



## DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

# IMPROVING GOVERNANCE

### CHALLENGES

India is committed to bring reforms in the sphere of governance. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments in the early 1990s bestowed constitutional status upon the institutions of local self governance. They were followed by the Right to Information (RTI) Act and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), which promote transparency.

In India, local bodies are constitutionally mandated to put in place accountable systems at the district and local levels. Previously excluded groups, especially women, need to participate more effectively in decision making. There are other areas that need attention such as the development of capacities of institutions mandated to deliver legal services, and awareness about rights. Planners at the state and district levels need support to integrate human development priorities in planning. Attention has to be paid to monitoring and evaluating centrally sponsored schemes at local levels.

### KEY FACTS

**1.03** million women out of 2.8 million representatives in the 240,000 Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the country

In **2005**, the Act of Right to Information was enacted by the Indian Parliament, and gives the citizens of India the right to demand disclosure of public records

In all 604 districts of India, **100** days of mandated employment per year is guaranteed to every rural household by the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP)

Sources: State of Panchayat Report, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, November 2006; Right to Information website, [www.rti.org.in](http://www.rti.org.in); National Rural Employment Guarantee Act website, [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

Photo © Tom Pietrasik/UNDP India

**RESPONSE**

UNDP's Democratic Governance Programme is positioned within the overarching objective of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for India 2008- 2012, which is 'promoting social, economic and political inclusion for the most disadvantaged, especially women and girls'. A key outcome of the UNDAF is that by 2012, 'accountable and responsive local government systems, in rural and urban areas, are in place in selected districts and cities within priority states, promoting equitable and sustainable development to achieve MDGs and local development goals with special attention to the needs of disadvantaged groups, especially women and girls.'

UNDP strengthens the capacity of the Government, local elected representatives and communities to better plan, implement and monitor decentralized development programmes. It makes human development an integral part of Government plans and policies, and formulates state and district Human Development Reports. UNDP pays special attention to the needs of disadvantaged groups, especially women and girls, and encourages them to participate in public decision making. Men and women belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are supported to access justice institutions. UNDP also strengthens national efforts towards a planning that is gender responsive.

Further, UNDP supports the NREGA, which provides work opportunities to people in rural areas. UNDP enhances citizens' monitoring and accountability capacities, through the use of public disclosure tools such as social audit, governance 'report cards', the Right to Information Act, and ICT-based systems. UNDP and the Government of India strengthen delivery mechanisms of justice and empower communities and disadvantaged groups to access justice.

UNDP also supports initiatives to improve service delivery of public services in urban local bodies in nine cities in four states. In the seven priority states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh), UNDP's governance work at the district level complements the work of other United Nations agencies. It also supports resource planning in the districts to improve effectiveness of programmes.

In the future, UNDP will focus on more extensive development of the capacity of the public administration and elected representatives to help them serve the needs of women and disadvantaged groups. In addition, UNDP will strengthen the institutional and management capacities of key training institutions such as the State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs) and Administrative Training Institutes (ATIs).

**PROJECTS 2008-2012**

**Decentralization and Planning**

1. Capacity Development for Local Governance  
Partner: Ministry of Panchayati Raj  
Budget: USD 5.5 million  
Duration: Oct '08 - Dec '12
2. Capacity Development of District Planning  
Partner: Planning Commission  
Budget: USD 5 million  
Duration: Oct '08 - Dec '12
3. Rural Decentralization and Participatory Planning for Poverty Reduction  
Partner: Planning Commission  
Budget: USD 4.6 million  
Duration: Mar '04 - Dec '08
4. Capacity Building of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Orissa  
Partner: Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Orissa  
Budget: USD 1.8 million  
Duration: Jan '08 - Dec '08
5. Strengthening State Plans for Human Development  
Partner: Planning Commission  
Budget: USD 10.96 million  
Duration: Jun '04 - Dec '09
6. Development of Coordination and Decision Support System on External Assistance  
Partner: Ministry of Finance  
Budget: USD 1.7 million  
Duration: Jan '06 - Dec '09
7. Capacity Building of Elected Women Representatives and Functionaries of Panchayati Raj Institutions  
Partners: Ministry of Panchayati Raj  
Budget: USD 3.7 million  
Duration: Mar '03 - Dec '08

**Strengthening Implementation of National Programmes**

8. Support to Operationalisation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act  
Partner: Ministry of Rural Development  
Budget: USD 5 million  
Duration: May '08 - Dec '12
9. Capacity Building for Access to Information  
Partner: Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions  
Budget: USD 3 million  
Duration: Dec '04 - Dec '09

