Be Bold, Think Big

2017-2018
RESULTS REPORT
Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
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Preface

The last several years have been exciting and eventful for UNDP, as the organization repositions itself to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the demands of UN Member States to reform the UN development system. Both are the result of a new course for development, one that supports people and the planet, and that meets the challenges and opportunities of our complex, rapidly changing world.

In Asia and the Pacific, UNDP has moved from its traditional role as a donor to a new and valued position as a development partner, one at the intersection of a world of cutting-edge ideas, emerging innovations and powerful collaborations. We connect and integrate these in signature solutions that effectively act across the different dimensions of sustainable development, in line with the priorities of countries across the region.

Many answers remain to be found in the quest for sustainable development, which is a fundamental reworking of the ways that our societies and economies operate. People in all areas of life must bring their commitment and creativity together, knowing that sustainable development benefits everyone, and that no one should be left behind. New ways of tackling challenges must come forward through a constant process of innovation and evolution.

Catalytic innovations in particular deliver on a broad scale. They reframe challenges in systemic terms, and generate solutions accordingly, drawing on the strengths and skills of broad coalitions of partners. In 2018, UNDP’s Administrator, Achim Steiner, established Project Catalyst as a corporate initiative to identify and leverage catalytic innovations for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In Asia and the Pacific and around the world, the project will support accelerated, integrated action by zeroing in on the most promising innovations, demonstrating their merits and scaling up their reach. I am confident that our region will be at the forefront as a source of ideas and as a dynamic proving ground, and that exchanges of many successful experiences lie ahead both within the region and with other parts of the world.

UNDP in Asia and the Pacific has already gone far in pioneering innovation, as this results report shows. Our work on introducing, advocating and building the ecosystem for social impact investing is just one example. Social impact investing combines the dynamism and drive of the private sector with a commitment to social goods, such as better health-care services for poor communities, or the extension of green modern energy sources.

Public and private sector partners across the region are enthusiastically coming on board, drawn by a forward-thinking generation of tech-savvy young people. Together, we are educating investors and supporting entrepreneurs as the concept takes off. Efforts like these are complemented by others aimed at unlocking the significant sums to finance the SDGs, such as through partnerships with leading business schools, which bring some of the world’s best minds into thinking through new models.

These are exciting times. Times that call for passion, and for being bold and thinking big. Everyone has much to gain from a more sustainable, inclusive world.

Achim Steiner
Administrator
United Nations Development Programme

Foreword

The 2010 Agenda for Sustainable Development comes at a moment of profound change in our world. We are on the cusp of a fourth industrial revolution, inequality has soared, and poverty remains persistent in many countries. In addition to these challenges, climate change poses new risks, and conflict and fragility continue to impose longstanding ones.

Yet, amid these challenges are the opportunities of an era of unprecedented human progress. The 2030 Agenda is our roadmap to move forward. It recognizes that none of these issues will be solved in isolation by one country or institution. Meeting them demands a rethink of how we bring together and integrate ideas, people, and resources. Only in doing so will we achieve the kind of development that transforms lives and which lasts over time.

UNDP is on the frontlines of these challenges and opportunities, globally, and across Asia and the Pacific—the focus of this results report. Our breadth of expertise and presence in the region, and our central emphasis on the integral areas of governance and poverty reduction are mission critical. They make UNDP uniquely positioned to transform people’s lives.

In Fiji, transformation means thousands of people gaining access to public services. In Lao People’s Democratic Republic, it means more than 6,500 small business start-ups have the chance to flourish. For 50 million people across the region, it offers the hope that comes from the chance to vote. For a billion people in the region, it rests on the sense of safety created when they can rely on comprehensive natural disaster emergency plans. For both poor rural communities and the central government in Indonesia, it means new ways to use traditional sources of Islamic finance for social goods.

In Asia and the Pacific, and around the world, people’s expectations for a better life are on the rise. UNDP uniquely positioned to build partnerships and address together a mix of complex issues to help countries break new ground. As a region, Asia and the Pacific continues to achieve great progress. Yet, nearly 400 million people remain trapped in extreme poverty. Gains from economic growth have disproportionately benefited the richest people. Environmental degradation and economic growth have disproportionately benefited the planet, and that means the challenges and opportunities of our complex, rapidly changing world.

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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development demands a rethink and a reset—in our region and our world. Change has surged at an exponential pace through Asia and the Pacific. But to continue advancing, to aim for development that equally benefits our children and grandchildren, depends on new ways forward.

UNDP has stood by the countries of Asia and the Pacific, with support from its donors, for more than 70 years, a period of extraordinary progress. Today, in partnership, we embark on a new phase: the pursuit of transformative solutions that are sustainable and leave no one behind. At a turning point in history, UNDP is committed to the vision of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are bringing together people and ideas, resources and innovations.

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More resilient development depends in many cases on innovation. A woman visited a Technology Demonstration House in Nepal to learn new construction techniques that make housing more likely to withstand crises such as earthquakes. © UNDP Nepal

Opportunities ahead

Looking ahead, there is enormous scope for optimism. Asia and the Pacific today is interconnected as never before, through networks of trade, roads and shipping lanes, and across the value chains that drive thriving businesses. Mobile technology has stirred slow-growing industries into robust and competitive ones, and extended critical market information and financial services to even remote locations. UNDP sees rich exchanges of thought and research, and dynamic social movements. Partnerships for development are increasingly powerful and diverse.

At the same time, the challenges should not be underestimated, from the spread of disease to the loss of environmental resources to acute vulnerability to natural disaster. Rapid urbanization has offered many benefits, but also imposed dangerous costs, such as heavily polluted air and water. Climate change heightens disaster risks and is already spurring mass movements of people, a pattern likely to continue amid pressures on agricultural land and food security.

Inequality is on the rise, and increasing at a rate higher than the average in the rest of the world, undermining future prospects for growth. All countries have vulnerable groups who lag particularly far behind the development curve—the poor, ethnic minorities, women, children, older people, migrants and people with disabilities. Continued disparities in health care and education mean that some groups not only start off on an unequal footing, but may never have a chance to catch up.

These concerns are daunting, but not insurmountable in a region with a tremendous well-spring of energy and creativity, where 700 million people left poverty in a short 20 years. Many opportunities lie ahead to transform societies by achieving the SDGs.

At UNDP, which serves 36 countries and territories across the region, the 2030 Agenda is our number one priority, the blueprint for our newest Strategic Plan. In this new era, our mission has never been more ambitious or clear: be bold, think big.
Towards transformation

This report demonstrates how far UNDP is already going in helping countries in Asia and the Pacific to bring home the SDGs. In the last year alone, we have assisted in rolling out detailed SDG plans and investments in Pakistan and India, empowering rural residents of Fiji and Lao People’s Democratic Republic, and mobilizing youth to claim their better future in the Maldives. Our support has encouraged the transformation of institutions, such as through a record number of women in local elected offices in Nepal and village courts that bring justice to every corner of Bangladesh. We are building resilience to shocks and crisis, always seeking to reach the most vulnerable first, such as through comprehensive disaster management in rural areas of Myanmar. Malaysia’s first law to curb biopiracy places special emphasis on protecting the rights of local and indigenous communities as stewards of natural resources.

To be bold and think big, we are seeking to channel the propulsive force of innovation and technology. Design thinking and silo-busting collaboration have pushed forward public administration reform in Thailand. Regionally and within countries, we champion social impact investment by connecting young entrepreneurs to financing and a socially responsible vision of the future. Our Responsible Business Forum has galvanized hundreds of businesses, large and small, around doing good while doing well.

From our position in the international system, we are linking countries to a world of new international finance, such as the Green Climate Fund, as well as South-South cooperation, such as through humanitarian partnerships with China. Lucrative domestic financing possibilities already demonstrating strong potential include Islamic finance in Indonesia, coming through both traditional charitable giving as well as a novel billion-dollar commercial bond instrument. Our knowledge leadership has yielded insights for Viet Nam to reorient national policy-making around inclusive growth, and for China to grapple with pressing issues around social mobility, social protection and urbanization.

