

# FAST FACTS

United Nations  
Development Programme



## UNDP and Democratic Governance

### The Challenges

Worldwide, the number of countries embracing the key features of democracy soared from less than 60 in 1985 to over 140 in 2007. Yet in many countries, rising hopes have turned to frustration where social and political exclusion, ineffective or nonexistent public services, and the lack of accountability of institutions and leaders threaten to dismantle many hard-fought gains.

Women are still underrepresented at all levels of decision-making. In many countries, governments have failed to provide the jobs, the services and the personal security their citizens need to lead fulfilling lives.



### The Response Needed

These challenges illustrate that while progress is being made, more is needed. This is where UNDP provides support. UNDP promotes human development—empowering people with the capabilities and choices to drive change and to improve their own lives. To enable people to exercise their full social and economic potential, a democratic polity needs institutions that work, including a competent civil service focused on serving its citizens, an elected parliament that keeps the executive in check, and an independent and professional justice system that provides legal access to all.

Such institutions and associated systems cannot be developed overnight, nor taken for granted once established: political and civil conflict, power monopolies and deep public dissatisfaction with government can slow or even stop progress towards inclusive, democratic governance.

Reaching the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 requires political will at the local, national as well as international level, which can be mobilized meaningfully only if the poor can exercise a stronger voice.

### UNDP's Focus

UNDP devotes the biggest share of its resources—approximately US\$1.5 billion each year—to making democratic governance deliver for the poor. Whether supporting the first free elections in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** in over 40 years or helping **Nepal** to craft its new constitution, the organization has proven it can deliver on the ground in every region, often under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

UNDP's work focuses on four main areas:

1. **Expanding people's opportunities to participate in political decision-making**, with particular attention to women and the poor. We encourage more women to enter politics and invest in a free and informed media.
2. **Making democratic institutions more accountable and responsive to citizens**: UNDP supports one in three parliaments around the world, helps public administrations to deliver basic services and promotes the rule of law and people's access to justice.
3. **Promoting the principles of democratic governance** – in particular, anti-corruption, human rights, women's empowerment and equal opportunity.
4. **Supporting country-led democratic governance assessments**: We help countries to assess their democratic government needs, monitor their progress, and achieve their goals—developing the capacities of various stakeholders to collect and analyze the information necessary to make the right decisions and to translate that insight into the best policies.

### UNDP's Services

UNDP offers services to developing countries in the following categories:

- Governance assessments and monitoring
- Civic engagement
- Electoral systems and processes
- Independent media, access to information and pro-poor e-governance
- Parliamentary development
- Access to justice and rule of law
- Local governance and development
- Public administration reform and economic governance
- Human rights
- Anti-corruption
- Women's political empowerment

Public administration reform and anti-corruption	2,122
Decentralisation, local governance and urban/rural development	990
Electoral systems and processes	915
Policy support for democratic governance	576
Justice and human rights	404
Parliamentary development	99
E-governance and access to information	71
Other governance activities	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,180</b>

### Examples of UNDP's Work

UNDP supports **an election somewhere in the world on average every two weeks**. Elections are about more than election day. For transitional states, especially those coming out of conflict, the election cycle is a crucial first step in managing what can be an unwieldy democratic process.

In **Sierra Leone** in 2007, UNDP coordinated a \$40 million basket fund on behalf of donors and supported the country's electoral process from voter education and registration to the distribution of ballot boxes.

**UNDP promotes access to justice for the poor.** Governing democratically means you have to get the law right and make sure it is upheld, while ensuring that people know they can resolve disputes impartially and equitably. For countries coming out of conflict, this can mean starting from scratch—writing a constitution, recruiting judges, preparing prison officers and training police.

After two decades of civil war, **Southern Sudan** is now finally starting to rebuild and UNDP is on hand to provide support. The justice system is severely constrained by a wide range of problems from a lack of English-speaking judges trained in the common law system to a lack of basic furniture, equipment and computers. In response, UNDP and our partners have trained 40 judges and support staff in English language skills and 17 judges and legal counsel in continuing legal education.

In **Yemen**, UNDP supported the introduction of IT-based legal records and court management systems. In a country where law libraries had been destroyed, printing the laws on CD was so successful that the number of copies needed was increased from 500 to 5,000.

**UNDP enables governments to deliver basic services to the people.** Running a government is largely about ensuring that basic services like health, education and energy get to those who need them. To do this, healthy democracies require fair and efficient public administrations nationally and locally—with a solid civil service and equitable social policies. For this reason, UNDP is working with developing countries to get public administrations up and running.

In **Liberia**, for example, having helped shepherd a peaceful election in 2005, UNDP is helping to rebuild the country's shattered public institutions, revamping civil

service regulations, creating a code of conduct for public

### UNDP helps to promote the voices of communities.

Communities need the opportunity to influence those who make decisions affecting them, and authorities at all levels need the capacity to act in response. UNDP works on both fronts: widening the channels of communication between the people and the state and helping the state to respond, often by supporting carefully planned and managed decentralized governance.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, for example, UNDP supported the incorporation of disaster management issues into local governance structures of 10 selected villages enabling communities to map disaster risks, establish voluntary village rescue teams and train local authorities in what to do in times of crisis. As a result of its success, the project is now being adapted nationally by the government and is regarded internationally as best practice.

### UNDP is supporting the realization of 'all human rights for all'.

A strong national human rights promotion and protection system guided by public policies that promote the rights of all people is a fundamental requirement of democratically governed societies. UNDP provides human rights capacity development support at the national, regional and local levels, often in collaboration with partners within and outside the UN system.

From strengthening national human rights institutions to harmonizing laws, as in **Uganda** and **Kazakhstan**, to supporting minorities and legal empowerment and assistance for the disadvantaged, as in **Albania** and **Indonesia**, and from training the police and judges, as in **Bangladesh** and **Egypt**, to addressing disability, as in **Peru** and **China**, UNDP puts human rights at the centre of the democratic governance agenda.

### UNDP confronts the corruption that can strangle development.

Cleaning up the police, health, education and environment sectors is vital to loosen the stranglehold of corruption on the lives of the poor. Whether working with governments to stop the mismanagement of income from oil, for example, or training legislators to write effective laws to prevent mismanagement in the first place, UNDP is at the heart of global efforts to fight for transparency.

In **Latin America**, UNDP worked in partnership with Transparency International and national partners to map out corruption patterns in 17 countries, a crucial first step in figuring out how to tackle the problem. Overall between 2004 and 2006, UNDP supported 113 active anti-corruption programs in 51 countries around the world.

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June 2008