**Gender Equality**

10. Promoting Gender Equality  
Partner: Ministry of Women and Child Development  
Budget: USD 1 million  
Duration: Jun '04 - Dec '08

**Access to Justice**

11. Strengthened Access to Justice  
Partner: Ministry of Law and Justice  
Budget: USD 5 million  
Duration: Oct '08 - Dec '12

**Public Private Partnership**

12. Sustainable Local Energy Services in Tiruchengodu Town  
Partner: District Collectorate, Namakkal, Tamil Nadu  
Budget: USD 97,000  
Duration: Jan '07 - Dec '08

Photo © Tom Pietrasik/UNDP India

Photo © Sabrina Sidhu/UNDP India



Photo © Anita Khemka/UNDP India

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- Human Development Reports (HDRs) have been prepared for 20 states and used to improve reporting on human development in state plans and policy statements; Additionally HDRs are being prepared in 56 districts and will be used for district planning.
- Micro-plans, focusing on the needs of the poor, were prepared in 100 Gram Panchayats with wide participation and discussion of development issues.
- Capacity of elected women representatives was enhanced in 10 districts across 10 states at village, block and district levels to represent interests of the disadvantaged, and execute schemes.
- Governance reforms were initiated in select Urban Local Bodies of four states and capacities of staff strengthened through training on accounting and property tax reforms.
- Technical support was provided to the Ministry of Rural Development for planning, implementing and monitoring of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) and for enhancing awareness on entitlements of rural poor under the Act.
- Nearly 50,000 people from public authorities but also citizens, and representatives from NGOs as well as media, were trained on the provisions of the Right to Information Act.
- Gender budgeting initiated at the central and state level, to ensure equitable resource allocation.
- Issues related to formal and informal justice institutions were identified in 34 districts through action research projects and studies. In addition, a network of experts, policy makers and civil society organizations were established, and an e-database for justice institutions was developed.

## PARTNERS

UNDP's partnership strategy is based on the underlying principles of commitment to the MDGs, inclusive development and gender mainstreaming. For the Democratic Governance Programme, some of the partners are:

PRIA Society for Participatory Research; Mahila Chetna Manch; Institute of Social Sciences; Institute for Human Development; Centre for Budget & Governance Accountability; Centre for Development Alternatives; Indian School of Women's Studies & Development; Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore; Samaj Pragati Sahayog; Professional Assistance for Development Action; Indian Institute of Technology, Madras; National Film Development Corporation; Centre for Good Governance; Kurukshetra University; National Centre for Advocacy Studies; Indian Institute for Para legal Studies; National Law Institute University; Amnesty International - Legal Aid Services West Bengal, Majlis and Prayas.

Photo © Benoit Marquet/UNDP India





Photo © UNDP India

## SUCCESS STORY

### One Woman brings Change

When Kiran Devi attended a meeting on the role of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (local governance body), little did she know that she would become a *Sarpanch* (village head) herself, heading the village court and helping people to get justice. The series of meetings in her village in Raghai Panchayat, Bihar, were part of the 2005 pre-election voter awareness campaign supported by UNDP and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. As a candidate, Kiran's participation and active involvement in the awareness programme helped her to meet people and gain confidence. Many factors were against her such as the prevailing male prejudice against women, the lack of family support, the fact that she did not belong to any self-help group and had not been educated beyond the high school level. Despite these factors, she carried out a door-to-door campaign for votes and won the election.

Once elected as *Sarpanch*, however, Kiran realized that things were not going to be easy. Neither she, nor the people or the *Sarpanch* were involved in village decision making or resource allocations.

Far from being discouraged, Kiran became more determined to achieve the goals she had set for herself and her village. With persistence and conviction, she was able to deliver judgments in more than 115 legal cases, with hardly any of the cases going into appeal. Now, she stresses the need for speedy trials and justice delivery, particularly on matters that can cause tension in the community.

Her determination and motivation to usher in change is impressive. "I am confident and keen to fight for election again and again, so as to provide justice at the village level," explains Kiran. "Justice delayed is justice denied." As a champion for change, her case shows that even one woman can make a difference.



For any queries, please email  
[info.in@undp.org](mailto:info.in@undp.org)

Or contact  
 United Nations Development Programme  
 55, Lodi Estate, P.O. Box 3059  
 New Delhi - 110 003, India  
 Tel: +91-11- 4653 2333  
 Fax: +91-11- 2462 7612  
<http://www.undp.org.in>