As our reason for being, our country offices remain at the centre of our efforts. Operating at the heart of the UN development system, in lasting partnership with the countries they have been explicitly designed to serve, they will start offering SDG country support platforms, as envisioned in UNDP’s new Strategic Plan. The platforms will help countries design integrated development solutions that balance economic, social and environmental concerns, and define actions to accelerate rapid progress. They will connect public and private, national and international partners, encouraging everyone to do their part.

Each year, UNDP strives to be more ambitious in serving the countries of Asia and the Pacific. This is a region that never waits for change. As this report affirms, UNDP, too, is forging ahead, boldly, with the passion of our convictions. Towards 2030 and beyond.
A Region Rolls Out the SDGs

UNDP helps make it happen. Bold actions accelerate change.

AFGHANISTAN:
A doubling in malaria case detection

NEPAL:
41% of local government seats go to women

BANGLADESH:
Village courts rendered justice in 20,000 cases

VIET NAM:
Start-ups linked to the SDGs

CHINA:
Assistance for half a million people in crisis

PHILIPPINES:
440,000 hectares of marine areas protected

NEPAL:
41% of local government seats go to women

CAMBODIA:
Climate considerations integrated in IMF talks

LAO PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC:
Graduation from least developed country status accelerates

INDONESIA:
$1.25 billion in new development finance

SRI LANKA:
Forests managed to benefit 124,800 people

MALAYSIA:
A new law safeguards biodiversity and indigenous rights

TIMOR-LESTE:
A fertile ecosystem nurtures young entrepreneurs

SOLOMON ISLANDS:
New consensus on governance reforms

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UNDP has one primary purpose in Asia and the Pacific: to support countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. We do this while emphasizing the core principles of leaving no one behind and reaching those furthest behind first.

In a remarkably diverse region, our solutions are diverse too, owned by the countries with which we work, and tailored to their priorities. We help them take on three broad development challenges: addressing basic development needs, achieving structural transformation for sustainable development, and preventing and recovering from shocks, crises and conflicts. Often these challenges coexist within the same country, requiring integrated action.

Our signature solutions are among the first efforts, on a regional and global scale, to systematically bring together the full array of elements that can bring people out of poverty, improve institutions so they are both effective and inclusive, and harness the power of development as both a protection from and a pathway out of crisis. Across every form of UNDP assistance, we help countries connect to innovation, new knowledge and powerful partnerships. These propel rapid change. The 2030 Agenda—and people everywhere—demand no less.

At a workshop in the Maldives, participants imagined their own ideal islands where all 17 of the SDGs had been attained, a technique to connect global goals to issues in their own communities. © UNDP Maldives
Building momentum, defining priorities

Across Pakistan, their voices were heard—nearly 9,200 in total. They were small traders, local government planners, farmers, lawyers, among many others. Their objective: identify which of the 17 SDGs deserve immediate priority in different localities. In Baluchistan, people called for ending poverty as the top imperative, followed by improved health and education. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stressed education foremost, and then clean water and sanitation. Decent work was among the major concerns in Azad Jammu Kashmir, gender equality in Gilgit Baltistan, and affordable and clean energy in Punjab.

The exercise was part of a mass community-based survey capturing grass-roots perspectives, and feeding into a dynamic national drive to jumpstart implementation of the SDGs, drawing on assistance from UNDP in Asia and the Pacific. In 2018, the National Economic Council, the country’s top policy-making forum, approved the National SDG Framework. It built on the community survey along with detailed analysis of SDG gaps and opportunities, and will set the tone for actions across the entire country, at the national, provincial and even district levels. Further endorsement comes from Pakistan’s Parliament, which passed a special resolution adopting the SDGs as national development goals.

“We believe that SDGs agenda for development is not an international agenda; it is our own agenda,” says Ahsan Iqbal, Honorable Minister of Planning, Development and Reform. “It reflects on our ambition and desire to give our people better quality of life. Therefore, we must take ownership of SDGs with com-

Leaving No One Behind

Vocational training gives young women the skills to find work in India’s booming manufacturing and technology industries. © Ruhani Kaur/UNDP India-Disha
The moves to make the SDGs central to public policy have been accompanied by steps to embed them in the institutions that will make them a reality in daily life. The federal and all four provincial governments have established SDG support units charged with monitoring progress to achieve the SDGs. In a cascade effect in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh, similar structures are now reflected in divisional and district administrations as well. They oversee committees dedicated to mobilizing around priority issues and engaging with communities to keep on top of local concerns.

The SDG units have an ongoing task: to check annual development plans for alignment with the goals and to define priority actions. In the province of Sindh, for example, recent analysis found that 89 percent of the public sector development programme contributes to the SDGs, and the total sum has risen steadily. Allocations are much greater to physical infrastructure than the social sector, however, even though both are top priorities in the SDGs. Far more weight has been given to priorities such as affordable and clean energy (42.4 percent) than to achieving zero hunger (0.2 percent). With findings like these, national ministries and provincial departments are expected to take the next step: making course corrections in projects and expenditures.

In India, state governments are leading the way on localizing the SDGs, against the backdrop of a national move to prepare the first-ever Sustainable Development Index as a regular measure of progress. Both efforts build on technical expertise provided through the UN country team, including UNDP. The state of Maharashtra, for instance, has established an Action Room to Reduce Poverty, which will apply $15 million a year to accelerate SDG localization across 100 of the most deprived subdistricts, particularly on livelihoods, education and health. The state of Assam has prepared a strategy and action plans for achieving the goals, and created the Assam Innovation Lab. In the state of Haryana, an SDG Coordination Centre will be a hub bringing together all that is required for the SDGs, from resources to new capacities, partnerships to monitoring. It will put a strong emphasis on innovation, with an early effort being to use blockchain technology to improve the security of land registration, essential in a state heavily dependent on agriculture.

India has prepared the first-ever Sustainable Development Index as a regular measure of progress on the SDGs.

UNDP has helped Indonesia’s province of Riau launch a local SDG programme aligned with a presidential decree urging SDG implementation across the country. SDG secretariats at the provincial level and in three districts bring together a cross-section of people, from the worlds of government, business, philanthropies, civil society, academia and the media. They collaborate on local sustainable development activities, with one early priority being improved access to water and sanitation. An important element of their approach is that they look across the many dimensions of poverty, understanding how they may interact, and what actions may be most effective in unblocking progress on multiple fronts.
Fiji’s Constitution enshrines social, economic and legal rights for all citizens. The SDGs promise to leave no one behind. But upholding these commitments can be a challenge in remote rural communities, which may lie outside the reach of existing public services. To start reducing these shortfalls, UNDP introduced mobile service delivery teams. In 2017, they traveled to 526 of the most marginalized communities in half the districts of Fiji. Specialists helped nearly 11,300 people gain new knowledge of their rights, and linked 15,540 people to essential services such as legal aid and social welfare provisions. Around half the beneficiaries were women, who drew on more general services as well as those designed for them, such as for leadership training, income-generation assistance and protection from gender-based violence.

In Lao People’s Democratic Republic, UNDP has partnered with the Lao Women’s Union to replicate a rural development programme based on a model from the Republic of Korea that ignited progress in rural communities. The model empowers rural residents, particularly women and youth, with comprehensive skills, knowledge and access to better livelihoods. In 10 villages, over 6,500 people have learned to start and manage small businesses. Repairs to water and road systems have boosted productivity and access to markets. Livelihood support centres now offer vocational training on subjects such as weaving and organic farming, while training on cooking and food processing has stressed both additional chances for income, and nutrition and food security.

Other advances have come from helping government planners cultivate capacities to gather and analyze sex-disaggregated statistics, which are being applied to tailor local planning to the varying needs of women and men.

