

Capacity Development: Where Transformation Begins

The capacity to plan and manage in order to achieve human development is the key that will unlock the door to the MDGs. Most developing countries face some degree of capacity constraints, from deficits in skilled personnel to overly complex legal structures to weak institutions. All forms of capacity overlap. Skillfully managed, they can take a country forward. If not, they will almost definitely hold it back, even if resources for development increase.

For decades, UNDP has been a leader in supporting countries as they enlarge their capacities on many fronts. Capacity development is now central to our role in assisting countries in their efforts to achieve the MDGs. Across our five practices, we help countries lay the groundwork for the kind of long-term, pro-poor progress that yields effective results and an even distribution of benefits.

The range of our capacity development services is broad. They include fiscal policy diagnostics, MDG costing exercises, the integration of HIV/AIDS strategies across development plans, and the training of local officials to improve the delivery of basic public services. In more than 60 countries, we support governments that are orienting medium-term national poverty reduction strategies around the more long-term MDGs. We also help identify and assist local best practices that can contribute to comprehensive and meaningful national policies.

In post-conflict countries, we are on the ground before, during and after crisis occurs. Our technical support assists governments and the international community in conducting the needs assessments that determine early infusions of resources critical to restoring stability. We provide training and transitional staffing to help interim governments start functioning, and help put in place the right governance, economic and legal reforms.

Identifying and working with countries on capacity weaknesses can be sensitive tasks, and for this, we can draw upon our legacy as a trusted development partner, and our close relationships with counterparts at many levels. All of our work is backed by the best and most recent research, and the routine exchange of experiences from our knowledge networks, which span the globe.

Afghanistan: A Country Rebuilds a Government

The UN and UNDP played prominent roles in supporting Afghanistan's 2004 presidential election, along with partners such as the European Commission, the United Kingdom and the United States. At UNDP, the [Afghan Elections Project](#) became the largest of its kind carried out in recent years. More than 9,200 registration teams scoured even the remotest regions for eligible voters, and 27,000 polling stations were set up, including in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan to reach Afghan refugees. Massive civic education campaigns spread messages about the importance of voting, and when the day finally came, marking Afghanistan's first election after two decades of war, more than eight million Afghans showed up to contribute their vote and their voice to the future. None of this would have been possible without the determination of Afghans themselves.

Behind the scenes, UNDP has been equally hard at work in helping Afghanistan put in place a government that works for the people. It needs the strength and stability to pull together a deeply poor country only just emerging from years

of devastating conflict and misrule, much less to aim for the MDGs. Most skilled Afghans fled to safer places long ago, the education system is years away from replacing them, and from furniture to communications systems to data, the resources of the fledgling government at first bordered on non-existent.

An early UNDP initiative in 2001 was to organize an interim trust fund to pay the salaries of the civil service immediately after the fall of the Taliban. Recognizing that foreign aid was essential to the country's recovery, and at the request of the government, we then brought in an international aid coordination adviser to help manage the inflow of external resources during this transition period. This was critical to ensuring that sudden influxes did not overwhelm fragile government structures, and that the resources could be used in ways that would inspire public confidence.

By late 2003, the government was able to integrate aid coordination within its new Ministry of Finance, where it can more readily manage the use of these resources through the

UNIFEM: Women's Rights to Property

Jannat is a Kyrgyz widow who is bringing up eight children on her own. To support her family, she decided to rent land to grow rice and cotton, but did not know how to go about it. Having heard about the free legal advice available under UNIFEM's project on land rights in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, she turned to a lawyer who helped her become a legitimate tenant and knowledgeable about her rights.

Countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are at different stages of introducing private land ownership, with Kyrgyzstan one that has made progress on land rights. Women like Jannat, however, are often neglected in the process. The [United Nations Development Fund for Women](#) (UNIFEM), which is administered by UNDP, is working to ensure that new policies and laws related to land reform empower women and widen their economic opportunities. Particular focus lies on raising the awareness and capacity of rural women as well as local governments through media campaigns and legal clinics.

In seminars throughout Kyrgyzstan, for example, more than 2,000 women and 204 local authorities were briefed on land and property ownership issues, and some 12,000 people consulted legal advisers. Based on the information collected during the law clinics, UNIFEM then helped legal experts formulate amendments to the existing Law on Land Manage-

ment, which were submitted to Parliament in 2004. Tajikistan recently signed into law amendments to its Land Code that reflect the needs of women.

Guaranteeing women's and girls' property and inheritance rights is one of the strategic priorities set out by the Millennium Project to meet the MDG on gender equality and women's empowerment. UNIFEM also worked worldwide in 2004 within the overall framework of the goals to amplify capacities for enhancing women's rights and opportunities. A five-country pilot initiative in Cambodia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco and Peru, executed for UNDP, aims at demonstrating the centrality of integrating gender equality across national development plans related to the MDGs. The project also looks for ways to strengthen gender-sensitive monitoring and reporting on the goals.

