

CUBA

PREVENTING POVERTY THROUGH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

PROGRAMME: Human Development Programme at the Local Level (PDHL)

UNDP seeks to support country policies and programmes for reduce and prevent poverty and social exclusion through integrated, participatory sustainable development at the local level, in accordance with the goals of the 2000 Millennium Summit.

Cuba is such a country.

In January 1999, UNDP-Cuba, in collaboration with UNOPS and an initial contribution from the Italian Government, launched a programme for local human development (PDHL/Cuba). Active in 44 percent of the country, it has supported hundreds of small-scale projects, from organizing waste management at in some villages to providing potable water in others, and has provided job training to thousands of Cubans.

The Programme

Human Development in Cuba

The 1996 *Human Development Report* notes the following new challenges facing the human development process in Cuba:

- Consolidation of the country's social achievements and prevention of poverty, in a context of reinsertion of the country into the world economy.
- Restructuring of the national economy so that the country can maintain and expand its social achievements, while preserving equity, solidarity and social justice in a society affected by economic restrictions and the penetration of values alien to its social model.

The Investigation Report on Human Development and Equity in Cuba, 1999, outlines national experiences; it addresses the challenges facing those strategies directed at achieving the objectives of human development and equity at world level and at national and provincial levels in Cuba, in a controversial international context, rife with uncertainties for the full prevalence of human development and rights.

The PDHL programme reflects the efforts the Government of Cuba is making to implement the Millennium 2000 and other UN goals through co-operative initiatives between local Cuban, European and Latin-American governments. The efforts follow four main lines of action:

- Technical and administrative decentralization.
- Coverage, quality and sustainability of social and infrastructure services.
- Local economic development.
- Gender focus.

For development partners interested in strengthening these lines in Cuba, the PDHL programme provides a programmatic framework through which specific initiatives can be formulated, managed operationally, monitored and financed.

Approach

The strengthening and promotion of local mechanisms and capacities for management and integrated programming, already well formulated by Cuba's national authorities, provide a platform for local development. The local planning process supported by PDHL establishes links to specific programmes. These include:

- Integration of vulnerable groups into the dynamics of local and economic development.
- Support for initiatives integrating social, economic and environmental components.
- Gender empowerment in local programming.
- Local human development plans linked to the community's territorial planning.
- Co-ordination of different international initiatives to achieve expected impact in the areas of interest to PDHL.

Levels of Action

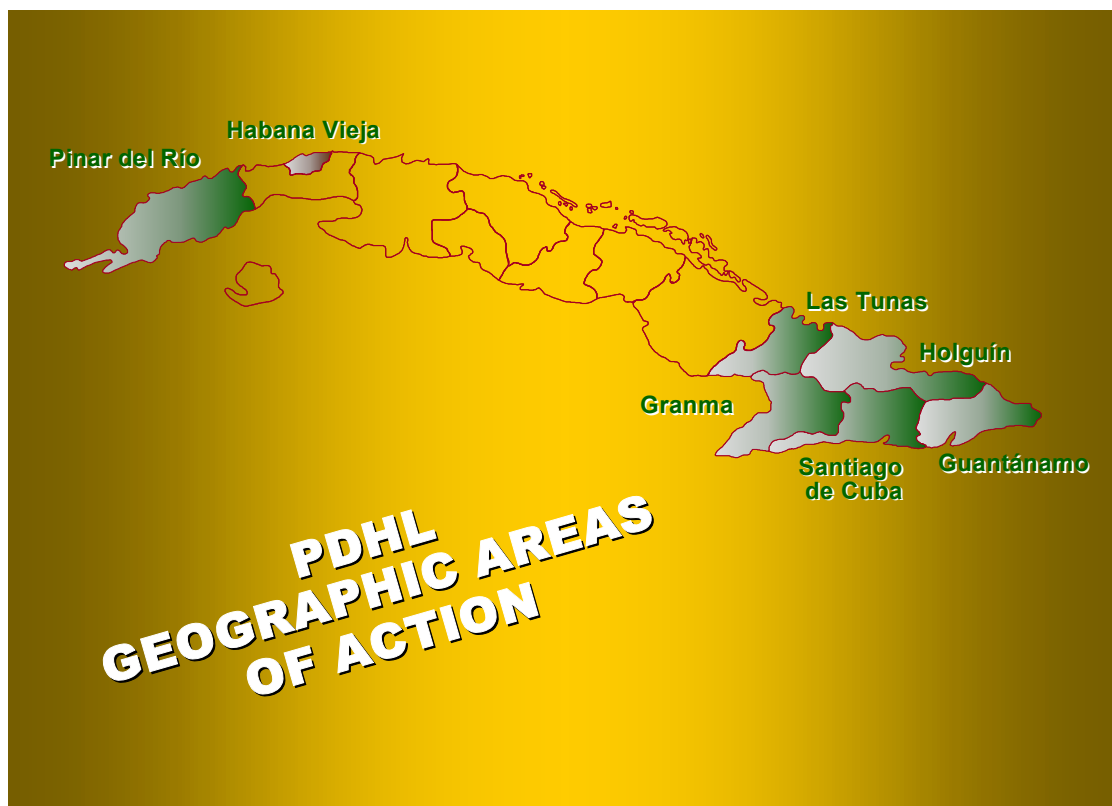
PDHL is currently operational at the following levels:

