"The link between democracy, press freedom and development has been well articulated by several studies, including from The World Bank and the United Nations, which have shown that the more freedom journalists have the greater the control over corruption, and the greater the focus of resources on priority development issues."

– BBC Worldwide, 16 January 2008.

EMPOWERING CITIZENS FOR DEVELOPMENT: DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Democratic governance is essential to inclusive, equitable human development. Democratic governance gives people the potential to drive change and exercise choice so as to improve their own lives. Reaching the MDGs by 2015 requires political will at the national as well as international level, which can be mobilized only if the poor have a stronger voice and influence on decisions. A democratic polity needs institutions that work, including a competent civil service focused on serving its citizens, an elected parliament that keeps the Executive in check, and an independent and professional justice system that provides legal access to all.

With approximately $1.5 billion each year to support democratic processes around the world, UNDP is one of the largest providers of democratic governance technical cooperation globally. UNDP devotes the biggest share of its resources, 40 percent of its programme expenditure, to democratic governance.

UNDP's work in democratic governance aims to contribute to the building of effective states, supported and sustained by responsive institutions empowered to make democracy deliver for the poor. This work includes support to electoral processes but it does not stop once the elections are over. It also involves continued support to parliaments and decentralized local governance to enhance the checks and balances that allow democracy to thrive; promoting human rights, the rule of law and access to justice by helping to strengthen the impartiality and effectiveness of national human rights machinery and judicial systems; ensuring freedom of expression and access to information by strengthening legislation, media capacities, and e-governance; promoting women's political empowerment; and integrating anti-corruption measures throughout.

All interventions are grounded in the realization that democratic governance and the capacities of the state to deliver must go hand in hand. Democracy must translate into tangible benefits for the poor. If people vote, but experience no real improvement in their daily lives as a result of the activities of their elected officials, they may become disillusioned with the democratic process. If governments are strengthened, but are not accountable to the people, then the process may become essentially undemocratic – benefiting the few and not the many. Without vigorous inclusive participation, official accountability, and strengthened responsive institutional capacity, governments are unlikely to deliver on their commitments to achieve the MDGs.

For the past seven years, some of UNDP's largest donors have been channelling additional resources to this area through the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund. For 2007, the Fund has provided support to 130 projects around the world, allocating over $16 million to these innovative initiatives, which are designed to foster inclusive participation, improve the responsiveness of governance institutions and promote democratic governance practice based on international principles.

One prominent area of UNDP's democratic governance work is in electoral support. UNDP supports an election somewhere in the world, on average, every two weeks. In 2007, UNDP was proud to contribute to the efforts of the electoral authorities of **Sierra Leone** in bringing about free and fair elections – the first change of power in the country to be achieved through democratic means. The project focused on reinforcing the capacity of Sierra Leone's entire electoral infrastructure, overhauling the National Electoral Commission and reforming the electoral framework. This entailed strengthening the professional capacities of election workers, the police force, administrative workers, political

Voter registrants in Bangladesh set a world record for electronically registering over 66 million voters as of 10 May 2008. UNDP worked with the Election Commission to create a new voter registration list in preparation for national elections later this year.

party representatives and the general public, and generating a national dialogue around a code of conduct by which all parties were expected to abide.

Voters turned out in record numbers – more than 2.6 million people, some 91 percent of the electorate – following widespread voter registration drives and months of civic engagement in the reform process. National and international observers praised the transparency of the process, noting a significant reduction in political and election-related violence, voting irregularities, negligence and fraud. In the months following the election, signs of economic revitalization have been visible throughout the capital, Freetown, with shops reopening for business and a vibrant local music industry gaining attention around the world.

As part of **Bangladesh**'s drive to improve democratic governance, UNDP worked with the country's Election

Commission to create a new voter registration list ahead of the national elections, expected to take place before the end of 2008. The new list includes digital photographs of each voter in a bid to help prevent fraud and the duplication of records. It is estimated that by the end of the registration process, Bangladesh will have set a world record for electronic registration of the largest number of voters – around 80 million – in the shortest period of time. As of 10 May 2008, over 66 million voters had already been enrolled. A total of nine development partners contributed $50 million through a UNDP-managed pooled fund project, implemented by the Bangladesh Election Commission, to undertake this groundbreaking initiative.