In the 2004 publication [Pathway to Gender Equality](#), UNIFEM draws links between the MDGs, the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Beijing Platform for Action, the high-level international agreement that resulted from the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. *Pathway to Gender Equality* shows that these agreements are cornerstones for realizing the potential of the MDGs for women around the world.

national budget. UNDP helped prepare a team of Afghan experts to oversee the new Development Budget and External Relations Unit, and to train more than 30 other ministries on preparing public investment programmes. A Donor Assistance Database was set up to track aid and contribute to budget preparations—it now covers over 85 percent of aid, and the International Monetary Fund recently praised it as the best they had seen in a post-conflict country. The budget unit has used its new capacities to deliver a mid-term review of the budget and to focus support on national priority programmes.

More recently, through the Afghan Information Management Service, UNDP has begun introducing the standards of data and information management technology used by governments and corporations around the world. To overcome the lack of technical knowledge, we have provided both teams of international experts and assisted Afghans in acquiring current skills. Together, they are helping the government to establish efficient systems for sharing data critical to making informed policy decisions. Over 18 ministries are now involved in projects to map road construction activities, manage disaster information, and track the activities of health and

education programmes. A network for database developers provides ongoing assistance.

Today, Afghanistan is moving towards a new Parliament, and UNDP is supporting the government in establishing a modern parliamentary system. In partnership with the French Government and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, we have helped train legislative staff so they can develop skills to assist newly elected parliamentarians. We are also backing the Afghan Government's efforts to create a legal framework for guiding parliamentary procedures, adopt the best technology tools, and design an effective public information and outreach strategy.

Afghanistan faces many hurdles to reaching the MDGs by 2015—half its population lives in poverty, and at present the average life expectancy is only about 45 years. But given its very recent past, the growth in its capacity to manage its own development, including through a progressive Constitution, has been nothing short of astonishing. With sound governance in place, improvement in Afghanistan's development indicators can be expected to follow.



Afghans enthusiastically responded to the chance to vote, flocking to voter registration and civic education centres, such as one that UNDP set up in the city of Jalalabad. The capacity to govern well, and on behalf of the people, rests in part upon an informed electorate.

HIV/AIDS: From Health Staff to Trade Talks, Easing the Capacity Gaps

HIV/AIDS erodes the capacities of societies on multiple fronts. It has cut a swath through the most productive members of populations, weakening the ability of already overwhelmed health and other social services to respond, even as more people continue to fall ill. In Southern Africa, the epidemic is contributing to a worsening spiral of systemic poverty, drought and food insecurity, and shortening life expectancies in some cases by decades. It is a development crisis that will affect the region's progress across all of the MDGs.

Given the far-reaching implications of the epidemic, UNDP helps the most affected countries to close gaps in their capacity to cope with losses, and proactively bolster their ability to manage over the longer term. One example of our support is the [Southern Africa Capacity Initiative](#) (SACI). It works with nine countries in the region and the [Southern African Development Community](#) (SADC).

An urgent problem in Southern Africa, where adult HIV infection rates climb above 20 percent in most countries, is finding enough people to fully staff government depart-

ments as well as institutions that provide public services, such as hospitals and schools. UNDP is working with policy makers to examine guidelines for deploying teachers, medical staff, agricultural experts and other vital members of civil services, given that these rules have often not been re-examined to incorporate the new dimensions of the HIV/AIDS crisis. In Zambia, SACI collaborated with the University of Zambia on a capacity assessment of a variety of public services, research the government is now using to improve the efficiency of service delivery. In Malawi, the government requested SACI's support in a public sector reform initiative emphasizing accountability and leadership.

UNDP has also partnered with both governments and NGOs to find new ways of immediately staunching the loss of skilled personnel. We have helped fill some shortfalls through national and international UN Volunteers (UNVs)—Zambia has deployed volunteers in all nine of its provinces and in 23 government ministries. Botswana, Malawi and Swaziland have embarked on their own local volunteer programmes, modeled on the UNVs, which bring together skilled retirees, retrenched workers and unemployed graduates.

With SADC, UNDP is convening sub-regional forums to discuss education reforms to meet what will likely be an ongoing demand for new skills. A partnership with a private-sector consortium led by the Microsoft Corporation is exploring how technology can be used to extend service delivery, such as through long distance education in remote areas where enough teachers may not be available.

Worldwide, a new kind of capacity requirement related to HIV/AIDS has emerged. Access to HIV/AIDS medicines remains staggeringly limited in many developing countries, in part because of a web of intellectual property rights, patents and international trade agreements. Recent interna-



In countries with HIV/AIDS rates high enough to cause severe staffing shortfalls, UNDP works with governments to re-examine civil service guidelines in light of the epidemic, and helps provide volunteers to maintain critically needed public services. In Zambia, a trained volunteer in a village health centre takes a blood sample to be tested for HIV.

tional negotiations have allowed developing countries certain flexibilities within patent laws that ease constraints on the import and production of high-quality, affordable drugs. Complying with these agreements can be complex, however, and call for expertise in trade and public health issues that some countries may not have fully in place.

