funds were also managed through separate bank accounts. CWBMP did not initiate a process to merge them into one single group and since both were funded through UNDP, there is still no conflict between them.

capacity of communities and government agencies; leadership quality at the community; and exit strategy. Project documents should clearly spell out the conditions required for sustainability of the project. UNDP supported programmes are expected to build or strengthen capacity of the government agencies and the communities.

Under the legal system of Bangladesh, the Forest Department is the custodian of all forests and wildlife products while the Department of Environment (a department within the same ministry, the Ministry of Environment and Forests), is responsible for ensuring quality of environment. As such, they are supposed to implement rules and regulations related to environmental management for all. They lack the legal authority to apprehend anyone violating the rules, but they can use the courts to implement their rules. The Forest Department has offices in many part of Bangladesh, but the Department of Environment does not. Because CWBMP was a complex programme involving fisheries, tourism and the forest department, it made it difficult to ensure sustainably. In order to ensure sustainability of this project, passing of a comprehensive resolution on management of ecologically critical areas should have been mandated in the project document.

Field observations suggested that while some communities had the ability to sustain project activities on their own, some did not without active support from government agencies. It was also observed that after the withdrawal of project staff, government offices were not fully equipped to deliver the support needed for the project outcome to be sustainable.

UNDP projects related to coastal and wetland management enabled the local people to understand their rights to the wetlands and their resources without depleting them. Communities were encouraged to protect the biodiversity for the benefit of the mankind. In return, the projects provided them with resources for developing alternative livelihood options. Since the projects were implemented in collaboration with

the Department of Environment, it has helped the government departments involved in conservation of resources and biodiversity accept conventional rights of the local inhabitants. CWBMP has successfully promoted the idea of community participation in resource management. The Department of Environment has embraced this concept; however it is still absent in the Forest Department. UNDP has shown the benefit of community participation in conserving resources. This concept needs to be nurtured until it enters into the mainstream of resources management policy in the government.

Identification of explanatory factors

After the Rio Summit of 1992, the government began to implement programmes to integrate environment into its mainstream planning exercise. UNDP provided timely support to help Bangladesh develop programmes for this. This included support for the formulation of the National Environment Management Action Plan. Between 2004 and 2010, UNDP continued support with projects such as Sustainable Environment Management Programme and CWBMP. UNDP also assisted the government in mainstreaming energy and climate change issues through its support for developing the National Adaptation Programme of Action. This was pioneering work to ensure that environment, climate change and energy issues enter in the mainstream of government decision making. Several other UNDP projects also helped Bangladesh to ensure that it meets its obligations related to Montreal Protocol. Furthermore, UNDP assisted the government in drafting other major policies and planning documents in relation to environment and natural resource management such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan; the National Capacity Development Action Plan to address biodiversity, land degradation and climate change issues; and the National Action Plan for Eliminating Persistent Organic Pollutants.

UNDP has been successful in helping build capacities of the government, communities and private institutions (for example, through the Brick Kiln Project) to address some of the

difficult issues related to environment, climate change and alternative energy use in Bangladesh. UNDP has made them aware of the linkage between the environment and poverty both in urban and local areas.

Although UNDP started its programmes and projects in this area through development of projects to mainstream environment and energy issues, as evidenced by allocation of funding, it has shifted out of the environment and energy sectors and adopted a climate change agenda related to adaptation and mitigation. While climate change is a very important issue for Bangladesh, environment is equally important, given the enormous pressure of the population on a very limited amount of resources. Environmental pollution as well as depletion of forest and fisheries resources will affect the marginalized population of the country. Given the existing poverty scenario, environmental pollution caused by rapid industrialization and urbanization are likely to affect the poor; the risk of climate change will only make these people more vulnerable. Consequently, pollution plus climate change will bring catastrophe to the lives and livelihood of both urban and rural poor. The threat is not just from natural disasters; it is also from continued pollution of rivers, wetland, and degradation of forests. Thus specific attention should be given to developing capacity of government agencies and the communities to deal with changes in livelihood and to improve governance in the environment sector. At the same time, some of the initiatives taken by UNDP through the SEMP could be lost due to shift of the focus of the programme. The threat on Bangladesh's rivers, wetland, and forests are real. It is important that UNDP remains engaged in this sector.

4.5 PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT

OUTCOME 10: STRENGTHENED POLICIES, INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT

Gender equality is a human right that lies at the heart of the MDGs. However, despite considerable progress and commitment by the government, gender equality and women's empowerment remains a major challenge in Bangladesh. Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female. Gender equality, women empowerment, and gender mainstreaming have emerged as core guiding policies and principles in the UN system. Globally, UNDP aims to attain these objectives through: strengthening gender sensitive government programmes; strengthening women's capacity to participate in policy planning; better reporting, monitoring and evaluation of programmes; and greater availability and use of gender relevant data. UNDP, apart from following the MDG goals, also incorporates all the women-related international conventions and declarations.

UNDP strategy

UNDP Bangladesh moved from an agenda for addressing gender equality through advocacy, support to the enforcement and formulation of gender-related policies and laws, support to government gender mainstreaming efforts, and support to sex disaggregated data and research, as set out in the 2006-2010 CPAP, to focusing interventions in this area to gender mainstreaming in UNDP projects. This is reflected by the removal of the gender outcome in the revision of the UNDP programme results matrix in 2008. To address the gender equality challenge, UNDP has therefore focussed on incorporating gender quality concerns in a number of its core programmes. These include: CHTDF, LGSP-LIC, UPPR, REOPA, PRP, CDMP and CWBMP. The gender component within each of these programmes has been analysed, taking into consideration the broad mandate on gender adopted by the United Nations.

Interventions and assessment by criteria

The selected UNDP projects and programmes were assessed through a gender lens, keeping in mind criteria such as relevance, effectiveness and sustainability.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF): Gender mainstreaming and gender sensitization has been a large component of the CHTDF. For instance, at least 50 percent of women comprised the executive committees of the PDCs, and PDC members have been provided gender awareness training with the assistance of partner NGOs. These NGOs were selected through an open and competitive selection process. CHTDF has supported CHT NGOs involved in gender activities, in forming the Women's Organizations Network which has held government registration since 2010. In order to support young graduated CHT women in getting their first foot on the career ladder, CHTDF has started a female volunteer program. Fifty young graduated women have followed a training program in development and office work related subjects in 2010. All of them are placed at various CHT institutions (including CHTDF) to gain skills and experience. In selecting partner NGOs, gender policies and practices are considered in the selection criterion. CHT has supported interested CHT NGOs in designing and improving their gender policies and practices. All community health workers under CHTDF's program are female. They have gained recognition from the communities they are serving for the excellent services they are providing. In many cases they have become confident agents of change and became members of PDC executive committees.

However, slow progress has been observed in achieving substantial changes in gender relations. A serious dearth of women development workers was identified by the UNDP annual report 2008 as the biggest barrier to mainstreaming and development efforts of women of the CHTDF.⁹⁴ In operational terms this might be the biggest obstacle, but given the political context of CHT, confidence building and gender mainstreaming is indeed an uphill task.

Hill Tracts women pointed out that without a political settlement of the Bengali settler issue,

confidence cannot be created within the Hill Tracts women. The military presence and Bengali settlers are identified as the biggest obstacles to peace. In view of the gendered structure of the regional administrative bodies, it would be important to incorporate strategic gender issues within their agendas, such as equal property rights for women.

Local Government Support Project-Learning and Innovation Component (LGSP-LIC): The activities of the local level women politicians, in particular their interaction with the women of the local community go a long way in raising the political consciousness of women. Women's participation in politics is also an important contribution to women's empowerment.

The project started in June 2008 and has been implementing schemes in six different pilot districts. The projects have 30 percent women representation and 30 percent of schemes were selected by women. From a gender perspective, the 30 percent benchmark for women is positive but not adequate; in terms of UNDP's stated objective of gender equality, the number ought to have been 50 percent.

Decentralization of power structures is a step towards making the structures gender sensitive. From a humane perspective, the relevance of the programme cannot be denied, specifically in a patriarchal society like Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Constitution has local governance as one of its stated principles. It meets the MDG 3 goal of the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations, since local governance is looked upon as the most important arena for women's empowerment at both policy and implementation levels. The programme appears to be effective in terms of its activities.