Local level: It is here that the needs of the population and the potential of the region are expressed in the PDHL programme. Local projects under the programme are designed to respond to local needs and demands and, at the same time, to be sustainable. The operational structure of the local projects is formulated by work groups appointed by municipal and provincial governments. The groups represent a broad range of stakeholders, including those from the health, education, agriculture, welfare, environment and physical planning sectors and from Cuban NGOs and institutions.

National Level: The PDHL is linked to national policies and the Copenhagen Pledges through a National Coordination Committee composed of representatives from the Cuban Ministry for Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration (MINVEC), UNDP-UNOPS, the embassies of donor countries and other participating national and international organizations.

International Level: The PDHL promotes affiliation with networks in other countries committed to the goals of the Earth Summit (environment) the Copenhagen Summit (social aspects) and the Istanbul Conference (human settlements). Positive results achieved by Cuba in the area of development are disseminated, and the exchange of innovative experiences in this areas of interest to Cuba is facilitated.

Where the Programme Operates



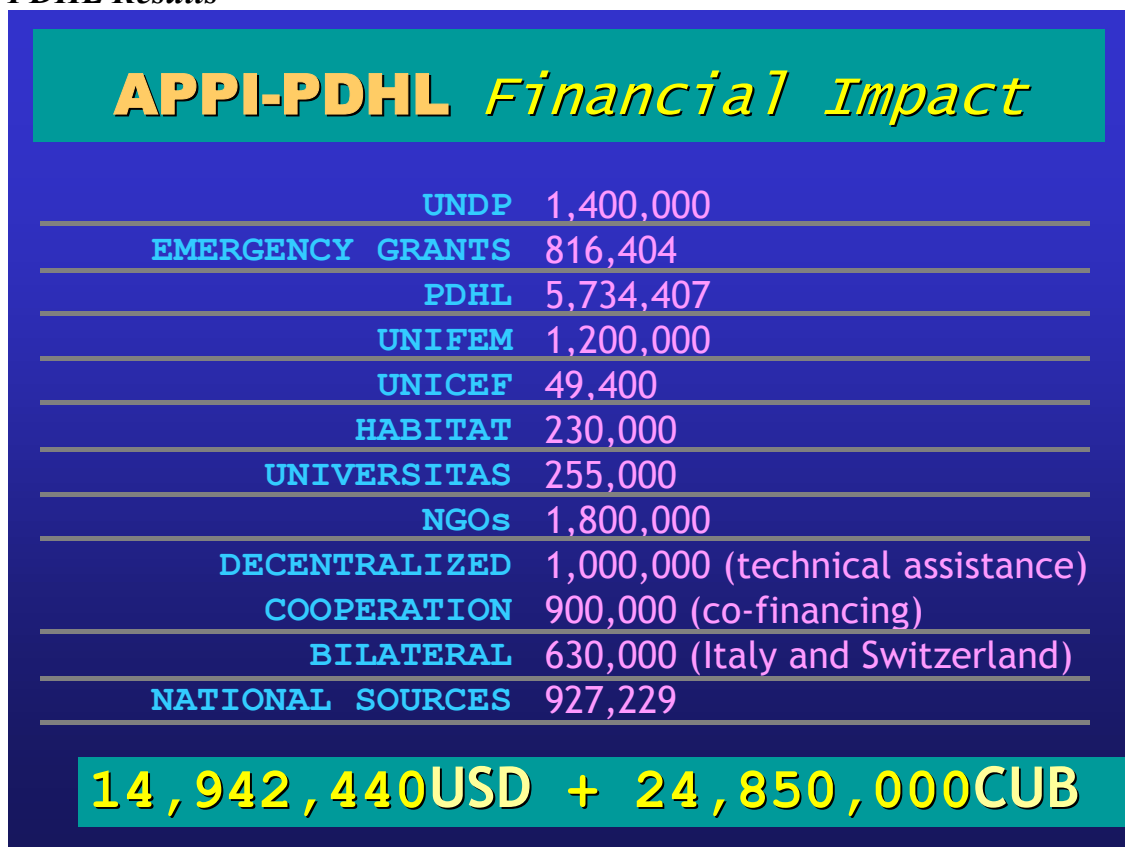
PDHL/Cuba was designed to serve geographically and socio-economically diverse regions of the country. Initially, the programme operated in the provinces of Pinar del Rio (western Cuba), Granma (southeastern Cuba) and in Old Havana (urban area). In 2001, the programme was expanded to include four provinces in eastern Cuba, the country's most economically depressed area. They are: Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, Holguín and Las Tunas. Together, these areas make up 44 percent of Cuba's territory.