Along Bhutan’s Thimphu-Phuntsholing highway, increasingly torrential storms have triggered landslides that threaten human lives, property and livelihoods, damaging both the environment and the economy. The highway, snaking through some of the world’s highest mountains, is an economic lifeline to India, with regular traffic in essential goods and services. For a decade, Bhutan tried to protect it with check dams to limit landslides, seeing mixed success.

With support from the Global Environment Facility, UNDP has brought in a mix of innovative and more promising solutions, some of which are being tried for the first time in Bhutan. Slopes have been stabilized with closely spaced ‘nails’ or bars strengthened by concrete, large sandbag dams and native plants. Drones were used to study the slide and monitor the progress of stabilization works. People residing in areas where landslides were once common now report they feel safer than before.
Going green to meet energy needs

With Thailand expecting its energy needs to rise by more than 75 percent over the next two decades, the search is on for new sources—particularly renewable energy sources such as sun, water, wind, biomass and geothermal heat. In the remote northern province of Mae Hong Son, UNDP is helping to demonstrate some of the ways forward. As these early experiments show what is possible, Thailand will be able to scale up to meet what works best and devise policies, plans and financing to roll out renewable energy generation on a larger scale in the province.

Early efforts have included a solar power system for the main hospital, and solar home systems outside the national electrical grid. Low-cost bio-digesters installed in schools and on farms produce energy from abundant biomass available particularly from the pigs raised by many households. The provincial government has already committed additional funding to expand the activities piloted by UNDP, both in the provincial capital as well as in some additional isolated, off-grid communities.

Mobilizing youth for their future

In the complex political environment of the Maldives, demand for progress on the SDGs comes most effectively from the ground up, filtering into multiple political debates. Towards that end, UNDP partnered with the official state body for SDG implementation to convene a national forum on the goals. It drew civil society groups from across the country to explore possibilities for collaboration. Following the forum, for the first time, the state body invited civil society organizations to take part in technical discussions on SDG progress. Social media groups were established to share workplans and updates, a community sensitization drive began among local leaders, and a “people’s charter” is in the works, based on the SDGs.

UNDP also sponsored the #Film4Change initiative, where young people learned storytelling, videography and production. They produced SDG-related films on mental health, gender equality and plastic pollution shown on social media and in local cinemas. Social innovation camps have given young people scope to explore new solutions to development challenges, with the best ideas selected for special mentorships to develop them. They include a web platform operating as a safe space to access professional mental health care, a label printing business for small food producers targeting women, and a game to learn about urban planning and sustainable cities.

For the first time in the Maldives, the official body on the SDGs is engaging with civil society to make progress towards the goals.

Timor-Leste has made considerable advances since independence. Today the country is one of the most youthful nations in Asia, which could represent a significant opportunity for further development gains. But a number of challenges stand in the way, including limited employment opportunities for young people and an economy that leans heavily on oil revenues. Under its Youth Action for SDGs initiative, UNDP has helped focus on improving the environment for skill development and entrepreneurship among youth.

A one-stop support centre for innovation and entrepreneurship is premised on the notion that young people are not just job seekers, but also job creators. It provides a fertile ecosystem for exchanges of ideas, links to financing, legal and technical assistance, and a web platform connecting youth to jobs, goods and services. Through the programme, young people have learned about the SDGs, and how to use research to define and solve problems in their communities. They have interacted with policy makers and business leaders on issues such as social entrepreneurship, and attended a Techcamp designed to promote design thinking and innovation.

Empowering women as environmental leaders

The six deep-blue, crystal clear lakes of Afghanistan’s Band-e-Amir region are surrounded by sheer red cliffs, a breathtaking landscape. In 2009, the Government declared the area the country’s first national park. Since 2014, UNDP has supported the Government in managing it for the 190,000 people who come each year to take in its peace and natural wonders.

Today they set an empowering and highly visible example of female leadership, while making a salary three times higher than the average agricultural wage of male workers in the surrounding province. Women are also making important community contributions to help manage park resources as members of the management board of the Band-e-Amir Community Council. Their share of council positions, while still low at 20 percent, is twice the national rate of female participation in government and non-governmental organizations.

Beyond the creation of the park, a second groundbreaking move came through the appointment of the country’s first female rangers.

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Transforming Institutions

New roles, new possibilities for women

After the final vote was cast and the last ballot counted, Nepal could celebrate history. In the 2017 election, women candidates took a record 41 percent of local seats and 34 percent of provincial seats. While women have had prominent roles in national politics and the quest for democracy in Nepal, the first local election in 20 years set a remarkable new precedent by sweeping a critical mass of women into local politics. Never before had such a large number run for and won political positions.

As Nepal moves towards a decentralized, federal system of government, women will have an influential say in decisions that define everyday life in their communities, from building roads to drilling wells to managing shared environmental resources.

Bindu Pariyar, a newly-elected Dalit woman ward committee member of Pyuthan Municipality, celebrated her victory. There was a time, not long ago, when it never would have occurred to her to enter politics, discouraged by the multiple forms of discrimination that stem from being both a woman and a member of a marginalized community. Vital support came from an orientation session organized by the National Elections Commission, which turned to UNDP assistance to prepare and manage the elections.

“I was not aware that I had a leader inside me,” Pariyar says. “It was only after attending the orientation session that I really came to understand and embrace my own potential.”

Making this kind of society-changing history requires a big push at the start. Through Nepal’s National Administrative Staff College, master trainers learned to...
teach leadership and civil participation skills, and gained perspectives on potential obstacles faced by women candidates, such as a lack of self-confidence and limited exposure to life outside their homes. The trainers then fanned out across the country, helping facilitators in 26 districts provide civic engagement and leadership training sessions to over 52,000 women like Pariyar, particularly those from marginalized communities. Progress was tracked and guided by a dedicated SMS reporting system. The Elections Commission hosted a series of public awareness campaigns encouraging citizens to run for office, with a special focus on women.

Over 4,000 women who participated in the training eventually filed to run in local elections; 1,000 were elected. A big share of their success came from new constitutional and legal requirements that women fill a certain share of political positions. But to make these more than paper promises, women themselves needed to know their rights and feel empowered to claim them. The campaigns and orientation sessions helped fill knowledge gaps around legal provisions, electoral procedures and women’s rights, and built hope and self-confidence.

Similar effects came through a different but related channel, a microenterprise programme also supported by UNDP. It reached out to women in historically marginalized social groups, many of whom are becoming role models in their communities. Laxmi Pariyar, a newly elected official in the district of Kavre, is one. She gained skills and a small sum to set up a tailor shop that has grown into a thriving business, proving her potential to lead. “I saw that if I could change my life with a little push, I could change the lives of the people in need in my community,” she said.

Extending the reach of justice

In districts of Pakistan’s Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, long rocked by insecurity and militancy, UNDP has worked at almost every level of formal and informal justice institutions to restore public trust. By 2018, over 22,000 people will have received free legal aid. More women are and first-time voters rose by 17 percent over the 2012 elections; voter turnout soared by nearly 77 percent. A new emphasis on women’s roles led to the deployment of women as half of polling staff, and for the first time, the turnout of women voters was recorded. Other support helped a national organization for people with disabilities to monitor the elections, a process yielding recommendations to improve accessibility, such as through legal guarantees and an inclusiveness strategy. Ongoing voter education and engagement with newly elected local government leaders are contributing to citizenship and nation-building in the youngest country in Asia and the Pacific.
entering the legal profession, and previously taboo cases relating to human rights and so-called “honour killings” are being increasingly investigated and prosecuted. In the effort to reduce case backlogs, UNDP has provided alternative dispute resolution guidelines and trainings to judges, para-legals and Dispute Resolution Councils at the district level for minor civil disputes. Around 700 prosecutors and pleaders have completed training on case management, joint investigation, trial techniques and forensics.

The police are moving from “policing by authority” to “policing by consent,” reinforcing a sense of partnership between community members and local police. Nearly 5,300 police officers have acquired skills, such as gender-responsive policing and improved crime scene management. Sixty-two model police stations have been established. At the Central Police Office in Peshawar, a new data analysis centre monitors security incidents and crime trends in real time.