Police Reform Programme (PRP): In 2007, there were fewer than 2,000 policewomen on a force of more than 100,000. Such a low number of female

⁹⁴ UNDP-Bangladesh, 'Annual Report 2008, Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the CHT', 2009..

officers hinders effective and efficient responses to issues regarding women victims. The first Gender Guidelines for Bangladesh Police have been developed and the implementation of these guidelines is being monitored by 168 gender committees at the *thana* level. A Bangladesh Police Women's Network has been set up as well. Partially as a result of the project's advocacy and other activities, there has been an increase in women officers from 1.8 percent in 2007 to 3.94 percent by the end of 2010.

PRP is relevant from a gender perspective. The Bangladesh State Constitution stipulates non-discrimination against women as well as affirmative action for women in public spheres. However, the police force has remained a masculine domain. The mainstreaming of gender and increasing the number of women with gender sensitive training would result in the development of the human security and women's rights mandates of the Government of Bangladesh and UNDP. It would also contribute towards a women friendly state and society.

It is not clear why the Gender Guidelines did not include any item regarding a gender sensitive code of conduct toward female colleagues and penalties for not complying with this code. Sexual harassment within the police department is quite common.⁹⁵ The lowest ranking personnel in the police are the Constables (making up 87,934 of the total force of 123,197), who do not usually receive enough training. If this large number of men in uniform does not get training on gender issues, the reform programme will be less effective than its potential.

Human security and human development are major components of the PRSP. The project is implemented by the Home Ministry. However, in order to make it sustainable it needs to incorporate the vision of the senior police officials who have field experience. Budgetary allocations for

training should also be increased.

Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP): During the first phase of CDMP, a Gender and Social Exclusion Analysis Framework for screening all risk reduction options was finalized through a validation workshop with the organizations actively working with women issues in the development field. In all disaster management programmes, women *Union Parishad* members are required to vet beneficiary selection.⁹⁶ Research on climate change and its impact on vulnerable groups including women has been undertaken. The 2007 mid-term review of CDMP-I noted the rising confidence and ownership of women on environmental issues. Gender is a crosscutting issue in CDMP. Since the programme is based on community participation, women's participation is assumed. Risk Reduction Action Plans are developed to document risk, vulnerable elements and priority risk reduction actions. This is undertaken with the full involvement of communities and local Disaster Management Committees. A grants programme has facilitated small scale reduction projects. It also involves climate change research and adaptation, emergency response and information management.

The programme addresses key concerns of the Government of Bangladesh, including MDGs 3 and 7 and is premised on community participation and women's participation, and the paradigm shift from risk management to a risk reduction focus on human security makes it highly effective from a gender perspective. The sustainability of the programme will depend upon improving the capacity of women *Union Parishad* members on the issues and the effectiveness of the research component.

Coastal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Programme (CWBMP) was formed to tackle urgent biodiversity issues. Local communities

⁹⁵ Personal interview with senior officials, Police Staff College, Dhaka, October 2010.

⁹⁶ Meetings with UNDP Bangladesh programme staff.

played an active role in implementing these activities. A Village Conservation Group was set up in each target village, consisting of representatives from the community including women. The role of these committees was to develop and implement sustainable biodiversity management. Women were a core part of this scheme.

Bangladesh is one of the worst victims of climate change. Thus adaptation and mitigation programmes have become a top priority of the government at the national and international levels. They have been included in PRSP-I and II. It addresses MDG 3 and 7. Examining CWBMP from a gender perspective, CWBMP worked in the pocket areas of most conservative societal settings where people would not even think of women participating in open discussions or any development interventions during the early years of the project implementation.

From that situation, women participation in the Village Conservation Groups has been raised up to 34 percent which is a noteworthy achievement in terms of promoting gender balance and women empowerment at the grass roots level. Although there were several areas involving women and vulnerability, a number of areas remained to be addressed. Gender-specific information is also inadequate. Gender is identified as a common factor influenced by social construction in both development phases and disaster situations. Therefore, a combined role of both development strategy and disaster management system is needed in order to resolve the existing gaps.

Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR): The UPPR had strong potential to increase the number of women in leadership positions. It worked through various tiers: the Primary Group; CDC and Project Implementation Committee. The Primary Group is headed by a woman President and Secretary. The CDC has four office bearers. The posts of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are reserved for women. All Primary Group Presidents are members of CDC. The CDC Vice-Chair post is open to both men and women. The programme works

in partnership with local government bodies and has facilitated girl education. Communities are recognizing that early marriage is not just a matter of awareness but is usually driven by economic circumstances and that families need a package of support including access to livelihoods programmes in order to overcome these problems in a sustainable way. By focusing on sustainable livelihood and socio-political empowerment of women and girls through education and other means, the project was linked to the strategic objectives of UNDP in the region and with the development strategies of the Government of Bangladesh. The project reached out to the highly vulnerable and extremely poor, both in slum and non-slum, and enhanced the leadership and participatory role of women to ensure that its benefits are shared equally. Since women are highly represented amongst the extreme poor, the project objectives were relevant from a gender perspective.

The project did not specifically raise the confidence of women, and work with men and women. The project did not provide guidelines that specifically aimed at gender parity. The project remained limited to protection and support measures for women. In other words, it addressed practical gender needs. However, since the project implemented its activities with local government and community organizations, where involvement of women does exist, this was a process towards empowerment of women.

Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA): The project objectives were implementation of safety net measures to protect the poor, especially women. By targeting the extreme poor rural women, this project directly addressed the issues of marginality of women. It aimed to take women out of safety nets. It also has the potential of avoiding the pilferage of the local governance system. It met the human security, women empowerment, poverty reduction mandates of the UNDP and Bangladesh. It addressed MDGs 1 and 3.

Assessment summary

The gender component was quite strong in the UNDP projects. They were successful in involving women participation at the policy and implementation levels but weak in monitoring, evaluation and reporting, which is the basis of the UNDP gender mainstreaming strategy. UNDP was, however, weak in terms of gender budgeting. The reporting process also lacked, in most cases, gender specific data, which have been produced separately by the gender hub of the country office. These data need to be reflected in the annual reports. So while successful in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in its projects, the overall UNDP contribution to the stated outcome of "strengthened policies, institutional capacity and knowledge management for gender equality and women's advancement" has been limited.

Identification of explanatory factors

While gender mainstreaming was appreciable, given the strong patriarchal societal structure of Bangladesh, where the legal system still does not have a uniform law, there is still a need to focus on practical gender needs as well strategic gender needs. Practical gender needs take care of day-to-day concerns and are more reformist in nature; while strategic gender needs call for structural changes through addressing and altering the barriers (socio-economic and religious) to bring about fundamental changes in women's lives. The UNDP programmes have made substantial and meaningful contributions in terms of addressing practical gender needs. However, the strategic gender needs remain largely unaddressed, although reforms and changes at the practical level may pave the way for strategic changes. This is an area where strong advocacy on the part of the UNDP is called for.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bangladesh ADR aims to provide both an evaluation of UNDP's ongoing and planned activities during the period examined, and a set of recommendations for improving UNDP contributions to Bangladesh's efforts to achieving its development goals. The conclusions and recommendations provided in this ADR are based on the findings presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, and are expected to contribute to better positioning UNDP during the next programme cycle. The conclusions should be seen as being mutually reinforcing conveying an overall sense of UNDP weaknesses as well as its strengths and the challenges it faces in contributing to development results in Bangladesh. The recommendations highlight only the most critical areas in which UNDP could enhance and consolidate its contribution bearing in mind its mandate and comparative strengths.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

1. During the ongoing programming period, UNDP has made significant contributions to a number of key development results in Bangladesh. Other contributions have the potential to be transformational in terms of supporting national goals and aspirations.