The Decentralized Co-operation Model

The PDHL has been designed to function in partnership with similar programmes in Europe and Latin America. A decentralized co-operation mechanism has been established to mobilize those social and economic actors in Europe and Latin America interested in formulating and implementing co-operation with their counterparts in the municipalities and provinces of Cuba.

This model promotes lasting relationships between organized local communities in Cuba and other countries and provides an opportunity to exchange innovative solutions and to create "common interest networks". Such common interests include the sustainability of services, environmental protection, measures for the social and economic integration of women and other vulnerable groups, and job creation.

PDHL Results



Today, after three years, the PDHL programme has been active in six provinces and portions of Havana, Cuba's largest city. Practical results during this period include:

- The completion of 241 local projects in 16 municipalities. These were formulated and executed on the basis of needs identified at the provincial and municipal levels. They have directly benefited more than 600,000 persons, and indirectly, more than 2,340,000.
- Training initiatives that have led to the potential economic empowerment of 11,450 persons. More than 4,000 jobs have been created, of which 2,448 were filled by women.

Noteworthy Projects

Specific noteworthy projects include:

Recycling of urban solid waste in several districts of the capital of Pinar del Rio province. This initiative, promoted by the Umbria and Cecina (Italian) PDHL Committees, is designed to foster environmental education while, at the same time, providing sources of income to women and the disabled through the recovery of raw materials for recycling and compost. Environmental conditions in the involved districts have improved dramatically.

Support for the water supply system in Manzanillo (a bay city in Eastern Cuba's Granma province). With the support of the Emilia Romagna region in Italy and the port city of Naples, the city of Manzanillo revamped its deteriorated water system, making it much more effective.

Creation of flower farms, opening new jobs for women. 30 women and six men have found jobs in two PDHL-sponsored flower farms near Bayamo, Granma province's capital city, where two outlets sell flowers and floral arrangements.

HIV/AIDS Prevention Programme among at risk groups in the capital of Pinar del Rio. The programme is aimed at students and youths and has been successful in preventing HIV/AIDS in the areas covered.

Production of bricks and other construction materials. This project took over a construction materials depot in Pinar del Rio's capital and installed machinery for the production of low-cost bricks and tiles for construction purposes. The project created five new jobs, two of them for women, and helped meet the need for construction materials in neighboring districts.

Development of traditional trades. Sponsored by the Florence (Italy) PDHL Committee, this project recruits young people and trains them in traditional, largely lost arts and crafts. Work places are provided for young artisans to develop their abilities.

Production of medicinal herbs and plants. Exploiting Cuba's rich store of medicinal herbs and plants, a system has been created for the production and processing of medicines from these plants, thus supplementing industrially produced drugs and pharmaceutical products. At least 60 local women in Pinar del Rio are working in this Project.

Development of computerized municipal geographical information systems. These systems provide a valuable tool to municipal planners and administration officials to improve local programming and administration.

Institutional Co-operation

Benefits reflecting extraordinary institutional co-operation in implementing the PDHL programme include:

- Co-ordinated programmatic action by UN agencies (UNDP, UNOPS, UNIFEM, HABITAT, UNICEF, WFP) and bilateral co-operation by the participating countries (Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, France and Sweden), 14 participating national and international NGOs, 123 participating European local governments and more than 240 participating associations and entities within Cuba (universities, municipal services, study centers, chambers of commerce, solidarity associations). The remarkable success of this UNDP programme in Cuba must in large measure be attributed to this web of partnerships.
- The creation and consolidation of a local, multi-sector operational structure based on the Provincial and Municipal Working Groups (GTP and GTM). This structure has facilitated the establishment of integrated processes of local development and has also supported international co-operation in strengthening these processes. Thirty-three local Working Groups employ more than 50 full-time local professionals and intermittently employ or consult with another 350 professionals.
- Building the capacities of the working groups to identify needs and to formulate and manage projects while, at the same time, focusing on gender issues.

Process Achievements

In terms of process, the most significant results of the PDHL programme have been:

- Strengthening at the local level of active, integrated participation by communities. This has been reflected in growing quantitative and qualitative participation as well as in the continuing development of management capacities.
- The creation of specific technical and administrative instruments in the service of local development. Among these are:
 1. The use of geographical information systems in the formulation and management of municipal and provincial development plans;
 2. The creation of management and purchase mechanisms at the municipal level;
 3. Cross-sector programming mechanisms at the municipal and provincial levels;
 4. The creation of small-loan facilities to promote small and medium businesses;
 5. Changes in the variety of and ways in which social services are provided -- community centers and subsidized housing for the elderly, for example, and education for disabled children;
 6. A focus on information measuring quality of life rather than on quantitative data alone.

How to participate:

Any organization, agency or institution interested in participating in the PDHL programme is welcome, and can do so by incorporating itself in any of the ongoing local projects. For more information, please contact the office of UNDP/Cuba.