The Development Advocate

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Empowered lives. Resilient nations.

SUPPORTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN THE NEW TUNISIA

BY JAMEL HAOUAS

Tunisia—Sumaya Al Arounony, a second year student of informatics from the coastal town of Ben Arous in Tunisia, had never voted before. But, on the morning of 23 October 2011 that was not the only reason for her eagerness to vote. She was also a candidate and, at 22, one of the youngest on the list.

“I am tenth on my party list. I have little chance of winning but I felt I had to do something for my country,” she enthusiastically explained. “Today, I vote for Tunisia.”

Millions of other Tunisians showed a similar kind of determination to make the elections for Tunisia’s National Constituent Assembly work. The Assembly has been pushed to prepare a new Constitution until new elections are held under the new laws and dignity of HIV+ people in Kyrgyzstan.

In fact, out of the 4.1 million Tunisian citizens who registered to vote, a record-breaking 76 percent actually voted, according to the Independent High Authority for the Elections.

Like Al Arounony, many young voters were exercising their right to vote for the first time in their lives.

In such a young, highly “wired” population like Tunisia – 1 in 3 Tunisians is an Internet user and 1 in 4 has a Facebook account – resorting to social media to reach out to youth with civic education content was a natural choice.

“Because they represent a significant portion of the population, and because of the pivotal role they played in the revolution, it was very important to reach out to youth, especially in pre-election campaigns,” said Philippa Neave, Public Outreach Adviser in UNDP’s Support to the Electoral Process in Tunisia project.

Game players learned about the democratic system, the role and tasks of the National Constituent Assembly and the institutional framework for elections. The game also included information on the electoral process, including election procedures, and the importance of a large voter turnout if the results are to be accepted by Tunisians. UNDP also PAGE 4+

NEW LAWS PROTECTING PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AND AIDS

“Now I exist.” HANDING OUT IDENTIFICATION CARDS

UNDP-sponsored programme delivers free identification cards to the Burundian population PAGE 3+

LETTER FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Dear Readers,

I am pleased to introduce the first issue of The Development Advocate. It showcases the 12 winning entries of UNDP’s first annual storytelling competition in an easy-to-read and cost-efficient newspaper-style format.

When we asked our colleagues around the world for submissions, we received more than 130 stories from 67 Country Offices. All of the stories you are about to read tell of the transformational change we contribute to across the four pillars of our mandate: poverty reduction; democratic governance; crisis prevention and recovery; and environment and sustainable development.

The 11-member jury which selected the winning stories included a number of prominent international journalists and the Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations, as well as UNDP communications and programme experts. The winning entries showcase the kind of development we need to share with the countries in which we work, our donors and the broader public.

We were especially keen to record UNDP success stories which best exemplify our tagline, “Empowered lives. Resilient nations.” We believe the winning stories do just that, from the story of young people voting for the first time in the new Tunisia, to UNDP’s role in the creation of new laws protecting people living with HIV and AIDS in Kyrgyzstan.

UNDP will continue to work for the kind of real change described in these winning stories. I welcome your comments and suggestions on how to refine and improve the next edition of The Development Advocate.

Sincerely,

Helen Clark

PAGE 4+

The Development Advocate
I found myself confronted with 20 first-rate essays ... penetrating, vibrant accounts of transformative moments in human experience.

BY CHRISTOPHER BOIAN

How do you quantify dignity? What is the mathematical equation for overcoming adversity? Where is the algorithm for finding the courage to speak the truth?

As I read and reread entries in the UNDP storytelling competition, I grew, successively, interested and, finally, deeply moved by these vital, first-hand accounts of people striving, of forward progress, of communities working to become a little better – of humanity developing.

And as a member of the jury for the competition, I wrestled with the dilemma: is it possible, objectively, to rank these brief works, each of which describes a reality of its own?

I encountered steely bravery: women overcoming fear to fight for social justice. I saw piercing, penetrating, incisive reporting on armed conflicts and a number of real people confronting real physical danger in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I encountered steely bravery: women overcoming fear to fight for social justice. I saw piercing, penetrating, incisive reporting on armed conflicts and a number of real people confronting real physical danger in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I marveled in the simple works, each of which describes a reality of its own?

I found myself confronted with 20 first-rate essays – not “breaking news”, in the traditional sense, but penetrative, vibrant accounts of transformative moments in human experience nonetheless. How on earth, I wondered, would I be able to say that this story is “better” than that one? On what basis of criteria? And who was I anyway to raise any pronouncement on the relative merits in descriptions of real people confronting real physical danger in Cyprus, spiritual anguish in Tajikistan, economic downturn in Zambia, social challenges in Fiji? In short, I was dummied by the assignment, by the need to do it justice.