- UNDP made an important and timely contribution to election reform, specifically to the 2008 election, a major development result for Bangladesh and one that has positively affected the lives of the Bangladeshi people. As an impartial and non-political development partner, UNDP was required to play at a very short notice a vastly expanded role in preparing an electoral role with photo ID for more than 80 million voters; in assisting the Election Commission in amending rules and regulations, and fair and acceptable delimitations of constituencies; and procuring translucent ballot boxes and in establishing an electronic network in 505 *Upazilas* and stations concerned with election. Through its advocacy and timely assistance, UNDP helped the Bangladesh Election Commission achieve its ambitious target of holding a credible election within the shortest possible time.
- UNDP interventions in the area of reduction in social and economic vulnerability strengthened government efforts to streamline disaster management efforts towards a total risk reduction approach using community awareness and participation. UNDP-supported projects helped the Government of Bangladesh to mainstream disaster risk reduction using community participation, awareness, mitigation and recovery plans in one framework.

There are also areas where UNDP has supported efforts that have the potential to be transformative:

- Through prolonged advocacy UNDP made a very important contribution to placing human rights on the policy agenda and institutionalizing it in the NHRC, which it continues to support through capacity development. This has the potential to be a major transformational result positively affecting the lives of Bangladeshi people.
- Police reform is important for the promotion of human development and human security, and UNDP engagement in this area is a reflection of its neutrality and position as a trusted partner. But the transformation from police force to police service is incomplete and further advocacy for increased political commitment to reform is required.
- UNDP has contributed to piloting important aspects of the decentralization process that have

led to policy and legislative reform that has the potential to be transformational in the context of a comprehensive decentralization strategy.

- UNDP made an impressive attempt to apply social mobilization as a tool for urban poverty reduction by encouraging the formation of the organization of the urban poor groups in slums and low-income urban settlements. The aim is to lift 3 million urban poor out of poverty by 2015. This intervention has the potential to be transformational, provided several outstanding institutional (sustainability of community organizations) and service delivery issues (deepening linkages with urban local government and urban MFIs) are addressed.
- UNDP has been widely viewed as a neutral mediator in areas of conflict. It played a pivotal role in contributing to service delivery and peace-building in the post-conflict context of the CHT. This intervention could become transformational if the inter-ethnicity confidence building component can be significantly strengthened with further emphasis on inclusive service delivery.
- UNDP has contributed to rural extreme poverty reduction through innovative interventions such as REOPA, which has the transformational potential of raising rural ultra-poor women out of poverty in a short time-frame. This intervention has provided an implicit critique of tokenism in conventional social safety net programmes by demonstrating an alternative to ultra-poverty.

2. Most UNDP interventions during the programming period 2006 to 2010 reflected national development priorities in Bangladesh. This has been made possible by forging strategic partnerships at different levels and establishing rapport with successive governments, which made UNDP a trusted and valued partner of the Government of Bangladesh.

It is clear that at an overall level, the UNDP programme, in terms of the stated outcomes to which it will contribute, is relevant to national development priorities, being deliberately aligned

to national development strategies. At the same time it builds on its comparative strengths of neutrality and closeness to government in providing support to address difficult issues. For example, since UNDP enjoys the reputation of an impartial player in the development process, UNDP was invited by the Government of Bangladesh to participate in the reform process during a critical time.

However, there have been significant shifts in the policies of the government since the departure of the caretaker government. In the present context, a comprehensive reappraisal of projects designed during the caretaker regime is warranted. There were discernible shifts in the stances of the newly elected government as reflected in the revised PRSP and other government documents, such as budget speeches, with respect to community police, village courts, access to justice reforms and some components of parliamentary reform (such as disclosure of assets of Members of Parliament, and increased participation of Members of Parliament in the budget). Such programmes may need to be reprioritized in the light of ground realities.

The extraordinary success of UNDP in the 2008 election demonstrated that strong government ownership, combined with efficient UNDP processes, works wonders. Conversely, lukewarm ownership at the highest levels of government leads to time as well as cost overrun, and non-fulfilment of project goals, as in the case of the Access to Justice Project, PRP and Parliament Reform Project, to name a few. In the present portfolio of UNDP projects, levels of political commitment vary widely. This is especially important in projects that envisage policy and legislative reform. Reprioritization and review of projects with lukewarm political commitment will help project implementation and sustainability. In a number of cases, lack of national ownership, in the sense of ensuring adequate support from the government at the appropriate level for the intervention, undercut UNDP contributions to national development results in general, and 'value for money' in particular.

3. The multi-stakeholder approach adopted by UNDP has been responsible for strengthening UNDP's contribution to improved human development in Bangladesh, especially to addressing the challenge of poverty reduction. In practice, however, there has been mixed experience with respect to involvement of NGOs/CSOs and local government while the private sector played a limited role in the process.

UNDP has played an important role working with government and members of the international development community in strengthening the aid effectiveness agenda. It actively participated in the development of the Bangladesh Joint Cooperation Strategy (2010-2015) and heads a number of working groups within its framework. UNDP does engage in a number of joint programmes with other members of the UN Country Team with mixed success. The challenges to greater collaboration through joint programmes may be attributed more to generic institutional problems than lack of willingness or capacity of UN organizations in Bangladesh to work together.

UNDP worked closely with civil society across a number of its projects. For example, the SEMP with 21 partner agencies within the government and civil society was the first programme in the history of Bangladesh in which so many Government organizations and NGOs were involved to link environment with major development and poverty reduction strategies of Bangladesh.

The role of NGOs and CSOs is quite varied across the poverty and service delivery projects supported by UNDP. In LGSP-LIC, the involvement of NGOs is virtually negligible. In the case of REOPA, the NGOs have been involved in income generating activities training. In the case of UPPR, a more pronounced use of NGOs could have yielded even more fruitful results, especially in terms of community mobilization, access to finance and training, and supporting sustained graduation beyond the life of the project cycle. Local NGOs have been actively involved in the execution of the CHTDF Project, but more could

be done to build social capital across different ethnic communities to achieve the target of confidence building by even greater involvement with nationally reputed NGOs and other CSOs.

The role of local government is another important dimension in the multi-stakeholder approach pursued, in principle, by UNDP. However, the potentials of its use through active participation and mediation of urban local governments have barely been reached in UPPR, thus affecting the sustainability of the project goal of lifting 3 million urban poor out of poverty. The role of local government is quite successful in the case of REOPA, while more could be done in the case of CHTDF where capacity building of the local government in the post-conflict peace-building process has remained a well-known constraint. In LGSP-LIC, local government's role promises to be stronger in the future provided there is enough attention paid to strengthening the interface between community and local government, which is currently weak in the form of irregular Ward Development Committee meetings. The local revenue generating capacity of the *Union Parishad* also needs to be strengthened.

Partnership with the private sector is also mixed. In all four project interventions cited in the paragraph above, there is scope for more innovative use of private sector actors to achieve the poverty reduction objective, for instance, increasing the interest of private financial institutions in the innovative financing of the 'health smart cards' for insuring against catastrophic health risks for the project beneficiaries (which could work well for UPPR and LGSP). In both LGSP-LIC and CHTDF, some project components can be built up with private partnership in service delivery as well as supporting local livelihood projects (branding local products), forging links with upstream urban and export markets.

Conversely, projects on persistent organic pollution, ozone depleting substances, chlorofluorocarbons, brick kilns and clean development mechanisms are examples where UNDP actively involved private sectors players and developed strong partnerships

with them. Projects like CWBMP, Sustainable Environment Management Programme, Coastal Fisheries and CDMP also involved many local organizations, NGOs, educational institutions, and religious institutions. Such partnerships helped local people develop skills and capacities to deal with overexploitation of resources, change unsustainable livelihood strategies and generate income for the poor and vulnerable groups of people in the locality.

4. UNDP has been observed to play multiple roles during the programming period (project implementation, policy advice, fund providers, service providers, advocacy etc.) and in some areas a more appropriate balance could have been achieved.

Multiple roles are, of course, inevitable for an organization like UNDP pursuing multiple routes for poverty reduction and MDG attainment in the shortest possible time. The question is to strike an appropriate balance among different roles. UNDP's advocacy role was important and effective in the areas of human rights, judicial reform, elections and local governance. A more pronounced role of advocacy in some other areas, however, is appropriate, for example, in the case of socially complex projects demanding long-term improvements in governance conditions. There are examples of good macro-micro linkages in some areas, such as local governance. But in the past there were missed opportunities on the part of UNDP for policy engagement by linking lessons from project interventions to policy dialogue and advocacy. For instance, the lessons of rural LGSP-LIC could have been highlighted to draw attention to the pressing needs for improving urban local governance. The lessons of REOPA have favourable implications for understanding the graduation process from poverty, but such lessons could have been advertised to have contained a broader message: give adequate resources while casting wide the safety nets.