UNDP has provided support for expanding capacities in this area through several initiatives. Collaboration with the Pan-American Health Organization and World Health Organization (WHO) in 2004 led to a workshop in the Andean region for trade and health ministries on policy options to consistently bring public health issues into future bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations. In 2005, on the request of African heads of state, and in collaboration with the African Union, WHO and the Third World Network, UNDP convened a regional workshop in Africa. Trade and health officials from 35 countries gathered to exchange best practices and their experiences in framing patent laws that ensure ongoing access to essential medicines.

UNDP has also actively assisted countries in determining their capacities for manufacturing HIV/AIDS medicines. In 2004, we supported an assessment mission in Southern Africa that highlighted the potential for improved regional cooperation on both production and procurement. We began working with the Brazilian Government in 2005 to appraise its capacity to produce generic drugs.

As broad initiatives that touch the many facets of HIV/AIDS, both SACI and our global programme on trade and access to medicines draw on UNDP's core strengths. These include a reputation for helping people and countries work collectively on complex issues, sharing in-depth knowledge and diverse experiences, and fostering a momentum that keeps hope—and people—alive.

Five Practices to Advance the MDGs

UNDP's five practices offer services that countries can use to reach the goals.

Democratic governance

- Policy support
- 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 reform and anti-corruption measures

Poverty reduction

- MDG country reporting and poverty monitoring
- Pro-poor policy reform to achieve MDG targets
- Local poverty initiatives, including microfinance
- Globalization benefiting the poor
- Private sector development
- Gender mainstreaming
- Making information and communications technology work for the poor

Crisis prevention and recovery

- Conflict prevention and peace building
- Recovery
- Small arms reduction, disarmament and demobilization
- Mine action
- Natural disaster reduction
- Special initiatives for countries in transition

Energy and environment

- Strategies for sustainable development
- Water governance
- Sustainable energy services
- Land management to combat desertification and degradation
- Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity
- Planning to control ozone-depleting substances and persistent organic pollutants

HIV/AIDS

- Leadership and capacity development
- Development planning centred on HIV/AIDS
- Advocacy and communication

Central African Republic and Niger: The Quest for Community Services

On UNDP's [2004 human development index](#), a measurement that assessed progress in 177 countries, Norway was number one. The Central African Republic was 169. Niger was 176. Both African countries have been through years of conflict. Most of their citizens struggle to make a living in direly poor rural communities. Both have now arrived at enough stability to carry out successful elections—national and municipal polls in the case of Niger. But to come within reach of achieving the MDGs and maintaining a fragile peace, they will need serious and sustained investments in developing basic social, economic and political capacities.

Easing the brunt of the worst forms of poverty often begins with enlarging abilities to provide basic services that improve livelihoods and health. UNDP has worked with local communities in the two countries to secure these services, and with the national governments to put in place the policies that over time will support and increase access.

In the Central African Republic, only a very small percentage of the population has electricity; the rest burn wood and coal. When UNDP met with officials in the energy ministry to explore this issue, they maintained that the inability to pay for electricity was cutting poor people off. UNDP presented examples of innovative pro-poor energy projects in other parts of the world, and convened a series of meetings between high-level ministry officials and rural community leaders in their villages. The meetings were held after sundown and started with movies—the first time many community members had ever seen what electricity can do, and the first time many of the officials had held meetings in the dark. Afterwards, the villagers questioned the officials at length about the lack of electrical service, pointing out that 45 years after independence, they deserved connections.

UNDP later helped compile all of this feedback into a draft energy policy focused on poorer people in rural areas. In 2004, the government set up a ministerial committee charged with working on problems related to rural electricity access, and officially adopted the draft policy as the new National Energy Policy. It contains a commitment to increase rural access to 10 percent over the next 10 years. Already, local private companies and the national electricity board have begun to make investments in infrastructure to provide power in the southwestern region of the country, and some rural communities have taken their own initiatives, including through micro-credit schemes supported by UNDP.

In Niger, one of the most pressing problems is the lack of water. The Sahara Desert scorches three-quarters of the country, and strife and conflict have in the past stemmed

from short supplies of water. Since better local governance helps ensure better public services, UNDP has worked closely with the national government to develop a conceptual and legal framework for decentralized government services. Following the 2004 local elections—an important step towards decentralization—we are now helping to improve the skills of locally elected representatives, including through training on supervising public works.

This builds on an earlier initiative where UNDP supported the formation of local water committees in over 1,000 villages, in partnership with the European Commission, African Development Bank and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Members learned to manage community reserves in ways that benefit both people and the environment. In the village of Allimboulé, for example, the local pond used to be full of silt and sewage. With UNDP's support, villagers cleaned the pond. A team from the water management committee now makes daily rounds to remove new filth and animal carcasses, while women trained to propagate seedlings have planted windbreaks to protect the pond against silting. With the pond now teeming with fish, a cooperative has formed. Some of its earnings have gone into the development of land for irrigated crops, a testament to how creative and targeted capacity investments can multiply people's options—and their abilities to act on them.



In Niger, once villagers learned to manage the routine cleaning of a local pond, they were able to cultivate new livelihoods, including through a fishing cooperative.