

BULLETIN

United Nations Development Programme
Washington Liaison Office



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The UNDP Washington Bulletin is a regular update of UNDP activities and events by the Washington Office.

UNDP IN BANGLADESH: HELPING TO REGISTER 80 MILLION VOTERS, PREPARING POPULATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The current Caretaker Government of Bangladesh came to power in January of 2007 against a backdrop of violent protests, riots and strikes that rocked the country for months on end. It declared that it would undertake a wide program of governance reforms to prepare Bangladesh for elections that would usher in sustainable democracy.

At the heart of this program is a roadmap on electoral reform, which includes the preparation of a new voter list, amendments to existing electoral laws and strengthening of the independence of the Election Commission. According to the roadmap, the next parliamentary elections are to be held by the end of December 2008.

UNDP has been working under these challenging and historic conditions to help Bangladesh prepare for general elections and strengthen good governance in general.

Given the responsiveness of the Caretaker Government, UNDP reconfigured its work in early 2007 to better support a deepening of the democratic processes. For example, UNDP is assisting the Bangladesh Election Commission with the preparation of an accurate voter list, complete with personal information, fingerprints and photographs. More than **73 million voters** have been registered (about 91% of eligible voters) by the end of June; this means that **Bangladesh now holds the world record in electronically registering the largest number of voters in the shortest time period.**

Special efforts have been made to include eligible voters who did not appear on previous voter lists—the disabled, the infirm and residents of remote corners of the country. Preparation of the voter list has required over 12,000 laptops, digital cameras and fingerprint scanners—for which UNDP raised the necessary funds. UNDP has also trained election officials, data entry operators and enumerators, totaling more than 300,000 people.

In addition, UNDP is raising public awareness about electoral registration. Last month, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative Renata Lok Dessallien attended the inauguration ceremony for a large, electronic billboard installed at the center of Dhaka, the Bangladeshi capital. The billboard will display regularly-updated information about voter registration and election-related news, such as areas where registration is completed, guidance for formerly excluded voters, updates on distribution of ID cards and voter list printing, and boundaries of electoral constituencies.

To learn more about UNDP's work in Bangladesh, visit the [country office website](#).

TACKLING CORRUPTION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION:

New UNDP report examines priority areas, shares innovations, makes recommendations

A regional UNDP Human Development Report released this month argues that cleaning up the police, health, education and environment sectors should be a top political priority in the Asia-Pacific region in order to loosen the stranglehold of corruption on the lives of the poor.

The report was launched on June 12th in Jakarta by the President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono; UN Assistant Secretary General and UNDP Director of the Bureau for Policy Development, Olav Kjørvan; and the Indonesian Minister of Development Planning, Paskah Suzetta.

Tackling Corruption, Transforming Lives illustrates how the region's pervasive petty corruption smothers opportunities for the most vulnerable people, limiting their access to education and compromising basic health services. The report stresses that while anti-corruption efforts too often focus on exposing the 'big fish', it is 'small fry' corruption—from the salaries of fictitious 'ghost teachers' funneled into the pockets of corrupt officials, to doctors demanding cash payments from poor, pregnant women to deliver their babies—which causes more day-to-day suffering and could severely hamper the region's development.

Agenda for action

The report argues that no single answer to the problem of corruption exists, but that a number of options are common across most countries in the region:

- Raising salaries for doctors, teachers and other civil servants so they do not have to rely on bribes to make a living; making civil service posts more merit-based; and strengthening oversight mechanisms by local governments
- Encouraging business codes of conduct that fit international standards
- Enacting and implementing the right to information laws
- Using information technology and e-governance to make administration more transparent
- Supporting citizen action to combat corruption by mandating that local governments publish basic information on contracts to facilitate citizen auditing.

To download the report, click [here](#).

To learn more about UNDP's work in the Asia-Pacific region, click [here](#).

UNDP's Regional Center in Bangkok has produced a 30-second public service announcement on anti-corruption, called *Vanishing*. Produced for television broadcast on national, regional and international networks, its simple message illustrates how corruption affects everyone – local communities, schools, hospitals, villages. Take a moment to view by clicking [here](#).

UNDP AND UNAIDS ANNOUNCE WINNERS OF RED RIBBON AWARD 2008 *Biennial global award celebrates outstanding community leadership and action on AIDS*

On the occasion of the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AIDS that took place this month, the UNDP and UNAIDS proudly announced the 25 winners of the Red Ribbon Award 2008.

Following a call for nominations launched on World AIDS Day 2007 from Mexico City, Geneva, New York and Colombo, over 550 nominations were received from 147 countries across the globe. A technical review committee of experts in the community response to HIV selected 25 community-based organizations demonstrating remarkable efforts in terms of innovation, impact, sustainability, strategic partnerships, gender sensitivity and social inclusion.

The Red Ribbon Awards' ability to bring international recognition to grassroots organizations is unparalleled. The Awards highlight the fact that often the most effective and innovative responses to the global epidemic are implemented by small, grassroots community-based organizations.

The 25 community-based organizations honored by the Red Ribbon Award 2008 demonstrate extraordinary courage, resilience and strength in shaping the epidemic. **To learn more about the Red Ribbon Award and individual awardees, go to www.redribbonaward.org**

Why does UNDP work on HIV and AIDS?

- HIV holds back development and economic growth in many of the world's poorest communities. In the most affected countries, it dramatically has reduced life expectancy on a national level.
- AIDS undermines other health gains, exacerbating tuberculosis, undermining health systems.
- AIDS affects economic and social development as children's education, nutrition, and health suffer directly and indirectly due to AIDS; this could affect economic performance for decades. In addition, new generations of children – many orphaned by AIDS – find themselves with daunting challenges for the future.
- AIDS impacts democratic institutions in severely affected countries by depleting political leadership and undermining representation. Also, the stigma and discrimination associated with AIDS impedes citizen participation in political life.
- The tragic and untimely loss of parents and productive citizens affects not only families, but also farms and other workplaces, schools and governments. Costly treatment, absenteeism and mortality that is heavily concentrated among working age adults have a direct economic impact, and decrease the overall economy's attractiveness to foreign investors.

How does UNDP work on HIV and AIDS?

As a co-sponsor of UNAIDS, UNDP has a specific and well-defined role in the overall response of the UN system. First, UNDP addresses the nexus between AIDS and human development through mainstreaming HIV into national human development plans. Second, UNDP strengthens the capacity of governments to govern and coordinate the AIDS response by helping to align the UN system and donor support. In particular, UNDP has an important collaboration with the Global Fund to support countries as they implement Global Fund grants. In certain cases where there are no suitable entities to act as principal recipients for the grants, countries have requested UNDP to assume that role. UNDP currently provides oversight for Global Fund grants in 25 countries. Third, UNDP promotes human rights and gender equality to reduce HIV-related vulnerability and address stigma and discrimination.

**To learn more about UNDP's work on HIV/AIDS, go to www.undp.org/hiv
For more information about the Red Ribbon Award, go to www.redribbonaward.org**

UNDP ROUNDTABLE RESOURCES

On May 21st, UNDP's Washington Liaison Office held a Roundtable: *Progress & Jeopardy - the Continuing Challenge of Elections in Africa*. Video is now available from the event [here](#).

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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.

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