Similarly, an urban counterpart of CDMP could be conceived, which is currently missing. This

is odd since a large part of slum poverty may be seen as derivative of adverse ecology experienced in the rural areas—a process possibly magnified by the effects of climate change. Hence, undertaking an urban component of environmental projects for combating degradation of the urban environment seems a logical extension of the rural focused CDMP (or a CDMP-type) project. In the MDG Monitoring Project, the emphasis was primarily on ICT-based capacity building. However, the project engagement could have been leveraged to emphasize and disseminate the idea of improved economic governance and much required institutional restructuring in planning and programming.

UNDP has accumulated a rich experience in working with various modes—in partnership with NGOs, working directly with the community through a CDD approach, and also working with local governments. Building this 'institutional triad' of NGOs-community-local government for project interventions in areas of rural and urban MDGs seems to be an important policy/advocacy message coming out of this rich experience. This could have been made a nation-wide message as a 'first theorem' of institutional development for project practitioners.

In seeking more balance among the multiple roles that UNDP plays, the importance of rigorous and innovative approach to project/programme evaluation can hardly be over-emphasized. In this area the internal monitoring and evaluation system for UNDP projects also needs considerable strengthening.

In general, UNDP should consider shifting from the 'project delivery' mode to a more 'advocacy and policy advice' mode with enhanced reliance on the local actors such as government organizations, NGOs and CSOs for delivering project outputs.

5. The design of the UNDP programme, as well as the projects that constitute it, did not always adequately focus on ensuring sustainability

through stronger institutional linkages and capacity development.

First, there is an overriding need to shift from the project mode of operations to seeking more sustainable institutional linkages. The ongoing move from pilot to first generation (UNDP implemented) to second generation (nationally implemented) reforms needs to be encouraged in UNDP programmatic interventions in Bangladesh. In the area of poverty and social MDGs, for instance, the key focus of the UNDP projects was often to respond to the immediate needs of the poor and less so on developing sustainable linkages with the local government and partner NGOs beyond the life of the project. Moreover, in some UNDP interventions there is not enough emphasis on an appropriate exit strategy.

Second, not enough attention was paid to the institutional sustainability of community organizations in Bangladesh. It is critical to ask whether the design of UNDP interventions explicitly includes long-term support to building capacity, institution building and institutional sustainability to community organizations of the poor in rural and urban areas. The issue of institutional sustainability has been a recurrent theme in UPPR (with a focus on CDCs), CHTDF (with a focus on PDCs) and LGSP-LIC (with a focus on Ward Development Committees). Such a social mobilization and community empowerment approach would have worked better if the community organizations created by the projects had a firmer legal basis (by way of national registration) and hence a more durable institutional structure as a community-based organization. Again, durability does not come easily merely by registering as a community-based organization, as is evidenced from the experience of CWBMP. In other words, legal recognition of community-based organizations is only part of the story. Such institutions require long-term mentoring and support.

Third, the capacity building component of some UNDP projects has yet to produce the desired

results due to structural and contextual factors. Part of the problems lie in the external policy and institutional environment within which these projects operate. For instance, the capacity building aspect of the CHTDF Project has been partly affected by the ill-defined local governance framework without proper delimitation of the boundary and scope of various local government bodies such as district council and *upazila* council. In the case of LGSP-LIC, while the spending ability of the *Union Parishad* has increased, the revenue generation ability has registered only modest growth during the entire decade of its operation. Part of the problem also lies in the incentive structure facing local government. Greater taxing ability of the *Union Parishad* is possibly compromised by electoral considerations, in the context whereby no *Union Parishad* elections were held for the last seven years. Generally speaking, the trade-off between short-term results and long-term capacity building assume critical significance in this context.

6. Although UNDP largely succeeded in mainstreaming gender in all its programmes, and UNDP programmes have made substantial and meaningful contribution in terms of addressing practical gender needs, the strategic gender needs of women, especially in vulnerable communities, remain largely unaddressed.

UNDP should be commended for embedding gender concerns across all its projects and programmes and is now well positioned to support national efforts aimed at addressing strategic gender needs. This is a difficult proposition, given the socio-cultural construct of gender roles and divides along the private-public realm. However, the vision has to be kept alive in order to attain gender equality. UNDP, being a close partner of the government, is in a position to play a major advocacy role in this regard. Bangladesh is a signatory to the Convention for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and other international conventions related to human and women's rights; this aspect should be emphasized through the observance of different days to raise awareness among the general people on gender

related issues. The programmes must be inclusive and both men and women ought to be part of it. However, it needs to be emphasized that practical gender needs are the pathways towards meeting strategic gender needs. In the absence of an adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanism, the pathways towards gender equality cannot be assessed properly.

7. UNDP's initial thrusts on addressing environmental degradation seem to have lost momentum in recent years. This can be attributed to the increasing preoccupation, maybe justifiably so, with programmes related to mitigation and adaptation to climate change in Bangladesh.

Although UNDP started its programmes and projects in this area by focusing on mainstream environment and energy issues, it is evident from the allocation of funds that it has gradually shifted away from this area and moved on to a climate change agenda related to adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction. Climate change is a very important issue for Bangladesh, and it needs to be addressed properly. However, environmental degradation is still responsible for poverty and the poor standard of living for millions of people. With enormous population pressure on a very limited amount of resources, Bangladesh's environment is threatened. Pollution is rising, and it is threatening the achievements of MDGs. Moreover, some of the momentum achieved to mainstream environmental degradation and depletion through past UNDP engagements could be at risk without additional and continued support in this area. In this context, regional cooperation on environmental and disaster management issues among South Asian countries in general and between India and Bangladesh in particular, assume special significance.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The analyses made in the preceding chapters not only signify the relevance of UNDP's current areas of focus, but also point to a sound logical direction for UNDP activities in the

coming programming cycle. These form the basis of recommendations made in this ADR, keeping in view that these are operationally actionable. Attempts have also been made to ensure that there is a clear link between conclusions and recommendations, even if one recommendation addresses several conclusions or one conclusion is addressed by several recommendations.

1. To remain relevant, UNDP should continue to align its programme with national development priorities, specifically the Sixth Five-Year Plan and the framework of Joint Country Strategy.

Currently UNDP programmes are based on the PRSP. There has been a shift to medium term planning (Sixth Five-Year Plan) and long term planning (Perspective Plan). UNDP should closely follow this shift in approach to planned development in Bangladesh during its future interventions. Also, periodic adjustment using the opportunity of a new country programme to assess the relevance of ongoing projects and alignment to the national planning framework is recommended.

2. Appropriate exit strategies need to be built into the programmes and projects to strengthen the potential for sustainability.

UNDP should redesign the programmes and projects on outcomes and outputs that are achievable and realistically implementable in the time-frame envisaged. Continuance of projects for a long time makes the country aid dependent and also develops a culture of dependency. Appropriate exit strategies should, therefore, be designed to ensure that benefits continue to flow even after support is withdrawn.

3. UNDP, together with national partners, should undertake periodic adjustments of innovative projects in light of experience.

An example of this would be the governance and poverty reduction projects. For instance,

innovative projects such as UPPR and LGSP-LIC need to be adjusted in the light of new sets of challenges in the areas of persistently weak local governance and lack of adequate coordination among local government, NGOs/CSOs and local communities. This is especially important in the context of new leadership elected in the recently held *Union Parishad* election in 2011 (the previous election was held in 2003). Lessons learned should be incorporated into revising the project design and linked to national entities responsible for policy making.

4. UNDP should strengthen its advocacy role, especially in areas that directly promote UN values such as human rights and gender equality.

Although UNDP is strategically positioned to promote UN values, the advocacy role of the organization in the areas of human rights and gender is extremely critical in countries like Bangladesh. Given the weak nature of accountability of state actors, it is important to strengthen the system of state monitoring and civic advocacy by the civil society at large. It is equally important to ensure transparency and a level playing field in the non-governmental sector as well. Concerns about promoting gender equality need to be adequately addressed in both policy advocacy, especially in compliance with international conventions, and outcome monitoring and reporting.

