

BULLETIN

United Nations Development Programme
Washington Liaison Office



*The UNDP Washington **Bulletin** is a regular update by the Washington Office of UNDP activities and events. We invite you to share the **Bulletin** with interested colleagues.*

UNDP DELIVERING BALLOTS, CONCLUDING TRAINING AS HISTORIC CONGOLESE ELECTIONS APPROACH THIS SUNDAY

UNDP is putting the finishing touches on its substantial support of parliamentary and presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which will take place this Sunday.

The 30 million ballots and election supplies required for voting are expected to be in place by Friday, July 28th. UNDP is helping the Congolese distribute these supplies to around 50,000 polling stations in a country the size of Western Europe, with few functioning roads or other infrastructure.

Meanwhile, at 210 regional training sites, UNDP and the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) are concluding the training of 12,000 Polling Center Supervisors who will assist local elections staff in ensuring fair and transparent elections.

Preparations for this Sunday's vote constitute the largest and most complex UN electoral-assistance mission ever undertaken, a joint initiative of UNDP and MONUC.

To learn more of UNDP's support of the Congolese elections, click [here](#).

NEW UNDP NIGER DELTA HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT CALLS FOR NEW APPROACH TO REDUCE POVERTY IN NIGERIA

The Niger Delta is a region suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, and endemic conflict, according to a UNDP report released last week in Abuja. The ambitious report, the first sub-national human development report for Nigeria to be commissioned by UNDP, emphasizes that addressing the Niger Delta's many development challenges begins with using its vast oil wealth to create an environment in which people can flourish.

The report points out that the Niger Delta pales in comparison to oil producing countries of the world in terms of human development, even as the region appears to be doing better than some other areas of Nigeria. To reverse this situation, the report calls for improved revenue allocation to the Delta, echoing a long-standing demand in the region. The report also calls for amendment of existing laws to give communities and states equity stake-holdings in oil and gas exploration. According to the report, revenue accruing from this should be administered by trust funds, with 50% used for urgent infrastructure needs and the remaining saved for the future.

Written by a consortium of Nigerian experts who conducted extensive fieldwork, the report is an offshoot of an \$18 million partnership forged in 2004 between UNDP and Shell Petroleum Development Company. Aimed at strengthening human development in the region, the partnership's components include publishing this Human Development Report, improving capacity for local governance, and empowering women and youth by improving livelihoods.

The report has both qualitative and quantitative data on the Niger Delta, with UNDP's trademark Human Development Index analyzing indicators of income, health, and education for the nine states and 185 local government areas of the region. The situation in the Delta also is brought into fuller relief by non-measurable indicators. For example, the Human Development Report examines how the near absence of modern infrastructure, in tandem with environmental degradation, the high cost of living, gross inequality, HIV/AIDS, limited sources of livelihoods, the dearth of good governance at the local level, and incessant conflicts have severely impacted the region.

To transform the Niger Delta in a sustainable way, the report puts forward a seven-point human development agenda, including:

- Promoting peace as the foundation for development
- Making local governance effective and responsive to the needs of the people
- Improving and diversifying the economy
- Promoting social inclusion and improved access to social services
- Promoting environmental sustainability to preserve the means of people's sustainable livelihoods
- Taking an integrated approach to HIV&AIDS
- Building sustainable partnerships for the advancement of human development

For more information about the report and UNDP's work in Nigeria, visit www.ng.undp.org.

AS LIBERIA CONTINUES TO CONSOLIDATE ITS DEMOCRACY AND REBUILD, UNDP & THE WORLD BANK HELP LAWMAKERS AND FINANCE OFFICIALS ENHANCE BUDGETING SKILLS

Liberia's recent 14-year civil war had immense social, political, and humanitarian implications for the country. Yet, the country's reemergence from the conflict has been steady: In 2003, the Economic Community of West African States led peace talks that culminated in the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement and this year saw the inauguration of a new democratically elected government whose president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is Africa's first elected female leader.

UNDP has maintained a presence in Liberia well before the conflict and was a critical actor in the transitional period from peace agreement to elections. UNDP's office in Liberia supports the new government in its efforts to rebuild the country and to promote sustainable peace, stability and human development.

Among their other efforts, UNDP and the World Bank have offered ongoing assistance to the Liberian government as it seeks to achieve transparency in government. Most recently UNDP, the World Bank Institute, and the government of Liberia jointly convened a three-day seminar, *Enhancing the Budgetary Process to Improve Governance in Liberia*, at the beginning of June in Monrovia's City Hall.