Since January 2007, UNDP has supported the preparations for the first-ever democratic elections in **Bhutan**, the world's youngest democracy. UNDP helped train election officials at national and district levels, and partnered with the Japanese Government to outfit election offices with IT equipment and to widen television network coverage in rural areas. UNDP also supported the Election Commission of Bhutan in its voter education outreach efforts, creating voter guides and media clips targeted to various audiences, including the 16,000 young people who had just reached the voting age of 18.

Forty journalists received training with UNDP support on how to cover an election process accurately and objectively. Media spokespersons in the Government will be trained to promote open and responsive public information procedures. To institutionalize these practices, UNDP

ENHANCING ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

PERIOD	TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS
PRE-VOTING CYCLE NEEDS	• Screen legal framework • Legal provision and related implementing procedures • Composition of electoral management bodies: special units for marginalized groups. Women members, recruitment process • Targeted training • Improving access to registration: mobile registration teams, registration by proxy, registration close to home, ramps, etc. • Engaged political parties • Voter information and education • Engage the media • Incorporate adequate technology
VOTING PERIOD NEEDS	• Support easy access to polling stations • Support assisted voting (without compromising vote secrecy)
POST-ELECTION PERIOD NEEDS	• Evaluation of access and participation in elections and programmes implemented • Civic education • Engagement with stakeholders

Source: BDP/UNDP

PRE-VOTING CYCLE NEEDS
VOTING PERIOD NEEDS
POST-ELECTION PERIOD NEEDS

supports the process of setting up a Journalists' Association of Bhutan, as well as a parliamentary information unit and website to widen public access to parliamentary decisions, draft legislation and other information. Other initiatives include supporting the Anti-Corruption Commission in its role of making the Government and the electoral process more accountable, through programmes such as road shows on curbing corruption in politics. UNDP continues to support the Election Commission of Bhutan.

Free and fair elections are just one pillar of democracy. Sound parliamentary systems are also critical to effective democratic governance. Institutions that are entrusted with safeguarding the public welfare must have the capacity, resources and independence to serve effectively. Recent research has linked the presence of a strong parliamentary institution with the existence of a strong democracy and an open society. Solid parliamentary institutions are critical to the establishment and consolidation of democracy since they empower ordinary people to participate in the policies that shape their lives. UNDP currently supports one in every three parliaments in the world.

Strengthening institutional governance has remained a priority for the **Solomon Islands** since the end of the civil unrest in 2003. With a population of fewer than 500,000 speaking more than 65 languages, the country has been working to maintain national unity and to achieve consensus on equitable resource distribution. In late 2007, UNDP supported the Parliamentary Secretariat during a leadership crisis following the resignation of eight Ministers. UNDP helped provide the legal analysis that allowed those in authority to react to each new development of the crisis based on administrative principles and the rule of law, avoiding violent conflict. The project has helped reinforce the capacity of Parliament to serve as an effective balance between the executive and judicial branches of government.

UNDP helps governments deliver basic services to the people. Running a government is largely about ensuring that basic services like health, education and energy get to those who need them. To do this, healthy democracies require fair and efficient public administrations – nationally and locally – with a solid civil service and equitable social policies. For this reason, UNDP is working with developing countries to strengthen public administrations. In 2007, almost two-thirds of overall UNDP expenditure in democratic governance was in public administration reform, anti-corruption, and decentralization and local governance.

UNV: DEVELOPING CAPACITY THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM

In Sudan, UNV community volunteer Badria Ahmed Elhij distributes materials during a community discussion and awareness training on female genital mutilation.

The UN Volunteers (UNV) programme, administered by UNDP, supported the development objectives of 25 UN organizations in 2007, by deploying 7,500 UNV volunteers and promoting volunteerism and the integration of volunteerism in development planning. Some 77 percent of all UNV volunteers were from developing countries, an expression of South-South development cooperation. This included 2,185 African nationals and 1,133 nationals from across Asia who became volunteers serving outside their home countries. In **Somalia**, a Nepalese UNV volunteer nurse taught midwives and nurses, while in **Trinidad and Tobago**, a Kenyan UNV volunteer doctor developed HIV testing protocols. UNDP engaged 2,105 UNV volunteers in 488 projects, including 16 co-funded from UNV's Special Voluntary Fund.