5. UNDP should try to avoid ‘fragmentation effects’ by providing adequate emphasis on both developmental and social cohesion needs within and across communities.

This is particularly important for socially complex projects such as CHTDF, where more emphasis was given to the promotion of micro-grant based income-generation activities and less on building social cohesion. Although the project achieved some tangible results in terms of post-conflict peace efforts, the developmental impact of peace itself may have been compromised by the growing discontent expressed by different ethnicities.

6. The issue of shock prevention to avoid income erosion needs to be given more attention in future UNDP programmes, which currently focus mainly on income generation.

Three major types of shocks experienced by the project beneficiaries are: health related, natural disaster related, and personal insecurity related (related to theft, harassment faced due to institutional malpractices and misgovernance). Each of these shocks demand different prevention strategies. For instance, health related shocks can be addressed by effective micro-insurance in curative health care. Measures related to natural disaster related shocks resist a single solution given the diversities in the sources of natural disasters (flood-prone, coastal and dry-lands will demand different coping methods and mitigation policies). Personal insecurity related shocks require long-term institutional improvements, but they can also be mitigated in the short-term, for instance, through easy recourse to legal aid and human rights aid by civic organizations, strengthening alternative mechanisms for grievance resolution, awareness raising in the criminal justice system, and ensuring access to information (speedy media disclosure of the events of injustice as well as increased rights awareness among the poor and the marginalized).

7. Given its long-term commitment to Bangladesh, UNDP should build on its success in addressing practical gender needs to explicitly move to the more challenging task of supporting strategic gender needs.

The issue needs to be addressed at the political, cultural and economic levels. A paradigm shift is required in the structure of political parties, through the induction of gender sensitive issues and programmes. Members of Parliament as well as members of the local government bodies need gender sensitization training. The formal domain of politics and policy making need to be demasculinized and made more humane. At the cultural level, the academic curriculum at all levels needs to incorporate gender studies or gender related issues. This is critical to bring

about a shift in the popular psyche. At the economic level, budgetary allocations for gender related issues should be increased. Instead of supportive structures, the emphasis ought to be on transformative structures like allocations for women to have entry into the market in non-traditional sectors, which are sustainable and not project dependent.

8. UNDP should play an important role in promoting regional cooperation on environmental and disaster management issues among South Asian countries in general, and between India and Bangladesh in particular.

Environmental issues are interlinked, so it would be useful to develop South-South cooperation between Bangladesh and India. Issues that require immediate attention are water flows between India and Bangladesh, protection of Sundarban and pollution in rivers. UNDP could play the role of a catalyst to promote cooperation within the region.

9. Comprehensive disaster management programmes of UNDP need to focus more on supporting the livelihoods of the poor within an asset livelihood framework (extended by rights to development of the poor) in design when it comes to the issue of revival of the local economy.

Recently, disaster management programmes in Bangladesh have refocused using a systematic approach to identifying vulnerable communities. However, with climate change becoming a reality, the risk and vulnerability of the communities is likely to be exacerbated. There are communities even in urban locations who are poor and vulnerable. Many communities will lose their livelihood due to climate change risks. The programmes need to focus on new risks and their effects on livelihood, because a livelihood based strategy is likely to succeed in reducing community level risks due to such vulnerability.

10. UNDP should continue to focus on environment-related issues like pollution and degradation of natural resources to ensure sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Mainstreaming environmental issues into policy making will require continued involvement of UNDP on these issues. However, since UNDP has reduced its engagement from the core environmental issues, poverty-environment links have been overlooked. This will adversely affect achievement of several MDGs related to health and environment. UNDP should therefore realign its engagement in this sector to restore environmental focus to its projects and programmes.

Annex 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Evaluation Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts country evaluations called Assessments of Development Results (ADRs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP strategy in facilitating and leveraging national effort for achieving development results. ADRs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.⁹⁷ Based on the principle of national ownership, the Evaluation Office seeks to conduct ADRs in collaboration with the national government whenever agreed and possible. The purpose of an ADR is to:

- Provide substantive support to the Administrator's accountability function in reporting to the Executive Board
- Support greater UNDP accountability to national stakeholders and partners in the programme country
- Serve as a means of quality assurance for UNDP interventions at the country level
- Contribute to learning at corporate, regional and country levels

The ADR in Bangladesh will be conducted in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh through its External Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance. It will be undertaken in 2010 towards the end of the current programme cycle of 2006-2011 with a view to contributing to the preparation of the new UNDP country programme starting from 2012 as well as the forthcoming United National Development

Assistance Framework (UNDAF) scheduled to start in the same year.

2. BACKGROUND

Over the last six years, Bangladesh has made impressive gains in key human development indicators and is placed among countries considered to have achieved medium human development. Bangladesh has also made good progress in reducing poverty, despite the external shocks that have routinely affected the country. Poverty fell from 49 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2005 (the latest data available), propelled by respectable economic growth and relatively stable inequality. Nonetheless, Bangladesh remains a poor country with approximately 56 million poor people in 2005 and continuing disparities across occupational groups, gender and regions. A caretaker government was established at the end of the first year of the programme and lasted two years. This accelerated the momentum of reform towards good governance and achievement of the MDGs. On 29 December 2008 Bangladesh held national elections resulting in victory for the Awami League and a promise to move the development agenda forward.

In 2005 the United Nations Country Team established the UNDAF 2006-2010 (later extended to 2011) based on a common country assessment. Within the UNDAF, UNDP developed in its own country programme 2006-2010 (also extended to 2011) focused on five main thematic areas:

- Democratic governance and human rights
- Sustainable environmental and energy management

⁹⁷ For the UNDP Strategic Plan, see www.undp.org/execbrd/pdf/dp07-43Rev1.pdf.

- Economic growth and poverty alleviation
- Reduction of social and economic vulnerability
- Gender equality and the advancement of women

UNDP in Bangladesh has changed significantly since the start of the country programme and the period of political change in the country. This change led to changing national priorities and new demands on UNDP. Programme delivery increased from US\$ 34 million in 2005 to US\$ 72 million in 2009, having reached US\$ 96 million in 2008. This is compared to an expected delivery of approximately US\$ 114 million for the five year of the 2006-2010 country programme. It has achieved this growth through significant resource mobilization reaching a more than 10:1 non-core to core ratio in 2008.

3. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

Since this is the second ADR conducted in Bangladesh, the period covered by the evaluation will be restricted. Data collection for the first ADR was undertaken in late 2004 and the report published in 2005. As a result, this ADR will focus on UNDP contribution to development results in Bangladesh only under its ongoing country programmes (2006-2011). Inevitably there will be projects within the ongoing programme that started in the previous one and some analysis may take a longer term perspective where appropriate.

The ADR will assess its contribution to the national effort in addressing its development challenges, encompassing social, economic and political spheres. It will assess key results, specifically outcomes—anticipated and unanticipated, positive and negative—and will cover UNDP assistance funded from both core and non-core resources. It covers all UNDP activities in the country including non-project activities and engagement through regional and global initiatives.

4. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation has two main components: the

analysis of UNDP contributions to development results through its programme outcomes, and the strategy it has taken. For each component, the ADR will present its findings and assessment according to the set criteria provided below. Further elaboration of the criteria will be found in 'ADR Manual 2010'.

UNDP contributions by thematic and programmatic areas

Analysis will be made on the contribution of UNDP to development results of Bangladesh through its programme activities. The analysis will be presented by thematic and programme areas and according to the following criteria:

- Relevance of UNDP projects, outputs and outcomes
- Effectiveness of UNDP interventions in terms of achieving stated goals
- Efficiency of UNDP interventions in terms of use of human and financial resources
- Sustainability of the results to which UNDP contributes

UNDP contributions through its positioning and strategies

The positioning and strategies of UNDP are analysed both from the perspective of the organization's mandate¹ and the development needs and priorities in the country as agreed and as they emerged. This would entail systematic analyses of UNDP's place and niche within the development and policy space in the country, as well as strategies used by UNDP to maximize its contribution through adopting relevant strategies and approaches. The following criteria will be applied:

- Relevance and responsiveness of the country programme as a whole
- Exploiting comparative strengths
- Promoting UN values from a human development perspective

Although a judgement is made using the criteria above, the ADR process will also identify how various factors have influenced UNDP performance. The following list has been enhanced through discussions with the UNDP country office in Bangladesh and national development partners but is not exhaustive. It is also provided to ensure that significant factors important to UNDP are addressed in all ADRs.

