



United Nations Development Programme
Oslo Governance Centre



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“The protection and promotion of the universal values of the rule of law, human rights and democracy are ends in themselves. They are also essential for a world of justice, opportunity and stability. No security agenda and no drive for development will be successful unless they are based on the sure foundation of respect for human dignity.”

Kofi Annan, 'In Larger Freedom', 2005

Oslo Governance Centre

A global thematic facility



UNDP established the Oslo Governance Centre in 2002 as part of its global policy network for democratic governance, at a time when it

had been broadly agreed that governance is an important precondition for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000.

One major reason for establishing the Centre in Norway was the long tradition of the Nordic countries in the area of democratic governance, and the extensive research on this topic being carried out by Nordic institutions.

The Oslo Governance Centre is part of the *Democratic Governance Group* in UNDP's *Bureau for Development Policy*. The Centre also works closely with other practice areas in BDP, UNDP's Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery, the Learning Resource Centre, the Regional Bureaux, as well as with the Regional Service Centres around the world.

The overarching purpose of the work of the Oslo Governance Centre is to help position UNDP as a champion of democratic governance, as an end in itself, as well as a means to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and human development priorities.

The Centre works through knowledge networking and multidisciplinary teams, as well as through close partnerships with leading policy and research institutions in different parts of the world. The Centre has a special focus in addressing new and emerging areas of democratic governance, in developing global knowledge products, and in building the capacity of UNDP's front-line staff in more than 130 UNDP Country Offices around the world.

The mandate for the work of the Oslo Governance Centre during the 2005-2009 period covers activities in four focus areas:

- Governance and poverty eradication
- Governance and conflict prevention
- Governance and civil society
- Learning and capacity development

UNDP and Democratic Governance

Challenges, advantages and partnerships



More governments today have been chosen by free and fair elections than at any time in history. But organizing multi-party elections is only one step in building democracy. Countries are challenged to develop institutions and processes that are more responsive to the needs of all citizens, including the poor. The long-term focus on developing national capacity to establish effective laws, systems, institutions, and processes lies at the heart of UNDP's work on democratic governance.

As the UN's global development network, UNDP advocates democratic governance as a tool to help achieve poverty reduction and human development. In 2005, UNDP supported democratic governance in over 130 countries and devoted US\$ 1.4 billion in resources to these efforts, making UNDP one of the largest providers of democratic governance technical assistance in the world.

As a trusted partner of developing country governments and civil society groups, UNDP is often asked to play crucial roles on sensitive governance issues, spurring change and fostering dialogue. As UNDP partners with many other institutions around the world,

we are able to give developing countries access to their resources and expertise. Responding to the requests and needs of developing countries, UNDP offers services in areas of democratic *participation*, democratic *institutions* and democratic *policies*. The services include the following areas:

- Parliamentary development
- Electoral systems and processes
- Justice and human rights
- E-Governance and access to information
- Decentralization, local governance, and urban/rural development
- Public administration and anti-corruption

More information about the Democratic Governance work of UNDP is available on the UNDP website. You can also get in touch with:

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Four focus areas

Mission and activities

Governance and Poverty Eradication

The Centre works to position democratic governance as an important part of the enabling environment needed to reduce poverty. This involves the development of tools needed by country offices to deliver relevant policy analysis on the linkages between governance and poverty reduction. Activities include:

- Supporting MDG based National Development Strategies through the MDG Support Team in the Bureau for Development Policy
- Governance Indicators project
- Land rights, poverty and gender in close cooperation with UNDP's Drylands Development Centre in Nairobi
- Governance in countries managing non-renewable natural resources

Governance Indicators Project

The Centre assists developing countries produce non-ranking, nationally relevant governance indicators to enable national stakeholders to monitor performance in democratic governance reforms. The purpose is to build the capacities of government, the national statistics office and civil society in the generation and analysis of governance related data. One important focus is to provide tools for measuring the impact of governance policies, institutions and processes on women and the poor.

Governance and Conflict Prevention

The Centre is dedicated to strengthening UNDP's role regarding conflict and its negative impact on development. Democratic governance is considered one of the best means for conflict prevention, long-term stability and peace-building. Supporting participation of the poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups in conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building, is seen as an important strategy for lasting peace. Activities include:

- Mapping of best practices in governance and conflict prevention
- Interactive workshops for practitioners to share knowledge on emerging issues
- Handbooks and policy notes on governance and conflict prevention
- Cross-practice initiatives in post-conflict state building with other UN partners

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Governance and Civil Society

UNDP regards strengthening of civil society as a vital aspect of democratic governance. The work involves developing tools needed by country offices to deliver relevant policy analysis and programming, particularly in areas of Access to Information, Communication for Development, and Citizenship. Equally important is to ensure the strongest possible cooperation with other UNDP entities. Activities include:

- Seminars and handbooks on Right to Information
- Projects on Communication for Development
- Research on Citizenship for Empowerment

Access to Information

Democratic governance involves public debate and open decision-making; hence, the organization of interest groups, the free exchange of ideas, opinions and information is essential. Addressing the information and communication needs of the poor in particular is essential, since they often lack information that is vital to their lives. They also lack visibility and voice to enable them to define policy priorities and access resources.

Learning and Capacity Development

The Centre works to provide the best advice, training and capacity development to UNDP staff so that they deepen their understanding of democratic governance policy and practice. This is aimed at enabling staff to help build capacity for democratic governance in partner countries. Activities include:

- The Democratic Governance Fellowships
- The Bergen Seminar Series in cooperation with the Chr. Michelsen Institute
- Face-to-face and virtual training programmes on governance at different levels, and adapted to regional and local contexts
- Knowledge management and networks
- Support to Regional Centres and SURF's on capacity development

HuRiTALK

HuRiTALK is the Human Rights Policy Network of the United Nations Development Group. It serves as a forum where members discuss, access information, share tools and build knowledge on emerging issues and on the best strategies to incorporate human rights into all aspects of work. HuRiTALK is intended to be a truly 'UN Wide' Network, encouraging inter UN collaboration around human rights issues.

“We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development”

UN Millennium Declaration, 2000

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