To make justice more accessible to people, especially women, and poor and marginalized communities, and to reduce case burdens on overstretched district courts in Bangladesh, UNDP helped to activate village courts in 1,078 union parishads, the country’s lowest level of local government. The idea has quickly become a popular one, fuelled by outreach to over 1.1 million people and a demonstration effect. Since disputes are locally resolved, travel costs and work absences are minimal—such obstacles can otherwise be insurmountable for poor seekers of justice. The courts act quickly, investigating and reaching a decision on small criminal and civil matters without the cumbersome bureaucracy of higher levels of the court system. From 2017 to 2018, over 29,000 disputes were reported to the village courts and nearly 20,000 resolved. Over 2,200 cases were transferred from district to village courts, a strong signal of confidence and trust.

Fostering an inclusive peace

With the end of a regional assistance mission in 2017 and preparations for forthcoming elections, the Solomon Islands turned to UNDP to help intensify dialogue around advancing peace and inclusion. Provincial and national talks have shaped new consensus around decentralization and governance reforms, and access to land and other resources, issues that have been a source of strife in the past. A framework for reparations has been developed, and a regular forum involving all key ministries and the Prime Minister’s Office established to coordinate work on transition and peacebuilding, with an emphasis on hotspot areas.

A sustainable peace will rest largely on broad popular support, including among younger people and women, who have suffered from exclusion in the past. UNDP supported the country’s first peacebuilding innovation forum, which placed youth concerns at the heart of peace and development efforts, and has triggered regular interactions between youth leaders and policy-makers.
A particular urgency comes from an impending referendum on the Autonomous Region’s political future, slated for 2019.

UNDP continues to support both the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government in implementing the peace agreement. Community information centres have been established to provide information on the agreement and referendum. At the Bougainville House of Representatives, new technology has improved digital connectivity, and a new recording system captures parliamentary sessions, part of a move towards greater transparency and accountability. A national conference helped women push for a greater voice in political and other decision-making processes.

A new public opinion monitoring framework has been launched by the national Cabinet in 2017 to deepen democratic representation and enhance the delivery of essential public services. Actions towards that end are already under way, and UNDP projects have benefited over 750,000 people since 2014, through the rehabilitation of access roads, irrigation channels, water supply systems and schools. Support for the resettlement of people returning after being displaced has included cash-for-work programmes to inject immediate support as well as longer-term measures such as skill development, livelihood grants and job placement services in partnership with the private sector.

Effective communication has helped advance buy-in to the reforms and rapidly correct misperceptions that might derail the process. Community organizations have brought people together to solve common concerns and share in cultural and sports events that ease tensions. Other decision-making processes. Reforms to cut the causes of conflict

Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has a long history as a semi-autonomous region, but under heavy state control. In recent decades, little attention was paid to development and human rights, even as the region, situated on the border of Afghanistan, was buffeted by turbulence. More than 2 million people were displaced from 2014 to 2015 as a result of militancy and subsequent military operations launched by the Government of Pakistan. As over 85 percent of the displaced population has now returned, there is considerable improvement in the security situation, and recovery and rehabilitation projects are underway. FATA is on the verge of becoming a successful case of how combining military operations, political reforms and socioeconomic development can quell the drivers of conflict.

UNDP, working with a cross-section of central and regional authorities, has been the lead partner of the Government in a process of significant reform, building on a 26-point agenda approved by the national Cabinet in 2017 as well as the creation of a prime ministerial committee dedicated to enacting the agenda. A comprehensive 10-year plan aims to eliminate development deficits and strengthen local governance to deepen democratic representation and enhance the delivery of essential public services. Actions towards that end are already under way, and UNDP projects have encompassed a doubling of detection rates over the previous year. Nearly 2.5 million tests with long-lasting insecticide were distributed to prevent exposure, including through targeted outreach to pregnant women. Iran has closed in on eliminating malaria cases with Global Fund support channelled through a strong partnership between national and international health experts. The result: a 98 percent reduction in the disease. This has

Developing capacities to fight disease

UNDP works closely with countries to strengthen health systems through the strategic management of grants from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. In Afghanistan, funds have gone towards the procurement of drugs and other essential supplies to combat malaria. Health-care providers have acquired new skills in detecting and treating the disease, laboratories have developed testing capacities, and services reach remote communities through the Strategic Management System. Partnerships between national and international health experts have a strong partnership between national and international health experts. The result: a 98 percent reduction in the disease. This has

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In Viet Nam’s Khanh Hoa province, Dang Thanh Son makes a small income from doing odd jobs for his neighbours. His wife collects and sells snails. They manage to get by, but just barely. When Typhoon Damrey’s powerful winds slammed into their community at the end of 2017, the family house was heavily damaged. Part of the front roof flew away and the rear wall collapsed. In minutes, the family lost its living space. Their distress deepened knowing they had little cash on hand to rebuild it.

Like many other people living on the margins, they face acute vulnerability across many dimensions—limited income, poor quality housing and a lack of information about how to prepare for disaster, among others. These add up to make a bad situation even worse, in the short and long term. Lost homes quickly translate into lost income, poor health, children kept from education and psychological distress.

Almost as soon as Typhoon Damrey made its destructive landfall, UNDP joined other UN agencies, the Government and civil society to mobilize emergency actions in 15 affected provinces, including Khanh Hoa. To restore housing and livelihoods, UNDP secured $2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Republic of Korea. Based on a damage assessment, 5,300 households in six provinces soon had cash, cash vouchers or material vouchers for shelter repair and reconstruction. More than 27,000 people received training and engineering support to put “build-back-better” principles into practice. An innovative mobile phone app enabled real-time monitoring of construction progress with a “call back” mechanism so that local communities could provide regular feedback.

Son’s family was given funds...
and information on safe house construction, meaning he could start repair work immediately. His priorities were clear: to remove the tree pinning down the roof, install a new roof, and use new construction techniques to build a storm-resistant brick wall at the rear of the house. Next time, his family will have a much better chance of making it through the winds and rain with their home intact.

**Viet Nam has developed a series of institutions, laws and capacities to effectively manage disaster risks.**

With a coastline of nearly 3,500 kilometers and situated inside the Southeast Asian typhoon belt, Viet Nam faces regular risks of disaster. Floods and storms impose some of the greatest losses in terms of life, property and even the economy at large, subtracting a point or so off gross domestic product annually. In any given year, thousands of houses are damaged by floods and storms in coastal provinces. In 2017 alone, 105,478 houses were destroyed and damaged by Typhoon Damrey.

UNDP has been a longstanding partner in helping Viet Nam develop a series of national and local institutions to manage disaster risks, along with related laws and regulations, and capacities such as early warning systems and rapid response networks. In seven coastal provinces, UNDP is partnering with the Green Climate Fund, the Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority, the Ministry of Construction and civil society actors to ensure that 20,000 of some of the poorest and most vulnerable families have homes that can withstand disasters. To provide a buffer against storm surges and support coastal livelihoods, 4,000 hectares of mangroves will be planted and restored.

**Realigning climate finance**

Climate change can have a profound impact on economies and societies, from deadly storm surges to droughts that devastate crops. Countries must prepare, and part of that is making sure that public expenditure is being invested in the right places. In Cambodia, the National Council for Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Economy and Finance have drawn on UNDP expertise to track expenditures accordingly.

Ministries in Cambodia are now strongly encouraged to fully integrate climate issues in budgets. The process has pinpointed steadily increasing allocations of national resources, even as external support has declined. While investments are broadly in line with national goals by different sectors such as water, transport and rural development, there are some significant gaps. Rural development, for instance, is adequately funded as a whole, but budget allocations have given short shrift to vital tasks such as climate-proofing vulnerable rural communities operated water purification stations, backed by public investment in Cambodia, provide year-round access to clean water for communities affected by drought, and reduce the unsustainable use of fuel wood to boil water. © Reaksmey NEOU, CCCA/UNDP Cambodia
Realizing the high stakes of climate change, the Government has used these insights for macroeconomic modelling to guide budget choices and is incorporating findings in its new five-year development strategy. Climate change also featured for the first time in 2017 in consultations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Through the most recent national budget circulars, ministries are strongly encouraged to fully integrate climate issues across their budget lines. UNDP has already worked with the Ministry of Rural Development as well as the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to analyse the costs and benefits of proposed investments given climate change. Evidence on climate resilient roads has been used in budget negotiations to justify investment in climate-resilient designs.