- Capacity development
- Gender
- South-South cooperation
- Partnerships for development
- Coordination of UN and other development assistance

The evaluation criteria form the basis of the ADR methodological process. Evaluators generate findings within the scope of the evaluation and use the criteria to make assessments. In turn the findings and assessment are used to identify the conclusions from the evaluation and to draw recommendations. The process is illustrated in Figure 1.

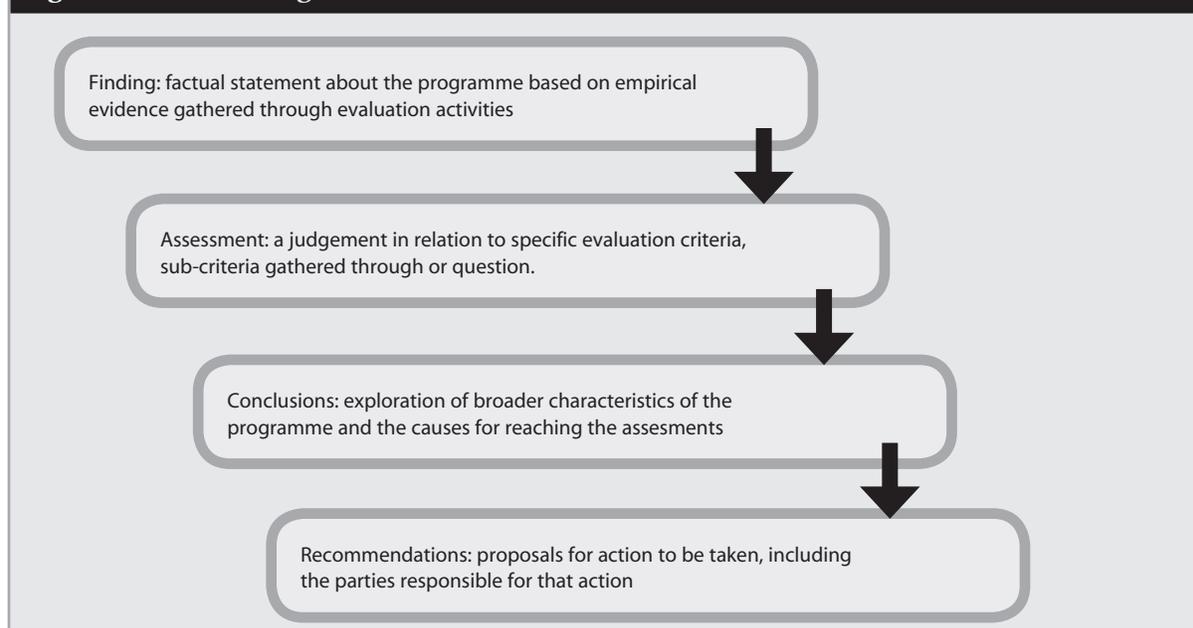
5. DATA COLLECTION

At the core of the data collection process will be the evaluation matrix that links each of the criteria and related evaluation questions to data sources and data collection methods. In so doing it ensures a logical approach to using the evaluation criteria.

The evaluation team will use a multiple method approach that could include document reviews, workshops, group and individual interviews, project and field visits, and surveys. The set of methods for each evaluation criteria and questions should be defined in the inception report to be prepared by the evaluation team after preliminary research. Nonetheless, the following two data collection methods will be used as a minimum:

- Document review is at the core of the data collection methods. The country office has successfully implemented a comprehensive evaluation plan ensuring the ADR can be built on strong foundations. Specifically, it has completed three outcome evaluations since the start of the ongoing country programme and more than 10 project

Figure 1: From Findings to Recommendations



evaluations have been completed for interventions undertaken in the period covered by the ADR.

- Stakeholder interviews will be used to fill gaps identified in the evaluation matrix. A strong participatory approach will be taken involving a broad range of stakeholders including those beyond UNDP direct partners. These stakeholders would include government representatives of ministries and agencies, civil-society organizations, private-sector representatives, UN organizations, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, and the beneficiaries of the programme. Furthermore, in order to identify key development challenges of the country, the evaluation team may conduct interviews and consultations beyond those involved directly or indirectly in UNDP country programme.

The evaluation team will use a variety of methods to ensure that the data is valid, including triangulation. All the findings must be supported by evidence and validated through consulting multiple sources of information. The evaluation team is required to use an appropriate tool (e.g. an evaluation matrix to present findings from multiple sources) to show that all the findings are validated. The data collection process will utilize data codification methods to facilitate analysis.

The evaluation team may undertake field trips for interviews, group discussions, surveys and/or project site observations. For ADR Bangladesh, it is expected that two such field trips will be undertaken to regions of Bangladesh where UNDP has a concentration of field projects. Details of evaluation methods will be included in the inception report (see section 8).

6. THE EVALUATION TEAM

The Evaluation Office will establish an evaluation team to undertake the ADR. The team will constitute the following members:

- Team Leader, with overall responsibility for providing guidance and leadership for conducting the ADR, and for preparing and

revising draft and final reports. The Team Leader will be a Bangladesh national with significant experience across a broad range of development issues. It is estimated that workload of the team leader would be 60 days.

- Team Specialists, who will support the Team Leader and provide the expertise in specific subject areas of the evaluation, and may be responsible for drafting relevant parts of the report. Specialists will be contracted to cover the following areas: climate change and disaster, governance, poverty and the crosscutting of capacity development. It is estimated that workload of the team specialists would be approximately 15-25 days each.
- The Evaluation Office Task Manager will act as a member of the team and provide support to the design of the evaluation, the process of data analysis and report writing.

A separate contract will be issued to a consultant to prepare a paper on the Bangladesh development context during the period being examined from a national perspective.

7. EVALUATION MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

UNDP EVALUATION OFFICE

UNDP Evaluation Office will conduct the ADR in collaboration with the External Relations Division of the Government of Bangladesh. The Evaluation Office Task Manager will provide overall management of and technical backstopping to the evaluation. The Task Manager will set the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, select the evaluation team, receive the inception report, provide guidance on the conduct of the evaluation, organize feedback sessions and a stakeholder meeting, receive the first draft of the report and decide on its acceptability, and manage the review and follow-up processes. The Task Manager will also support the evaluation team in understanding the scope, the process, the approach and the methodology of ADR, provide ongoing advice and feedback to the team for quality assurance, and assist the Team Leader

in finalizing the report. The Evaluation Office will meet all costs directly related to the conduct of the ADR.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

The External Relations Division will collaborate with the UNDP Evaluation Office in conducting the ADR. The External Relations Division will provide inputs to the Terms of Reference particularly on key evaluation questions, to the selection process of the evaluation team, and to the preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations to be made by the team. It will facilitate the conduct of the ADR by the evaluation team by: providing necessary access to information sources within the Government of Bangladesh; safeguarding the independence of the evaluation; and jointly organizing the stakeholder meeting with Evaluation Office. It will be responsible within the Government of Bangladesh for the use and dissemination of the final outcomes of the ADR.

UNDP COUNTRY OFFICE IN BANGLADESH

The country office will support the evaluation team in liaison with key partners and other stakeholders, make available to the team all necessary information regarding UNDP programmes, projects and activities in the country, and provide factual verifications of the draft report. The country office will provide the evaluation team support in kind (e.g. arranging meetings with project staff and beneficiaries; or assistance for the project site visits). To ensure the independence of the views expressed in interviews and meetings with stakeholders held for data collection purposes, however, the country office will not participate in them.

EVALUATION TEAM

The Evaluation Team will be responsible for conducting the evaluation as described in section 8 on the process, in particular Phases 2, 3 and 4. This will entail, *inter alia*, preparing the

inception report, conducting data collection, structured data documentation and analysis, presenting preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations at debriefings and the stakeholder workshop, and preparing the first, second and final drafts of the ADR report as well as a draft Evaluation Brief.