In my choosing, I looked at a range of factors in each story. In my order of priority, these included: the power and efficiency of the writing; reflection of the UNDP motto “Empowered Lives. Resilient Nations.”; the scale of impact of the project examined; the timeliness and “newsworthiness” of the topic; the human drama; the practical education for readers. In addition to the judging criteria I was given, I attempted to formulate a few additional pointers that were as objective as possible and to apply these equally to each entry. I took notes, I added and divided numbers (rankings that I assigned to specific aspects of each story), I read all entries at least twice and I double-checked my figures. In the end, I made my selections for the competition, ranking entries first by region and then picking my overall top three. And in the process, I arrived at an answer to my own questions: There is no easy way to quantify dignity. There is no perfect algorithm for honesty. There is no satisfying way to assign a ranking, within the constellation of human activities, to the sometimes prosaic choice of simply trying to become better.

What there is, however, is the capacity of people like those writers who entered this storytelling contest, and like the UNDP itself, to shine a bright light on a few things, decent and good and great, that people around the world do with their days. This is the fabric of the civilization, the core of self-respect, the essence of hope for our common future. In that respect, I regard every contestant in this storytelling competition as the winner.

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The jury included three additional UNDP communications and programme experts.

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A Development Puzzle

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. In the span of 177 countries and territories, we offer global perspectives and local insight to help promote resilience and to help build a better future for people around the world.

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Those of us possessing an identity card can imagine how things would be without one. Those of us who don’t possess one don’t need to imagine. We know. We know we can’t vote, can’t be heard, and certainly can’t run for office. But it doesn’t stop there.

Mayisha Sikitu lives in Buyenzi, a neighbourhood in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi. She has five children—Karara, Hami, Jola, Mariam and Hodari. She gave birth to her youngest, Hodari Karibu, at a hospital in October 2009 through a social programme that covers free birth-giving care. She wasn’t able to benefit from the same programme for Karara, Hami, Jola and Mariam because she did not have an identification card, for which she could not afford the processing fees.

In 2009, however, Sikitu took advantage of a UNDP-sponsored programme that delivered free identification cards to Burundian citizens as part of UNDP’s support to the 2010 election process. As a result, 968,882 Burundians, 59 percent of whom were women, received their identification cards. With additional support from the Government of Switzerland, the campaign was very successful in mobilizing citizens. A healthy turnout resulted in an average of 40,000 cards being issued per day, empowering an additional almost 1 million Burundians to benefit from the rights and responsibilities of being recognized citizens. “It was important for me to be able to get an ID card for free,” Sikitu said. “I hadn’t been able to afford one before, and had convinced myself I did not need one since I rarely left my neighbourhood. What I did not understand then is all I could do with an ID card.”

Besides receiving free care when she gave birth to Karibu, Sikitu is now able to travel and be a witness at official functions. “Before I had my ID card, if I needed to take the bus to go to town to sell my crops and by necessities, I ran the risk of being ordered out of the bus,” she explained. “Without an ID card, policemen could not identify me and I became a threat. A couple of times the police made me get out of the bus and sit down on the sidewalk. Not only was I not able to sell my crop on those days, but I lost some of it, and for several days my children went hungry.”

Forty-six percent of Burundi Senators are women, the second highest such average in the world, second only to Bolivia. But Sikitu sees the impact of the free delivery of identification cards has had on the women around her. “Unlike me, my eldest daughter, because she had an ID card, was able to marry legally,” Sikitu said. “With my ID card, I was able to be a witness at her wedding. With our ID cards, a friend of mine was able to run for office and I, along with many women in the neighbourhood, was able to vote for her and elect her. Now I am thinking about running for office myself.”

When asked what she likes best about her ID card, Sikitu smiles and then responds with a degree of rare intensity: “Now I can vote. Now I can move. Now I don’t need to say ‘Wait, I’ll go get my husband anytime something in our lives needs fixing. Now I exist.’”

Aaron NsaVyImaNa is a Public Information Associate in UNDP Burundi. Before joining the UN, he worked as a reporter for the Burundi Press Agency from 1989 to 1991.
For the 2010 special voter registration campaign, 65 registration teams signed up over 15,000 elderly women.

Timor-Leste
BRINGING OUT
THE RURAL WOMAN VOTE

BY JOHN FENECH

DILI, Timor-Leste—Senhora Mendonça Córte-Real, a grandmother from the capital city of Dili in Timor-Leste, is now the country’s oldest registered voter after having finally been given the chance to exercise a democratic vote for the first time at the ripe old age of 92.

She celebrated by attending a special event, along with Timor-Leste’s President, celebrating the success of the 2010 national voter registration campaign that focused on marginalized Timorese women. The ongoing campaign has been registering these women and others in the run-up to the nation’s second ever presidential and parliamentary elections in 2012.

Timor-Leste is one of the world’s youngest nations and is currently undertaking an ambitious project to build a democratic society and culture in a country that, after being subject to foreign rule for over 400 years, has barely had any prior exposure to democratic governance.

In 2007, UNDP and the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste jointly embarked upon a comprehensive electoral cycle support project in partnership with the State Secretariat for Electoral Administration, the National Electoral Commission and multiple international donors. The $US5.3 million project is focused on consolidating democracy in a country only recently emerging from conflict and also has been strengthening the democratic institutions needed to facilitate a strong and thriving democracy.