Taking a comprehensive approach to disaster

Pre-positioned measures to limit the risks and impacts of disasters are critical, no more so than in Nepal. It straddles a faultline that gave rise to the cataclysmic 2015 earthquake and is among the nations most vulnerable to climate change. UNDP has helped the Government pursue more resilient development by adapting to climate shifts, managing disaster risks and extending clean energy. In a major milestone in 2017, the Government endorsed the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and Strategic Action Plan 2017-2030 in line with the globally agreed Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The plan lays out a long-term strategy for preparedness, calling on all ministries, from education to infrastructure, to proactively counteract potential threats.

Moves are underway to develop preparedness plans and emergency systems for all 75 districts of Nepal. Community-based early warning systems are being installed, inexpensive and quake-resistant housing models have been introduced, and building codes are being more strictly implemented. Local action plans to adapt to climate are being rolled out in 68 municipalities, engaging over 65,000 people in taking steps such as constructing irrigation canals and practising climate-smart farming. One urgent measure already completed entailed lowering the water level in Lake Inja. Situated high in the Himalayas, it was considered at strong risk of bursting and causing catastrophic flooding.

Myanmar has drawn on UNDP support to develop a comprehensive national disaster risk reduction policy framework, including the new Myanmar Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction, which guides priority actions for disaster management. A complementary community disaster resilience
A sustainable future largely depends on preserving environmental resources while meeting human needs. In Sri Lanka, the Government has acted on this principle by scaling up a community forestry initiative supported by UNDP. Premised on the notion that protecting forests will be more successful by involving people who live nearby, the project has involved managing 23,000 hectares of forests. Marginalized local communities have found new livelihoods, with benefits reaching 235,000 people. Where poverty once drove small farmers to destroy forests to plant crops, often by slashing and burning the trees, they can now receive up to two hectares of land to grow forest, food and fruit trees. If maintenance is sound, they receive a lease agreement along with 80 percent of the value of the trees when they mature; 20 percent goes to the Government as a royalty.

This approach has reduced illegal logging at 87 project sites and virtually eliminated forest fires. Monthly incomes have risen by 30 percent in general, including through the extension of financial services that have helped people develop small businesses that do not encroach on forest resources, such as raising chickens or growing mushrooms. The National Forestry Department has acknowledged the approach as the most cost-effective way to manage forests, and amended regulations to expand it, backed by national financing. UNDP has helped the department develop the right capacities to sustain the programme, such as through skills to respond to gender sensitivities and to engage with communities from a perspective of partnership rather than policing.

Indonesia is restoring 2 million hectares of damaged peatlands.

Indonesia’s peatlands host a wealth of plant and animal species, but poor management practices have left many drained and used for crops, oil palm plantations and industrial timber estates. Once dry, these areas become highly susceptible to forest fires, causing extensive damage, and producing haze that harms the health of local communities. As a response to these threats, and in an effort to meet its national climate mitigation goals, Indonesia established the Peatland Restoration Agency to restore 2 million hectares of damaged peatlands by 2020. With UNDP support, the agency has been able to develop maps of priority restoration areas, create mechanisms to assist local governments with carrying out the restoration, and establish a command centre for coordinating restoration and monitoring progress. Local communities have been trained in new land conservation practices and alternative livelihoods using restored peatland.

As one of the world’s richest repositories of biodiversity, Malaysia finally has a law to safeguard local and indigenous people’s rights over these resources. The law is also intended to curb biopiracy, where biological resources are used without a country’s consent, at times for huge profits in industries such as pharmaceuticals.

Supported by UNDP, the Access to Biological Resources and Benefit-Sharing Act 2017 features state-of-the-art provisions on the responsibilities of central and state authorities, prior-informed consent and benefit-sharing among governments, research institutions, business entities and indigenous communities. Additional UNDP assistance has helped the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre and Forest Research Institute Malaysia partner with indigenous communities to develop innovative medicinal and health-care products based on traditional foods and medicine, an effort that improves livelihoods while conserving nature.
Aspirations for a “digital Bangladesh” are driven by the Access to Information or a2i programme. Situated in the Prime Minister’s Office, and supported by UNDP, the programme applies technological and other innovations to transform public services so they are better, cheaper and easier to use. Nearly 5,300 Digital Service Centres now reach every corner of Bangladesh and provide 116 public and private services, from banking to passport applications to social security payments. In 2017, 100 million underserved people accessed some form of digital public services, up from 72 million in 2016. Four million people had used the banking services; many came from marginalized communities where financial services used to barely exist.

A Digital Financial Services Lab is now applying a “lab+” model to find and scale up proven a2i financial inclusion innovations. It backs a process of constant innovation, such as through regular “innovation jams,” which bring financial providers and financial inclusion experts together to create new solutions. Ethnographic research feeds in perspectives from poor communities never previously consulted about their financial service needs. Innovation challenge competitions mobilize banks, microfinance groups and others to incubate promising ideas and try them out through the Digital Service Centres, with built-in feedback mechanisms from people managing the centres. Related initiatives include

UNDP is an Innovator

Jamming to transform public services

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100 million people accessed digital public services in Bangladesh in 2017.
innovation camps and challenges specifically for women and people with disabilities to propose ideas most relevant to the concerns they face.

One recent major project has been to improve social safety net payments—which soak up a huge sum, over 12 percent of the national budget. Paper-based transfers have long been fraught with inefficiencies imposing costs for both the government and recipients. A pilot enabling 7,000 widows, people with disabilities and senior citizens to digitally collect payments is underway, a step towards a broader national rollout that could reduce costs for beneficiaries by 32 percent, and time-consuming trips to government offices by 80 percent.

4.0 for administrative reform

In Thailand, innovation has been a priority in economic and social development policy-making for more than a decade. But uptake in public sector practices lagged behind. In an effort to drive Thailand out of the middle-income trap, the Government has complemented its “Thailand 4.0” strategy for an innovation-driven economy with an administrative reform initiative, “Bureaucracy 4.0.” It aims to make governance open and connected, citizen-centric and high performing in responding to public demands. UNDP backed the process in 2017 by helping to set up the Government Innovation Lab, taking inspiration from comparable experiences in other countries, such as MindLab in Denmark, the PS21 Office in Singapore and the Seoul Innovation Bureau in the Republic of Korea.

With Thailand’s Office of the Public Sector Development Commission, UNDP has brought in international design thinking experts to train over 100 government representatives across different national ministries. They are challenging the rigid traditional bureaucracy through new ways of working, such as by thinking up solutions that respond to multiple needs, fostering a culture of collaboration across institutions, and systematically pursuing innovations to improve human well-being.

Several pilot projects have already demonstrated better public service delivery. For instance, to cut long waiting times for patients in public hospitals, design thinking was used to shape a new service prototype. It streamlines hospital processes and improves coordination across departments and roles, measures coupled with an online appointment system with on-site check-in and a digital platform to share patient information. The result: A prototype that will reduce patient wait times by 70 percent. The prototype will now be fully developed and rolled out in phases across some 1,000 public hospitals across the country.
UNDP is a Thought Leader

Moving forward through inclusion

UNDP is globally renowned for its Human Development Reports, which have charted a course that puts people, not just economies, at the heart of development. Within Asia and the Pacific, national Human Development Reports translate this global vision into robust and nationally relevant data, analysis, policy debates and recommended actions. The reports are devised in close partnership with national decision-makers and leading research institutes, guaranteeing close responsiveness to the most pressing national issues as well as rapid uptake in policy-making and broader public discourse. At the same time, the reports bring in leading ideas and successful experiences from across the region and around the world.

