

Knowledge: A World of Shared Solutions

Development problems related to the MDGs may be complex, but especially in today's interconnected world, they do not need to be solved in isolation. UNDP has one of the world's most comprehensive reservoirs of knowledge about development, which is why we have invested in global knowledge networks to collect and share it as widely as possible. Our networks multiply the benefits of our contributions in many places, for many people. They connect countries, regions and the global community, and offer a rich source of experiences from developed and developing countries that will be essential to achieving the MDGs.

Involving over 12,000 development professionals from in and outside UNDP, the networks function as virtual communities, where members can find technical and policy advice to provide to governments and other partners, exchange information on what works and what doesn't, and locate research and referrals to experts. Five networks are dedicated to our practices; one brings together UNDP management experts; and a half dozen others address cross-cutting issues such as gender and the MDGs.

Additional networks connect people working within regions, or touch upon specific issues within our practices. In 2004, [Capacity 2015](#), a UNDP initiative that works on the MDGs with local partners in communities, debuted the [Information Learning Network](#). Community members, businesses and civil society groups can now turn to it for knowledge about sustainable development. Increasingly, our country offices are setting up national networks as well.

Other agencies have taken notice of UNDP's transformation into a "knowledge organization"—the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations is adapting some of the features of our approach to their own network. The World Bank, Canadian International Development Agency and the non-governmental group CARE have expressed a strong interest. A 2004 external review panel of four leading network specialists noted they were impressed with the energy and responsiveness of the networks. Their report said, "(UNDP's) system is remarkable, and indicative of a culture that cares passionately about development issues."

Europe and the CIS: Policy Advice for Emerging Democracies

The countries of Central and Southeastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are generally well on schedule to achieve the MDGs. Most have passed through the rockiest period of their political and economic transition; eight have now acceded to the European Union, and three others are working in that direction. Still, there are sometimes vast disparities across the region and within countries, and even those who have come the farthest are still fine-tuning their capacities as democratic nations. By providing knowledge and policy expertise, especially to countries that were until recently fairly isolated, UNDP helps fill remaining development gaps. We work through our [country offices](#) and our [Bratislava Regional Centre](#), where 30 policy experts encourage an ongoing exchange of ideas and successful experiences within the region.

UNDP publications often help inform national and regional thinking. In Ukraine, as the Orange Revolution rolled forward with demands for greater democracy and an end to corruption, UNDP put together a team of UN and other experts to draft *Proposals to the President: A New Wave of Reform*. It underscored that despite rapid private sector

“(UNDP publications) are valuable to me because they compare local conditions with those in surrounding countries, because their methods are very sound, and because they are dispassionate and free of any internal Slovak view.”

Klará Orgovánová, Roma Communities Plenipotentiary, Slovak Republic

growth, progress in Ukraine would stall without far-reaching political reform on a number of fronts. The new government's action plan, *Towards the People*, includes many of the report's recommendations, and individual ministries are now using it as a tool for strategic planning.

The Bratislava centre has produced a series of MDG reports on the [Czech Republic](#), [Hungary](#), [Slovakia](#) and [Slovenia](#). These pinpoint that even amid general prosperity, more nuanced approaches to poverty measurement reveal widespread disparities within countries, especially for ethnic minorities such as the Roma. All of these countries are members of the EU, which requires proactive steps towards social inclusion. The reports provided analysis that all are now using for devising new policies. In early 2005, eight countries in the region signed on to the Decade of Roma Inclusion agreement, the first cooperative effort to improve the lives of the Roma in Europe. It followed a [10-country study](#) conducted by UNDP that became the largest ever compilation of data on Roma and development issues, including those reflected in the MDGs.

Close collaboration between UNDP country offices and the regional centre has supported governments across the region with hands-on tasks such as training civil servants on creating budgets, establishing rules and regulations, and implementing reform policies. A programme to train highly skilled civil servants in Georgia builds on an earlier initiative to fund short-term salary supplements for officials in order to improve the quality of personnel and curb corruption. A part-

UNDP's regional research has helped define and publicize the depth of disparities faced by the Roma as an ethnic group, even in otherwise affluent Central and Eastern European countries. Residents of a Roma settlement in the village of Zehra, in eastern Slovakia, chop wood behind their hut.



nership between UNDP, the Soros Foundation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the programme has attracted more than \$30 million from public and private sources, following an initial investment of \$3 million.

A UNDP manual explaining how to ensure that national budget allocations reach men and women equally is used across the region—the Russian Academy of Public Administration now offers a mandatory course on the subject. We have also advised national statistical agencies on developing indexes and disaggregated data to better measure the status of women, given that many women's concerns remain underreported and therefore hidden. A regional network now links officials working on gender in different national statistical offices; Ukraine has incorporated a provision on data in its Gender Equality Law. A 2004 workshop held in cooperation with the UN Economic Commission for Europe

and the US Agency for International Development looked specifically at gender statistics for Central Asian countries—Kyrgyzstan has since begun developing a national policy on gender statistics.