EVALUATION REFERENCE GROUP

An evaluation reference group will be established to discuss key outputs from the evaluation process and provide comments to the evaluation task manager. Led by the External Relations Division focal point for the evaluation, the reference group will include representatives from:

- Government stakeholders (External Relations Division, Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division)
- National civil society
- Key international partners (DFID, European Union)
- United Nations (UNDP, United Nations Country Team)

8. EVALUATION PROCESS

PHASE 1: PREPARATION

The Evaluation Office will undertake preliminary research to prepare for the evaluation and upload relevant document to a special website for the evaluation team. The Task Manager will undertake a preparatory mission and following discussion with stakeholders will prepare the Terms of Reference for the evaluation. At this stage the evaluation team leader will also be identified and establish the evaluation team.

PHASE 2: PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION DESIGN

- Preliminary research: Desk review and briefings—Based on the preparatory work by the Evaluation Office and other information and materials obtained from the government,

UNDP country office and other sources, the evaluation team will analyse, inter alia, national documents and documents related to UNDP programmes and projects over the period being examined. The evaluation team may also request and hold briefing sessions with country office programme staff to deepen the understanding of their work portfolio and activities. With the preliminary research, the evaluation team is expected to develop a good understanding of the challenges that the country has been facing, and the responses and the achievements of UNDP through its country programme and other activities.

- Inception workshop—A two day workshop design to cover ADR methodology and approaches as well as to discuss various evaluation and qualitative data analysis tools that can be used in the evaluation process. The workshop will be facilitated by the Evaluation Office task manager and will help produce input for the inception report.

Based on the preliminary research above, the evaluation team will develop an inception report, which should include:

- Brief overview of key development challenges, national strategies and UN/UNDP response to contextualize evaluation questions
- Evaluation questions for each evaluation criteria (as defined in the ADR Manual)
- Methods to be used and sources of information to be consulted in addressing each set of evaluation questions
- Selection of projects/activities to be examined in-depth
- Possible visits to project/field activity sites
- Outline of the evaluation’s approach to qualitative data analysis, specifying specific tools to be used
- The profiles of other members of the evaluation team
- The Task Manager will provide guidance and a detailed outline to be followed in preparing

the report. The UNDP Bangladesh country office focal point will be fully involved in this process both as resource person and participant.

PHASE 3: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Based on the inception report, the team will carry out the evaluation by collecting data.

- The evaluation team should establish a tentative schedule of its activities in consultation with the UNDP country office, External Relations Division and Task Manager. The field visits and observations should normally be arranged through the country office. The schedule may need to be further adjusted during the data collection.
- The team will collect data according to the principles set out in Section 6 of this Terms of Reference and as further defined in the inception report.
- All interviews will be conducted based on indicative interview protocols, and (electronic/Word) summaries of each interview will be prepared based on an agreed structure to be define in the inception report’s qualitative data analysis approach.

The evaluation team will analyse the data collected to reach preliminary assessments, conclusions and recommendations.

- Once the data is collected, the evaluation team should dedicate some time (up to one week) to its analysis. The Task Manager will join the team during this phase to assist in the analysis and validation.
- Where possible, the evaluation team should develop data displays to illustrate key findings.
- The outcome of the data analysis will be preliminary assessments for each evaluation criterion/question, general conclusions, and strategic and operational recommendations.
- Once the preliminary assessments, conclusions and recommendations are thus

formulated, the evaluation team will debrief the External Relations Division and country office to obtain feedback so as to avoid factual inaccuracies and gross misinterpretation.

- Feedback workshop—A validation workshop will be organized at the end of the data collection and analysis phase to present preliminary findings, assessments, conclusions and, possibly, emerging recommendations to the evaluation reference group and other key stakeholders, and to obtain their feedback to be incorporated in the early drafts of the report.

PHASE 4: DRAFTING AND REVIEWS

- First draft and the quality assurance—The Team Leader will submit a complete draft of the report to the Evaluation Office within three weeks after the feedback workshop. The Evaluation Office will accept the report as a first draft when it is in compliance with the Terms of Reference, the ADR Manual and other established guidelines, and satisfies basic quality standards. The draft is also subject to a quality assurance process through an external review.
- Second draft and the verification and stakeholder comments—The first draft will be revised by the Team Leader to incorporate the feedback from the external review process. Once satisfactory revisions to the draft are made, it becomes the second draft. The second draft will be forwarded by the Evaluation Office to the UNDP country office and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and the Government of Bangladesh through the External Relations Division, for factual verification and identification of any errors of omission and/or interpretation. The Team Leader will revise the second draft accordingly, preparing an audit trail that indicates changes that are made to the draft, and submit it as the final draft. The Evaluation Office may request further revisions if it considers it necessary.
- Stakeholder workshop—A meeting with the

key national stakeholders will be organized to present the results of the evaluation and examine ways forward in Bangladesh. The main purpose of the meeting is to facilitate greater buy-in by national stakeholders in taking the lessons and recommendations from the report forward and to strengthen the national ownership of the development process and the necessary accountability of UNDP interventions at the country level. It may be necessary to incorporate some significant comments into the final evaluation report.

PHASE 5: FOLLOW-UP

- Management response—UNDP Bangladesh will prepare a management response to the ADR under the oversight of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. The bureau will be responsible for monitoring and overseeing the implementation of follow-up actions in the Evaluation Resource Centre.
- Communication—The ADR report and brief will be widely distributed in both hard and electronic versions. The evaluation report will be made available to the UNDP Executive Board by the time of approving a new country programme document. It will be widely distributed by the Evaluation Office and at UNDP headquarters, to evaluation outfits of other international organizations, and to evaluation societies and research institutions in the region. The Bangladesh country office and the External Relations Division will disseminate to stakeholders in the country. The report and the management response will be published on the UNDP website as well as in the Evaluation Resource

9. TIME-FRAME

The time-frame above is indicative of the process and deadlines, and does not imply full-time engagement of the evaluation team during the period.

10. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The expected outputs from the evaluation team in particular are:

- An inception report, providing the evaluation matrix as specified in section 8 of this document (maximum 10 pages without annexes)
- The first, second and final drafts of the report ‘Assessment of Development

Results—Bangladesh’ (approximately 50 pages for the main text)

- Draft for the Evaluation Brief (2 pages)
- Presentations at the feedback and stakeholder meetings

The final report of the ADR will follow the standard structure outlined in the ADR Manual 2010, and all drafts will be provided in English.

Activity	Responsible	Estimated time-frame
ADR initiation and preparatory work	Evaluation Office	Jan-Feb
Preparatory mission	Evaluation Office	End-Feb
Selection of the evaluation team leader	Evaluation Office/country office	March/April
Inception workshop and report	Evaluation Office/Team Leader	17-20 May
Selection of other evaluation team members	Evaluation Office/Team Leader/country office	May/June
Data collection	Evaluation Team	June/July
Data analysis	Evaluation Team/Evaluation Office	July
Validation workshop	Evaluation Office/ External Relations Division/Evaluation Team	August
Submission of the first draft	Team Leader/Evaluation Team	September
External review	Evaluation Office	October
Submission of the second draft	Team Leader/Evaluation Team	October
Review by country office, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and Government of Bangladesh	Evaluation Office/ External Relations Division	November
Submission of the final draft	Team Leader/Evaluation Team	November
Stakeholder workshop	Evaluation Office	November
Editing and formatting	Evaluation Office	December
Issuance of the final report and Evaluation Brief	Evaluation Office	December
Dissemination of the final report and Evaluation Brief	Evaluation Office/ External Relations Division/country office	January

Annex 2

KEY PEOPLE CONSULTED

UNDP COUNTRY OFFICE

- Mr. Steven Goldfinch, Programme Specialist, Climate Change, Environment, and Disaster Management Cluster
- Ms. Majeda Haque, Programme Analyst and Head, Local Poverty Reduction Cluster
- Ms. Won Young Hong, Assistant Country Director and Head of Governance Cluster
- Dr. M. Aminul Islam, Assistant Country Director and Head of Climate Change, Environment, Disaster Management Cluster
- Mr. Robert Juhkam, Deputy Country Director (Programme)
- Mr. Mamunul H. Khan, Programme Officer, Environment and Sustainable Development
- Ms. Shaila Khan, Assistant Country Director and Head of Local Governance Cluster
- Mr. Andre Louhanapessy, Programme Specialist, Head of Peace and Development Cluster
- Mr. Sydur Rahman Molla, Programme Analyst, LGSP-LIC
- Mr. K. Morshed, Assistant Country Director (Policy Support and Communications)
- Mr. Stefan Priesnar, Country Director
- Mr. Ashiqur Rahman, Programme Analyst, Local Poverty Reduction Cluster
- Mr. Ashiqul Hasib Tareq, Programme Analyst, Results and Resource Management Cluster