Recent years have seen the reports making a number of significant contributions on issues at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. Viet Nam’s latest report, Growth that works for all, was a milestone in the country’s search for a new growth pathway. The report recommended a bold policy agenda for an economy that harnesses the talents of all, builds human capital, and accelerates technological adaptation and innovation. It challenged the trend towards privatizing public services, and argued for a universalist approach to social protection.

The report’s findings and recommendations have broadened policy discussions, which now highlight inclusive growth as a strategic direction. The current national Socio-Economic Development Plan has put renewed emphasis on human as well as physical capital accumulation, and stipulated the national rollout of multidimensional poverty methods as more comprehensive and accurate ways to identify poor households. New master plans for social assistance and insurance reform elaborate proposals for modernizing and expanding the social protection system towards...
universal coverage, including to reach the “missing middle” spotlighted in the report—people who are not poor but face strong risks of falling back into poverty, in part through the lack of social protection. As it prepares its next national development strategy for 2021-2030, the Government has requested UNDP to make further contributions from the perspectives of inclusive growth and people-centered development.

Viet Nam’s report recommended a bold policy agenda that now informs the national development plan.

China’s most recent National Human Development Report, Social Innovation for Inclusive Human Development, emerged from in-depth engagement with national policy makers; as a result, findings entered policy debates even before the report was launched. Findings on income disparities rooted in rigid social class lines contributed to an emphasis in the 13th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) on greater social mobility, for example. The plan also referred to a report recommendation on social policy that balances social protection and individual efforts. A process of extending public pension coverage and reducing pension system capacity disparities among different regions has begun, drawing on report recommendations. Other proposals that have moved forward relate to improved access to health care and a new national plan for the care of the elderly.

China’s previous report, Sustainable and Liveable Cities: Toward Ecological Civilization, was widely recognized as a critical input at a point of explosive urbanization. Recommendations on links between cities and rural areas have featured in the National Plan for New Urbanization 2014-2020, along with proposals to factor the carrying capacity of resources and the environment into urban planning, to plan for generations now and in the future, and to pursue strategic urbanization based on a system of efficient urban clusters. The national plan also commits to extending education and health-care insurance for migrant workers and their children, many of whom move from rural to urban areas in search of a better life.

Accelerating a national transition

In Lao People’s Democratic Republic, key recommendations from a series of national Human Development Reports have guided a move towards more consultative and result-based planning processes, as exemplified in the current National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the first to apply these approaches. In 2017, the fifth report, Graduation from Least Developed Country Status, examined a core national aspiration: accelerating the move up the ladder of development. The Government has used key recommendations and data to project progress towards graduating from least developed country status, and to stimulate internal policy discussions on national priorities and the pros and cons of graduation. By 2018, for the first time, Lao People’s Democratic Republic had passed two of three thresholds to become eligible to graduate, a testimony to how rapid progress can be driven by the right policy choices.
Taking up the cause of a new generation

Youth and Development: Towards an Inclusive Future mobilized youth and policy makers in Sri Lanka at a point of economic and social transition. Only a few years past the end of a protracted civil war, Sri Lanka needs to ensure that all youth feel engaged and equipped to realize their hopes for the future, which will largely depend on their skills and productivity. Despite political sensitivities, the research team managed to tread a careful path and preserve an independent, substantive approach endorsed by the Government and civil society alike.

The report has helped shape national and provincial youth policies along with new vocational training programmes. It has been widely used for teaching, including through a diploma course in youth development at the Open University of Sri Lanka, and in training for a new national network of youth workers’ associations. Hack-a-Dev, a UNDP initiative in collaboration with Dialog, Sri Lanka’s top mobile service provider, brought together nearly 100 young people to develop solutions to challenges such as civic engagement, drawing in part on report findings. Building on recommendations that youth need to have a voice in shaping their own agenda, the ‘UNLOCKED’ blog on youth and development ran in a weekly national newspaper.

With large young populations, both Pakistan and Timor-Leste also issued reports on youth. Pakistan’s 2017 report, Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan, explores the implications of becoming a much older country before becoming richer and equipped to care for a large elderly population. The report argues that the future will depend on investing in the human development of youth today through quality education, gainful employment and meaningful engagement.

In Timor-Leste, three-quarters of the population is under the age of 35. Its 2018 report, Planning the Opportunities for a Youthful Population, provides a roadmap for investing in young people and their promise in sustaining growth and development. The report probes the aspirations, attitudes and behaviours of young women and men, and proposes tailored policies and investments aimed at their well-being.

For girls like this one, Pakistan’s 2017 National Human Development Report argued for investing in quality education, gainful employment and meaningful engagement. © UNDP-Pakistan
The SDGs are everybody’s business

For the second year, UNDP collaborated with Global Initiatives to co-organize the Responsible Business Forum in Singapore, a melting pot for ideas from over 900 participants from over 40 countries. Coming from business, government, academia, the United Nations and media, the discussion gravitated towards SDG acceleration and the 2030 Agenda, exploring how new and existing socially responsible business models might act on sustainable development issues previously left to public aid.

With participants from 300 businesses, the meeting provided a unique platform to explore new partnerships for people, planet and prosperity that would allow businesses to do good while doing well. The conference agreed on proposals for future work around core issues such as impact measurement, technology for sustainable development, and regulatory changes; initial pitches and proposals were vetted through an app that polled people inside and outside the conference.

A highlight of the Responsible Business Forum was the announcement of UNDP’s first non-human Innovations Champion, Sophia, a humanoid robot developed by the Hong Kong SAR-based company Hanson Robotics. Demonstrating the power of artificial intelligence, she adroitly engaged in panels and as a presenter. She drew the attention of attendees from diverse industries and received frontline news coverage in several leading newspapers across the region, including the Straits Times.

In the Philippines, UNDP has called on all businesses to make the SDGs...their business. SDGs is Our Biz documented 139 SDG-related initiatives by 75 enterprises and distilled the findings into the country’s first online platform for reporting business engagement on the goals. The platform details the various initiatives and also provides practical guidance on how businesses can...
report on SDG contributions. It highlights the substantial potential for the private sector to further expand and adopt sustainable development business practices. While the 139 initiatives alone total approximately $800 million in SDG-aligned investments, business leaders can go further by making environmental and social issues fundamental to business success. They can embed the SDGs across value chains, prioritize underserved markets to reduce inequalities, and collaborate on the 2030 Agenda with other companies, governments and civil society.

Propelled by the initial success of SDGs is our Biz, UNDP formed a Business Advisory Council on the SDGs comprising representatives from major business networks. It will meet regularly to encourage increased private sector investment in the goals, and the systematic pursuit of sustainable and inclusive business models.

Youth drive the agenda

Asia and the Pacific has more young people than anywhere else; an empowered new generation will drive the 2030 Agenda. In 2017 and 2018, 1,700 young entrepreneurs mobilized to act for their future through 11 Youth Co:Labs, a set of national dialogues and social innovation challenges held across the region. Led by UNDP, Citi Foundation and Baoshang Bank, and with 80 partners such as TechStars and MaGIC, the initiative catalyzes youth start-ups and opens opportunities for entrepreneurial young people to pioneer new SDG solutions. The national dialogues bring together delegates from private and public sectors to identify challenges and solutions that can improve the ecosystem for youth entrepreneurship in each country. Training, mentoring and seed funding nurture start-ups or scale up existing social entrepreneurship endeavours.

A regional Youth Co:Lab Summit in 2018 capped the national events, bringing together 21 young teams to pitch some of the most promising SDG innovations. After a two-day challenge event, five winners were selected to fine-tune their investment cases. The winners, who will go on to compete in a youth entrepreneurship forum in China, included the creators of an app to connect users to providers of psychosocial care services, a textile recycling centre and a social media chatbot to demystify legal processes, all from the Philippines, and a social enterprise using 3-D printing technology to produce affordable prosthetics for children in China. The award for the most popular pitch went to an online platform providing young people in the Maldives with ready access to mental health care.