An important thrust of the regional centre's work has been assisting new EU members in setting up mechanisms to provide ODA, another stipulation of EU membership. UNDP has worked with [Slovakia to create a trust fund](#) for foreign projects, including by bringing in Czech expertise to help establish guidelines for support. The fund assisted 37 projects in 2004, in countries including Afghanistan, Belarus, FYR Macedonia, Mongolia and Sudan. In Poland, UNDP advised the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a public media campaign to rouse support for giving foreign assistance, a new concept for Poles who for many years were accustomed to receiving such assistance themselves.

Networks: Countries Plug in for Fast Answers

A growing number of UNDP's partners are turning to our networks for fast answers to development questions. After the Government of Bolivia requested assistance in shaping a new law to decentralize social services such as health and education, the UNDP Country Office put out a call for information. Within days, replies came back highlighting similar experiences in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Kenya and the Republic of Korea. Network members cautioned against rolling out decentralization too speedily. The government worked with UNDP to draft the new legislation, and the bill that passed takes a gradual approach.

In Azerbaijan, the government asked UNDP for advice on creating an export promotion agency. The country office used the networks to provide information on experiences from other countries, which favoured a proposal to integrate the new agency within an existing investment promotion body. This would allow the two to work closely together on common issues. After a thorough review, the government agreed this was the best course of action.

The Government of Mauritius turned to the networks to help formulate a new Family Code, bringing in experiences on integrating women's rights from Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Senegal and Uganda. Laos drew upon them for inspiration in crafting the messages for a massive MDG media campaign. Guyana used them for drafting models of legislation to establish an elections commission and guide the state-owned media.

“UNDP has set up a very powerful process that goes beyond anything I have seen elsewhere both in public and private sectors.”

Geoff Parcell, head of knowledge management at BP and part of an expert team reviewing UNDP's knowledge networks

In India, UNDP is leading the UN Country Team on a project to establish a national network so that development agencies, all levels of government and NGOs can share the many innovative development projects taking place across the country. A UNDP network query from Uzbekistan that brought in experiences from 10 other countries has prompted members of the UN Country Team, along with the government, private sector and civil society, to work together on a project to improve the national capacity to gather statistics. UNDP at large has used its global networks to shape organizational guidelines on programmes to assist the increasing numbers of young people afflicted by conflict. A call for “votes” to steer the theme of the 2006 global *Human Development Report* drew close to a 1,000 responses, some with extensive comments that in the past could not have been so easily shared.

Timor-Leste: A New Nation Learns from the World

Timor-Leste's 1999 struggle for independence left a ruined landscape and a population that is one of the poorest in Asia. Faced with setting up an independent government and economy, the new country turned to UNDP for support. From the start, we have brought in knowledge from around the world to help Timor-Leste move towards peace and develop its capacity to achieve the MDGs.

Highlights from 2004 included the adoption of the Civil Service Act to ensure fair management of the public sector. During the bill's drafting, UNDP conducted a study tour so that officials could review similar legislation in Australia, Malaysia and Singapore. We then called upon sources of international legal expertise to review the draft, including Portugal's National Institute of Public Administration. After this legal milestone was passed, the Ministry of State Administration was able to validate over 11,000 civil servant records, a first step towards implementing a modern computerized Personnel Management Information System. UNDP continues to provide assistance through 180 international advisers within state institutions to coach civil servants. We are also supporting the National Institute of Administration in

enhancing its ability to train civil servants through an alliance with the Singapore Civil Service College.

To help deepen the oversight capacity of the legislative branch, UNDP has offered training to parliamentarians, and produced a hands-on budget manual outlining the national budget's composition, cycle and parliamentary oversight instruments. The manual was widely used during the national budget debate for fiscal 2004/2005. An emerging institutional assertiveness was on display, with parliamentarians putting increasing pressure on the executive branch to comply with parliamentary directives related to public expenditures.

As Timor-Leste began preparing to carry out local elections in 2004 and 2005, UNDP tapped experts from Australia, Brazil, Mexico and Peru to support the process. Study tours provided opportunities for officials from the Technical Secretariat of Electoral Administration, the national institution in charge of organizing the elections, to learn from similar experiences in Cape Verde, Fiji, the Philippines and Thailand. UNDP introduced comparative analyses from experts in Brazil, Cape Verde and Uganda to assist in an assessment of local governance options, which paves the way for government decentralization.

Other experts, mainly from other developing countries, have participated in projects to improve people's livelihoods. A pilot initiative in two villages increased rice seed yields by 400 percent after specialists conducted research and trained district extension officers. Another programme, grounded in close consultation between the government and communities, and guided in part by a volunteer international management team, has benefited thousands of community members through employment opportunities, vocational training, and basic services such as schools and irrigation. An international research team has now studied this innovative initiative, which has been featured on UNDP's networks. Having gained from knowledge outside its borders, Timor-Leste has begun to give back.



From elections to agriculture, Timor-Leste is using knowledge from the rest of the world, often from other developing countries, to put together a new country. Soldiers can now proudly hoist their flag in front of Parliament in Dili, the capital. Parliamentarians are among those who are expanding their skills.