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

Donor Agencies

- Mr. Chris Austin, Country Representative, DFID
- Mr. Koen Duchateau, First Secretary, European Union

- Mr. Arthur Erken, UNFPA representative, Bangladesh
- Ms. Julia Jacoby, Attache, Coordination and Aid Effectiveness, European Union
- Mr. Jim McAlpine, Senior Programme Manager, DFID
- Ms. Yolande Wright, Senior Livelihoods Adviser, DFID
- Mr. Milko Van Gool, Counsellor, Head of Cooperation, European Union

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

- Ms. Rowsan Sadia Afroza, Senior Assistant Director (Training), Police Staff College, Dhaka.
- Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Director, Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division, Ministry of Planning
- Mr. Musarraf Hossain Bhuiyan, Secretary, External Relations Division, Ministry of Finance
- Mr. Dilip Kumar Das, Joint Secretary, External Relations Division, Ministry of Finance
- Md. Enayet Hossain, Deputy Chief, Planning Commission
- Mr. Sakhawat Hossain, Member, Election Commission
- Mr. Sohul Hossain, Member, Election Commission
- Dr. A.T.M. Shamsul Huda, Chief Election Commissioner
- Mr. Mihir Kanti Majumder, Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Environment

NGOS/CSOS

- Ms. Kabita Chakma, former President of Hill Women's Federation

Mr. Gautam Dewan, President, CHT Citizen's
Committee

Mr. Hafizuddin Khan, Chairman, Transparency
International, Bangladesh

Dr. Niaz Ahmed Khan, Country Director,
IUCN

Ms. Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Chief Executive,
BELA

Dr. M.K. Mujeri, Director General, BIDS

Mr. Shaktiprodo Tripura, JSS Member and
President, Headmen's Association

Annex 3

DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

- Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project, Local Government Division, 'Baseline Survey on Village Courts in Bangladesh, Final Draft Report', 2009.
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Annex 4

UNDP Bangladesh Outcome Mapping

No.	CPD 2006-2010	CPAP 2006-2010	Results-based annual reports 2006 and 2007	Results-based annual reports 2008 and 2009
1	1.1 Functioning parliamentary oversight and accountability mechanisms	1.1 Functioning parliamentary oversight and accountability mechanisms	Functioning parliamentary oversight and accountability mechanisms	BGD-42: Legislatures, regional elected bodies, and local assemblies have strengthened institutional capacity, enabling them to represent their constituents more effectively
2	1.2 Electoral assistance coordinated and electorate informed of voting rights and responsibilities	1.2 Electoral assistance coordinated and electorate informed of voting rights and responsibilities	Electoral assistance coordinated and electorate informed of voting rights and responsibilities	BGD-41: Electoral laws, processes and institutions strengthen inclusive participation and professional electoral administration
3	1.3 Human rights/ security promoted and protected	1.3 Justice, human rights and security promoted through capacity enhancement and ensuring better access to justice	Justice, human rights and security promoted through capacity enhancement and ensuring better access to justice	BGD-43: Strengthened national, regional and local level capacity to mainstream human rights in government policies and institutions
4	1.4 Informed participation of vulnerable groups in policy dialogue	1.4 Access to information for citizens promoted through the creation of information portals and localization of contents	Access to information for citizens promoted through the creation of information portals and localization of contents	
5	1.5 Local governance capacities enhanced in policy formulation, partnerships			BGD-40: Strengthened capacities of local governments and other stakeholders to foster participatory local development service delivery for the MDGs
6	1.6 Public administration reforms made efficient, transparent, accountable, effective, responsive and gender-sensitive	1.5 Public administration made efficient, transparent, accountable, effective, responsive and gender sensitive	Public administration made efficient, transparent, accountable, effective, responsive and gender sensitive	BGD-44: Effective, responsive, accessible and fair justice systems promote the rule of law, including both formal and informal processes, with due consideration on the rights of the poor, women and vulnerable groups

7	2.1 Enhanced carrying capacity of the environment and natural resource base	2.1 Enhanced carrying capacity of the environment and natural resource base and increased access to sustainable energy services resulting human and income poverty reduction	Enhanced carrying capacity of the environment and natural resource base and increased access to sustainable energy services resulting human and income poverty reduction	BGD-47: Strengthened national capacities to mainstream environment and energy concerns into national development plans and implementation systems
8	3.1 Statistical capacities and analytical processes for regular MDG reporting established	3.1 Statistical capacities and analytical processes for regular MDG reporting established	Statistical capacities and analytical processes for regular MDG reporting established	BGD-39: Enhanced national and local capacities to plan, monitor, report and evaluate the MDGs and related national development priorities, including within resource frameworks
9	3.2 Expanded employment and poverty alleviation opportunities for women, slum-dwellers, CHT residents and the poor/vulnerable	3.2 Expanded employment and poverty alleviation opportunities for poor and the vulnerable in rural and urban areas through effective local governance, community partnerships and basic service delivery	Expanded employment and poverty alleviation opportunities for poor and the vulnerable in rural and urban areas through effective local governance, community partnerships and basic service delivery	BGD-46: Post-crisis socio-economic infrastructure restored, economy revived and employment generated; crisis affected groups returned and reintegrated
10	4.1 Disaster risk reduction integrated into development planning	4.1 Disaster risk reduction integrated into development planning	Disaster risk-reduction integrated into development planning	BGD-45: Strengthened national capacities, including the participation of women, to prevent, reduce and cope with the impact of the systemic shocks from natural hazards
11	4.2 Replicable local poverty initiative(s) linked to policy change, undertaken	1.6 Institution building in CHT for improved and inclusive development with community participation	Institution building in CHT for improved and inclusive development with community participation	
12	4.3 Increased national capacity for an effective HIV/AIDS response	4.2 Increased national capacity for an effective HIV/AIDS response	Increased national capacity for an effective HIV/AIDS response	
13	5.1 Strengthened policies, institutional capacity and knowledge management for gender equality and women's advancement	5.1 Strengthened policies, institutional capacity and knowledge management for gender equality and women's advancement	Strengthened policies, institutional capacity and knowledge management for gender equality and women's advancement	

Annex 5

Summary of Field Work

Data	Working Area	Project	Type of Work
16-26 Sept. 2010	Narsingdi Sadar and Raipur <i>Upazila</i> under Narsingdi District	REOPA	Focus group discussion, Questionnaire Fill up, Local Level Elite Interview, Life History of REOPA (RMP) Programme Members
16-26 Sept. 2010	Narayanganj Sadar <i>Upazila</i> under Narayanganj District	UPPR	Focus group discussion, Questionnaire Fill up, Local Level Elite Interview, Life History of UPPR Programme Members
17 -26 Sept. 2010	Sirajganj Sadar and Ullapara <i>Upazila</i> under Sirajganj District	LGSP-LIC	Focus group discussion, Questionnaire Fill up, Local Level Elite Interview, Life History of LGSP-LIC Programme Members
27 Sept-06 Oct. 2010	Rangamati Sadar and Rajasthali <i>Upazila</i> under Rangamati District	CHT	Focus group discussion, Questionnaire Fill up, Local Level Elite Interview, Life History of CHTDF Programme Members
27 Sept. - 06 Oct. 2010	Khagrachhori Sadar and Matiranga <i>Upazila</i> under Khagrachhori District	CHT	Focus group discussion, Questionnaire Fill up, Local Level Elite Interview, Life History of CHTDF Programme Members
5 Oct. 2010	Habiganj, Sylhet District	REOPA	Focus group discussion with (a) elected <i>Union Parishad</i> members (b) 15 women members of REOPA
23-27 Aug. 2010	Cox's Bazar, Chittagong District	CWMBP, ECFC and CDMP	Focus group discussion and Local Level Elite Interview