Across the region, 1,700 young entrepreneurs mobilized for their future through 11 Youth Co:Labs.

At the #WeAre2030: Youth Dialogue and Incubation Programme in Sri Lanka, over 350 young people gathered to debate how entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership can contribute to the future we want.
20,000 young people online. The network works through national chapters, which organize their own actions and campaigns to localize the SDGs.

Case4Space, a collaboration between UNDP, Amnesty International, ActionAid and other agencies encourages the meaningful and inclusive participation of youth and civil society in the SDGs. The initiative hosted the Young Human Rights Defenders Summit in Thailand in 2017, providing participants with training, advocacy tools and networking opportunities. Youth4Peace, another initiative, offers a dedicated space for young peacebuilders to constructively discuss peace and security issues.

A UNDP partnership with CodersTrust in Bangladesh has helped 360 young people become IT freelancers through access to training, mentorship and markets. In Timor-Leste, in part through UNDP advocacy around the barriers young people face when setting up their own businesses, the Government now backs loan guarantee schemes ensuring better access to finance for innovators.
South-South collaboration for humanitarian action

UNDP has a long mandate and experience in helping countries mitigate the risks of disasters and recover if a crisis occurs. A transformative approach helps communities rebuild assets and livelihoods while developing resilience to withstand future crises.

In 2017, from Mexico to Sierra Leone to Sri Lanka, UNDP was on the ground helping people in 36 countries survive and thrive, overcoming floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, famines, displacement and political instability. Recognizing UNDP’s leading contributions, the Government of China selected it to help reach more than half a million people affected by natural crises in 2017. Through its newly established South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund, China provided $4 million each to help Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal respond to various emergencies. In the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean region, $5 million went to Antigua and Barbuda and the Commonwealth of Dominica for housing rehabilitation and recovery.

The hurricane season was a hard one in the Caribbean in 2017, with Irma pummeling Antigua and Barbuda, and Maria hitting Dominica, causing significant losses to homes and other buildings. Through the partnership with China, and in close collaboration with the governments of both islands, UNDP provided construction materials and trained hundreds of construction professionals and local residents on how to build new homes to restart their lives. In Dominica, additional materials were brought in to rehabilitate crucial government buildings, including for education and health care. Building codes are under revision, accompanied by efforts to help the Physical Planning Division develop stronger capacities.
to enforce them.

In Nepal, some of the heaviest rainfall in 60 years inundated over 80 percent of the southern Terai region. In some of the most severely affected districts, UNDP, through Chinese financing, was able to quickly distribute packages of non-food items that gave people clean places to cook and sleep, safe drinking water and protection against disease. A process of rapid assessment entailed working with local planners and non-governmental organizations to pinpoint households most in need of relief. Chinese assistance in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan meant that UNDP could ensure that nearly 50,000 people returning to their homes after being displaced by instability had essential food and non-food items, a lifeline for survival as a severe winter set in.

Bangladesh faced floods in the north and a stream of refugees from neighbouring Myanmar, but the UNDP-China partnership put fast relief at hand for nearly 238,000 people. Emergency shelter and household packages eased the worst impacts of the floods. For 118,000 women and girl refugees, specialized health care kits and services helped protect their dignity, and prevent discomfort and disease.

**Combining tradition and innovation**

Indonesia has high hopes for achieving the SDGs and strong political commitment to rapid progress. Yet it also faces a problem common to many countries: Where’s the money to achieve these ambitious goals? At a time of low government revenues, falling official development assistance and lagging international finance, Indonesia is increasingly turning to new sources of domestic private finance to fill the gap.

To help that process advance, UNDP partnered with BAZNAS on the world’s first plan to apply zakat contributions to the SDGs. An initial round of funds has helped to establish four micro-hydro plants in Jambi, a province of Sumatra. Zakat funds are mingled with financing from the Global Environment Facility as well as corporate social responsibility support from the provincial state-owned Bank Jambi. The initiative has provided the first modern energy services to 4,500 poor families, opening opportunities for greater income and education, among others.
other benefits. Next steps include local economic development and mobile banking services.

The Zakat Inclusion Programme launched with BAZNAS, Bank Jambi, Indonesia’s financial services authority OJK, and UNDP now allows people to pay their zakat through online banking services. All proceeds will go towards SDG projects in Jambi.

**UNDP’s Innovative Financing Lab explores all new sources of SDG finance in Indonesia.**

Islamic finance offers a variety of other avenues that UNDP is also helping to open, such as microfinance through Islamic banks. Collaboration with Badan Waqf Indonesia is creating a digital platform for waqf, another kind of charitable contribution.

In early 2018, the Government of Indonesia released a sukuk, an Islamic commercial bond instrument, for $1.25 billion. The first of its kind, it will fund projects for renewable energy, sustainable transport, waste management and green buildings. UNDP has assisted the Ministry of Finance in identifying green projects under the bond.

Since 2017, UNDP’s Innovative Financing Lab has been specifically dedicated to exploring all new funding streams and sources of SDG finance in Indonesia. Successful experiences already include crowdfunding an SDG Impact Fund linked to an investor-enterprise matching platform. A newly established sovereign wealth fund with the district of Musi Banyuasin is helping it plan for the future. Through the fund, the district will be able to ensure that when its rich oil, gas and mineral reserves are depleted, its people have other revenue sources to fund essential public services.

**Tapping global finance**

Across Asia and the Pacific, UNDP helps governments, businesses and civil society access the substantial resources of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The goals: step up environmental protection, transform markets, and improve the resilience of vulnerable communities towards achieving sustainable development.

GEF financing in India has promoted markets for concentrated solar heating technology. The project introduced new and innovative applications, built awareness, demonstrated the viability of a lifecycle approach, and reduced information, technical, capacity and financial barriers. Over 30 demonstration projects were followed by 60 replication projects in university kitchens, dry cleaning businesses, farms and hospitals.

A GEF-supported joint initiative by UNDP and the Food and Agriculture Organization assisted Sri Lanka in cutting greenhouse gas emissions through the introduction of modern biomass energy technologies in small

Nguyen Thi Van, the founder and CEO of Imagtor, an SDG Challenge winner, pitched her business idea to the judging panel. © Nguyen Viet Lan/UNDP Vietnam
and medium food, tea, rubber and other businesses. The project supported 1,000 hectares of model fuelwood plantations, three biomass energy terminals, and the development of fuelwood standards and certification. In the Philippines, through GEF funding, UNDP aided preparations for creating a marine protected area network of 440,000 hectares. Each area will be placed under an appropriate management regime, including community-based management boards.

UNDP has helped the Government of Samoa secure GCF financing to protect people from flooding.

UNDP was the first UN agency accredited to access the resources of the newly created Green Climate Fund for developing countries. In Samoa, which faces a mounting toll from natural disasters in the age of climate change, UNDP has helped the Government secure GCF financing for integrated flood management. The project will reduce flooding from the Vaisigano River, which flows through the capital, Apia, by establishing river floodwalls, retrofitting two bridges and upgrading drainage and sewerage systems that will benefit approximately 26,000 residents.

The project is scaling up an ongoing GEF-funded initiative that has built flood protection infrastructure in one segment of the Vaisigano river, protecting an electric power station and nearby communities during Cyclone Gita in 2018. Additional infrastructure investments will help manage higher levels of run-off, while providing employment. The process will also entail developing capacities for long-term planning to manage flood risks, along with new options for livelihoods that can be sustained in the face of climate shifts.

### Investing in impact

**Viet Nam** has a thriving business start-up scene—the third largest in Southeast Asia. Next up: linking start-up dynamism to achieving the SDGs. In 2017, UNDP connected the vision, ambition and innovation of young Vietnamese entrepreneurs with some of the biggest development challenges facing the country, and in the process, helped grow the base for social impact investment.