Volunteerism plays a role in capacity development by promoting people's involvement in the development of their own societies. Through its business model of advocacy, integration and mobilization of volunteers, UNV enhances the role of volunteerism in development. One important result indicator was the integration of UNV activities in 41 UN Development Assistance Frameworks and in 29 Country Programme Assistance Plans.

In addition to the placement of UNV volunteers, UNV contributed to developing national capacities for volunteer management, developing volunteer legislation and establishing national volunteer schemes in countries such as **Burkina Faso**, **Ecuador**, **Liberia**, **Niger**, **Pakistan** and **Tanzania**, among others.

To advance results-based programme management, UNV held five results workshops to analyze its contributions in post-conflict, disaster management, youth participation, governance, and national volunteer infrastructure. The workshop on capacity development for democratic governance in Africa found that volunteers helped strengthen the accountability and transparency of government institutions in the delivery of basic services, increased access to justice by poor and marginalized peoples, improved citizens' participation in development planning, enhanced the organization of elections, and strengthened social services. The impact of UNV's contribution to developing capacity for democratic governance and elections was demonstrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and **Timor Leste**.

UNV volunteers worked in a range of projects, including a joint programme on human security in **Honduras**, improving disaster risk reduction capacity in **India**, **Indonesia** and **Sri Lanka**, supporting the rule of law in Sudan, and building health sector capacity in countries such as **Malawi**, **South Africa** and Trinidad and Tobago. Through UNV, people have the opportunity to contribute their skills for developing capacity worldwide, with a third of UNV volunteers contributing to capacity development within their own communities.

In Nepal, electoral workers display polling centre staff identification cards for use during the April 2008 elections.

A series of interventions in the **Philippines** established a citizens' watch for monitoring progress towards achieving the MDGs at city level. These MDG-focused projects have raised awareness among city bureaucrats and the citizens at large to marshal efforts towards MDG achievement. The initiatives promoted collaboration among departments in planning and delivering basic services to meet the MDG targets in 13 cities across the country. These cities' laws, ordinances and policies were improved to make them more responsive to the MDGs, human rights and gender. The projects ultimately improved access to public goods and services for poor and disadvantaged groups. The success drivers included poverty profiles and development baselines (which form the basis for setting local MDG targets), twinning cities with local resource institutions, and knowledge-based constituency feedback mechanisms that made the local government units more accountable. The model has been documented and is being disseminated throughout the Philippines.

UNDP is supporting a range of decentralization projects around the world. Some, as in **Burkina Faso** and throughout Africa, seek to formalize the relationship between the civil court system and village councils. Others, such as a municipal empowerment programme in **Egypt,** emphasize fiscal decentralization as a means to alleviate poverty.

Eliminating corruption is critical to reducing poverty and promoting social and people-centred sustainable development. In 2007, UNDP **Mexico** scaled up an initiative previously launched to prevent vote-buying, guarding against the interference of "political entrepreneurs" who promised social benefits in exchange for votes. The project developed and monitored the degree of implementation of a number of policy recommendations seeking to improve access to information by programme beneficiaries and the general public, enhance transparency and accountability for government performance, and strengthen the capacities of public oversight bodies and watchdog groups. In addition, a national survey with 9,000 respondents was carried out – the first ever of its kind – linking perceptions on the operation and transparency of anti-poverty programmes, questions of political culture and participation, and the exposure of social programme beneficiaries to practices that seek to coerce poor people's votes in exchange for a public good or service. It yielded a number of good practices for improving transparency and accountability in the administration of anti-poverty programmes, and facilitating access to information to beneficiaries and the general public. The project also helped identify ways to strengthen civic education campaigns, as well as citizen monitoring and oversight of social programmes at the community level. The project received wide media exposure – more than 200 reports in major national newspapers.