The seminar aimed to develop new technical skills for members of parliament and finance officials to help them handle financial matters. The former Ghanaian Finance Minister Yaw Osafo, speaking at the seminar, underlined that the focus was to acquaint all state players about the proper handling of resources and the transparency needed to promote development in Liberia.

The seminar specifically focused on:

- Engaging participants in dialogue and discussion around the budget process (formulation, enactment, execution and evaluation), highlighting incentives for cooperation and risks
- Exposing participants to substantive issues, activities, opportunities, and challenges of the budget process
- Enhancing the spirit of cooperation among actors involved in the budget process
- Providing a platform for national and international participants to share experiences and information, building on lessons learned and peer experiences.

This initiative builds on other activities that have bolstered the capacity and skills of members of the Liberian Legislature, including a UNDP-sponsored legislative needs assessment.

For more information on UNDP's work in Liberia, go to <http://www.lr.undp.org/>

UNDP's ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSES SECURITY COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

To mark the one-year anniversary of the signing of a landmark UN resolution to protect children in conflict (Security Council Resolution 1612), this week Security Council members discussed concrete next steps for protecting children in conflict zones from the most unspeakable violations – among them the abduction, sexual abuse and recruitment of children as combatants.

UNDP Associate Administrator Ad Melkert addressed the Council with a review of the substantial ground already covered, as well as an emphasis on new directions forward. His excerpted statement follows:

“For UNDP, and for the broader development community, children and youth are significant partners in building sustainable peace, in preventing violent conflict and in contributing to development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Children and youth are not just victims with special needs, but powerful agents for reconciliation and positive change.

Many of our programs and policies that engage with the rights, protection, and well-being of war-affected children are increasingly premised on this core belief. For example, UNDP and development partners in South **Sudan** have not only supported Disarmament, Demobilization and

Reintegration (DDR) programs for underage persons, but also recently helped organize, in collaboration with civic actors, a Youth Peace Conference...In **Uganda**, DDR programs have made special provisions for the return of young girls who were abducted by rebels, and face stigma attached to bearing children out of rape or wedlock upon return to their communities... Similarly, in **Sierra Leone**, UNDP has supported a national initiative, the National Youth Councils, to give young persons the skills to re-engage in the process of governance by electing their councils, which have official decision-making powers, at both the district and the national levels. In the Niger delta region of **Nigeria**, UNDP and other partners are supporting efforts, in collaboration with Shell Oil, to provide youth with viable alternatives to armed violence...In **Port-au-Prince**, a highly successful employment generation initiative has engaged youth in civic activities such as garbage pick-up and repair of basic utilities, thus making them active agents for reconstruction. Similar approaches are also being tried in the context of DDR programs in **Colombia, Afghanistan, Burundi, DRC, and Liberia...**

...However...how often do we craft post-conflict needs assessments or interim poverty reduction strategies that place a particular emphasis on initiatives for the political and economic empowerment of youth? We often worry about the threat that large numbers of unemployed youth pose to peace and security in fragile situations, but how often do we make the effort to train youth as election observers, or as peace monitors in their communities, or as a national network of mediators that can help bring peace to their communities? As we spend billions in reconstructing post-conflict societies, we also need to invest more to establish national service schemes that provides youth with life skills as they help to rebuild their communities.

In the same way that we have moved from traditional approaches to DDR to the so-called three "Rs" approach, which prioritizes not just the disarming of former combatants, but their return, rehabilitation, and sustainable reintegration into their home communities, we need a fresh approach to young persons and armed conflict. This new approach could be called the three "Es," as in Engage young persons in efforts to build lasting peace; Educate young persons with life skills, and not just perfunctory job training; and Empower young persons to develop and seize political and economic opportunities, so that they can transform their countries and their societies.

In conclusion, I would call on Security Council members, and indeed all Member States, to give the UN presence on the ground - including the UN Country Teams - the tools and resources that they need to move towards working more proactively with young persons in situations of armed conflict, so that children and youth become full partners in bringing their countries and societies closer to peace and stability.

###

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.

For additional information on the above news, please contact communications officer Cara Santos Pianesi at **UNDP's Washington Office** at 202.331.9130 or cara.santos@undp.org.

To subscribe send a blank email to dc-bulletin-subscribe@groups.undp.org
To unsubscribe send a blank email to dc-bulletin-unsubscribe@groups.undp.org