A partnership with HATCH! Ventures, a business incubator, and the World Federation of United Nations Associations led to training on SDG entrepreneurship for 150 young entrepreneurs and innovators in three of the country’s biggest cities. Participants had to pick an SDG challenge, develop a business model to solve it while producing a financial return, and use SDG targets and indicators to measure progress.

Some of the best ideas were submitted to Viet Nam’s first SDG business innovation competition, the SDG Challenge 2017. Four were chosen for seed funding and a 12-month business incubation and impact acceleration programme. They offer creative and potentially powerful strategies to reduce plastic water bottle consumption, enable communication between people with and without hearing disabilities, extend IT training and decent work for persons with disabilities, and deploy wind turbines so that lower-income households can enjoy sustainable and affordable energy.

Demo days have showcased the innovations to impact investors, venture capitalists, development partners and philanthropic organizations; two have already secured additional investment. Discussions are continuing with more investors. All four teams that created the innovations now serve as “champions” of social impact start-ups, proof that Vietnamese entrepreneurs can strike the balance between profit and people.

UNDP has begun a campaign advocating for start-ups to adopt and integrate the SDGs in their businesses. This is a means to attract international investment, given that the SDGs are the only globally agreed framework for measuring social and environmental impact. Funding from Citibank has already been committed to develop next-gen social impact start-up ideas for 2018 and beyond.

University has joined UNDP to map challenges and opportunities, and outline essential policy recommendations so these enterprises can take off on a larger scale. The Ministry of Education and Training is integrating entrepreneurship and social impact skills into curricula, giving a head start to future business leaders.

Zakat financing allowed construction of rural electricity services.

© UNDP Indonesia
Countries in Asia and the Pacific, having passed through tremendous changes, are now challenged to do even more in the era of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. At UNDP, as we look at how we can best rise to help meet this challenge, we have begun transforming our business model. We want to act boldly and innovatively, and think big in bringing what works to scale. Through our SDG platforms and in all other forms of assistance, we help countries balance and integrate the different dimensions of sustainable development, and connect people and resources to ignite rapid progress.

As we move towards 2030, longstanding partnerships as well as pipeline investments are yielding results. Government partnerships remain the starting point for all of our work, within countries but increasingly across them as well. In China, UNDP was the first international organization to sign an agreement with the Government on the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. It offers a vision of enhanced economic cooperation tracing the ancient Silk Road’s land and maritime routes.

Within the system of UN and international financial institutions, heightened collaboration is advancing SDG policy advice based on combined expertise from UNDP, the UN Regional Economic and Social Commission and the Asian Development Bank. In late 2017, engagement with the Government of Mongolia helped generate sound proposals to sustain social and environmental gains as part of a $3.5 billion external funding package.

UNDP is at the vanguard of reimagining partnerships with the private sector. Business will be perhaps the most decisive force in achieving sustainable development, through ideas, technology, environmental practices and finance. It remains the source of 90 percent of all jobs. UNDP’s SDG Impact Finance team is spearheading new collaborations with
enterprises, innovation labs and investors, and building the ecosystem for impact investing. With leading business schools, including Oxford University and Wharton at the University of Pennsylvania, we have launched a global Research Council that will apply the most rigorous academic standards to defining incentives and quantitative measures for impact investment, helping to guide the intentional flow of commercial capital into the SDGs.

In Bangladesh in 2017, we joined political and corporate leaders to launch the Build Bangladesh Impact Fund. With Impress Capital Limited as an anchor investor, the fund is aimed at raising over $100 million from private investors in profitable ventures yielding social and environmental impacts. Seed funding of $3.5 million is already providing affordable housing for urban migrants. Similar initiatives are underway in Cambodia, India and Pakistan.

Innovation is now part of our daily work at UNDP, because in this SDG era, it has to be. Building on a groundswell of activity by our country and regional offices, we are collaborating with experts from innovation labs such as NESTA and Dark Matter Labs to set up our own Regional Innovation Centre. From blockchain to artificial intelligence, we see the power of innovation to not only disrupt and transform industries, but also health care and education towards the goal of high quality available to everyone.

In moving from the past to an ever-changing present, we are breaking with some traditions, particularly the one where UNDP was seen primarily as a donor agency. The countries we work with today view us as a trusted partner, and value our integrated development expertise and skills in convening different constituencies. From India to the Philippines, from Timor-Leste to Malaysia, government cost-sharing is powering new programmes, bringing with it better accountability, responsibility and success. Partnership with towns and cities — ground zero for much of sustainable development, and thus where UNDP’s impact can be most critical — has led to the deployment of versatile dashboards and other tools to help align local service and spending choices to the SDGs.

Globally, an estimated $7 trillion will be needed to achieve the SDGs, a staggering sum, but one within reach. As important, now that a high aspiration has been set, will be the willingness of all countries and peoples to sustain transformative change across every dimension of investments and institutions, practices and partnerships. At stake is our future, no less. We must not fail to be bold and think big.
Financial Resources

Expenditures in Asia and the Pacific by Area of Work, 2017
in millions $

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Work</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Governance and Peacebuilding</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate and Disaster Resilience</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: UNDP Executive Snapshot as of 11 April 2018.

UNDP Expenditures in Asia and the Pacific, 2014-2017
in millions $

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Donor Resources</th>
<th>Local Resources</th>
<th>Regular Resources</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNDP Executive Snapshot as of 11 April 2018.
UNDP Asia and the Pacific Expenditures in Low- and Middle-Income Countries by Area of Work, 2017

LOW-INCOME COUNTRY EXPENDITURES with Afghanistan in millions $

- Sustainable Development: $69.8/8%
- Climate and Disaster Resilience: $7.0/0%
- Democratic Governance and Peacebuilding: $51.7/6%
- Others: $115.3/16%

Low-Income Country Expenditures without Afghanistan in millions $

- Sustainable Development: $57.8/23%
- Climate and Disaster Resilience: $1.7/1%
- Democratic Governance and Peacebuilding: $101.6/41%
- Others: $564.9/77%

MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRY EXPENDITURES in millions $

- Sustainable Development: $32.4/10%
- Climate and Disaster Resilience: $3.5/2%
- Democratic Governance and Peacebuilding: $105.3/47%
- Others: $92.9/41%

Delivery by Core and Non-core Resources in UNDP Asia and the Pacific Country Offices, 2017

Source: UNDP Executive Snapshot as of 11 April 2018.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on the maps in this report do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. The backdrop indicates the region and the placement of the delivery pie chart is indicative.
**Government Co-financing Resource, 2017**
in millions $  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2017 Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>$18.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
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<td>Pakistan</td>
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<td>Timor-Leste</td>
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<td>Bangladesh</td>
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<td>Nepal</td>
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<td>Pacific Office in Fiji</td>
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<td>Viet Nam</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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Source: UNDP Executive Snapshot as of 11 April 2018.

**Top Donors to UNDP Asia–Pacific, 2017**
in millions $  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2017 Actual</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Global Environment Facility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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Source: UNDP Executive Snapshot as of 11 April 2018.

**Government Co-Financing in Asia and the Pacific 2014 Actual Available Resource through 2018 Projected Available Resource**
in millions $  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2014 Actual</th>
<th>2015 Actual</th>
<th>2016 Actual</th>
<th>2017 Actual</th>
<th>2018 Projection</th>
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<td>$753</td>
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<td>Arab States</td>
<td>$1,178</td>
<td>$1,017</td>
<td>$894</td>
<td>$753</td>
<td>$427</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>$1,178</td>
<td>$1,017</td>
<td>$894</td>
<td>$753</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>$1,178</td>
<td>$1,017</td>
<td>$894</td>
<td>$753</td>
<td>$427</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNDP Executive Snapshot and Stream Forecast as of 11 April 2018.

**UNDP Programme Delivery by Region, 2017**
in millions $  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2017 Actual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>$1,178</td>
</tr>
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<td>Asia and the Pacific</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>$427</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNDP Executive Snapshot as of 11 April 2018.