UNDP promotes access to justice for the poor. Governing democratically means getting the law right and making sure it is upheld, while ensuring that people know they can resolve disputes impartially and equitably. For countries coming out of conflict, this can mean starting from scratch – writing a constitution, recruiting judges, training prison officers and the police. After two decades of civil war, Southern **Sudan** is now rebuilding and UNDP is on hand to provide support. UNDP and its partners have trained 40 judges and support staff in English language skills and 17 judges and legal counsel in continuing legal education. In **Yemen,** UNDP supported the introduction of IT-based legal records and a court management system. Transferring the laws to compact discs has been so successful that the number of copies has increased from 500 to 5,000.

UNDP supports the realization of placing human rights at the centre of the democratic governance agenda. A strong national human rights promotion and protection system, guided by public policies that promote human rights of all people, is a fundamental requirement for successful democratically-governed societies. Therefore, UNDP provides capacity development support at national, regional and local levels, often in collaboration with partners within and outside the UN system. Recent interventions include strengthening national human rights institutions and harmonizing laws in **Kazakhstan,** supporting minorities and providing legal assistance for disadvantaged populations in Indonesia, and addressing rights for the disabled in **Peru**.

UNDP is helping Southern Sudan to re-establish the rule of law, including honing the skills of judges.

UNDP works to help governments address imbalances caused by gender inequality. High on this agenda is women's access to and participation in democratic governance processes. UNDP has developed a series of resource materials to guide policy and its application in improving women's access to justice, encouraging broader women's participation in elections and producing gender-sensitive governance, including drafting legislation with an awareness of any potential unique impact on women. These resources include an online network for women in politics called iKNOW Politics that connects women candidates and leaders worldwide with the advice and know-how they need to be effective once elected to office.

The right to freedom of expression and the right to information are prerequisites for ensuring the voice and participation necessary for an open democratic society. UNDP supports countries in improving the legal and regulatory environment for freedom and pluralism in information, and strengthening the capacities of media and civil society to exercise the right to information and the communication mechanisms that empower citizens, including marginalized groups, to participate effectively in governance processes.

One recent example of this work is in **Nepal**. As part of a UNDP Participation in Peace project, the BBC World Service Trust brought together citizens in rural areas to put questions directly to the Prime Minister on the state of the peace process and to express their own concerns on a range of governance-related issues. A separate meeting between the general public and the chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) was also organized. Both took place before a live audience and marked the first real-time direct exchange between the two figures of authority and ordinary citizens. The Trust has now launched a new public affairs series in Nepal – *Sajha Sawal* or Common Questions – that is broadcast on 35 FM radio stations as well as on television.

The links between democracy, free media and development have been well documented by several studies, includ-

ing by The World Bank and the UN. These studies have shown that the more freedom the media have, the greater the control over corruption and the greater focus of resources on priority development issues. Globally, regionally and nationally, UNDP contributes to the training of national journalists and to the strengthening of legal and institutional frameworks that allow independent journalism and the media to flourish. Working with partners in the UN system and the international journalism community, UNDP aims to encourage the growth of vibrant, self-sustaining, professional news media organizations and institutions on both the national and local level in developing nations.

A recent UNDP-sponsored workshop hosted 18 journalists and media professionals from seven countries – **Belarus**, **Kyrgyzstan**, **Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine** and **Uzbekistan**. The workshop provided participants with a deeper understanding of human development concepts, focusing on strengthening skills in covering human development trends and issues of particular importance to the region. At the same time, it helped foster greater cooperation among media outlets.

UNDP is improving the national information base for democratic reform. By promoting nationally-owned governance assessments, UNDP is both enhancing the ability of policy makers to make informed decisions and strengthening the voices of the poor and women. In **Argentina**, a UNDP-supported citizens' audit was rolled out in 2007 to institutionalize qualitative analysis of local democratic practices in municipalities. The project established local civic forums composed of representatives of CSOs and the municipal government. These forums set standards and indicators of the elements of governance to be evaluated, and then used surveys to gather information for analysis. To date, some 50 civic forums have been established, covering 30 percent of the national population. Reports emerging from the forums are already influencing policy decisions on access to public information and public health projects. With broad participation and ownership on the part of municipal governments and civil society, the citizens' audit is enshrining the practice of monitoring and evaluating democratic life in the country.