Targeted voter-registration outreach programmes formed part of the project, aimed at taking electoral information and registration facilities out to under-represented groups. In 2010, these programmes specifically reached out to elderly and illiterate women.

Female participation in civic or political affairs has historically been quite low, partly because most women in Timor-Leste spend much of their time struggling to make a living through farming while running a household. Additionally, the illiteracy rate of elderly, rural women is one of the highest in South East Asia.

For the 2010 special voter registration campaign, 65 registration teams travelled throughout Timor-Leste’s 13 districts, successfully signing up over 15,000 elderly women for the first time. The teams also worked to encourage female voter participation in general.

This emphasis on women’s involvement in the voting process has been part of a Government-led effort, supported by UNDP, to fast-track female participation in decision making. The progress is already evident:

- The Government and National Parliament have adopted policies in relation to elections at all levels of government by reserving seats especially for women in the Community Councils and in the National Parliament.
- Timor-Leste has one of the highest percentages of female political representation in Asia. By the end of the 2012 elections it will be among the highest in the world with a minimum of 1 in 3 parliamentarians being women.
- The national electoral database reveals that approximately 50 percent of all registered voters are women.
- Finally, strong leadership shown on this issue has also helped break new ground at the village level with 10 women becoming the chiefs of their respective villages, a domain traditionally monopolised by men.

The progress made towards a burgeoning civil society and democratic culture is already an incredible achievement for Timor-Leste. But the sign of a truly healthy democracy is one that values and promotes participation by all its citizens, and in 92-year-old Senhora Mendonça Córte-Real can attest to, Timor-Leste is quickly making that a reality.

It was very important to reach out to Tunisian youth, because of the pivotal role they played in the revolution.

commended an election song, called “Eziz Essou” (You are the Voice). The song was written, composed and performed by a group of emerging young artists on the contemporary world music scene who retain strong Tunisian roots.

It encouraged Tunisian youth to play an active part in the constitution of a new Tunisia. Launched four weeks before the elections, the song quickly went viral, with more than 100,000 free downloads (www.entissout.com). For many of its fans it became the election’s anthem.

The Development Advocate
Sierra Leone: Tackling Youth Unemployment

BY ABDUL KARIM BAH

Makeni, Sierra Leone — The story of Umaru Kangbo, in Sierra Leone’s northern city of Makeni, 113 miles from the capital city of Freetown, is one of resilience and of determination to lift oneself out of poverty. It is also the story of how a country, once ridden by suffering and stagnation caused by years of civil war and gun-toting youth rampaging through the countryside, is slowly managing to include marginalized youth into participating in national development and social transformation. Youth unemployment is one of the major causes of war in Sierra Leone and a serious threat to the peace that prevails in the country today. An estimated 800,000 youth between the ages of 15 and 35 are actively searching for employment. Some of these youth lack skills and education, but it is even more difficult for those with disabilities and only a basic education to compete for the limited jobs that are available.

Umaru, more popularly known as K-Man, is one of those young people facing a bleak future, a future of begging on the street and in local markets to make a living. When he was 10 years old, Umaru was stricken by polio, an acute viral infectious disease that is widespread among children in Sierra Leone and leads to infantile paralysis. Three years ago, Umaru, 29, moved from his small hometown to Makeni, the biggest city in northern Sierra Leone, where he survived by begging by the streets.

Umaru had attended school for only nine years. In Makeni, his fellow disabled peers advised him that begging was the only way for disabled people to make a living. Two weeks after the start of this life of danger and hunger, however, Umaru was selected for training through a UNDP-supported youth employment project in Makeni. He was placed as an apprentice in a workshop where he learned how to make shoes.

“I had decided that I did not want to be a beggar. I want to do something more fruitful and dignified with my life. The training was good,” a smiling Umaru explained. “I was supplied with basic materials like adhesives, leather, nails, a hammer, and I was also given a weekly allowance of about Le 15,000 (US$30) for my upkeep while in training.”

A recent independent study of 17 youth employment programmes administered by UNDP and the Government of Sierra Leone showed that the programme that Umaru has transformed the lives of 10,000 young people.

UNDP’s Chief Technical Advisor Keith Wright said a recent study on the project demonstrated an enormous impact. “The study showed that there was an average increase in the income of the youth by more than 197 percent.

Communities also reported that there was improvement in their food security, and the likelihood that they could afford school fees,” Wright said.

In the past two years, Umaru said he has achieved a lot. He finished the apprenticeship and has started his own small business, which enables him to earn his living without begging.

“I have a family now, and a child. I am responsible for their food and his education. I go to work about 5 a.m. on a good day. I earn even more. Now I am happy and proud,” he said. His mother, Isata, used to cry endlessly after he was stuck by polio.

“But now she knows I can do something for myself,” he said.

“Before this door here,” he continued, holding up one of his customers’ shoes. “I charge Le 5,000 to repair it; and these sandals I made, I charged Le 4 for each. My life has changed, I run my own workshop and I am even training other disabled and polio victims. Hopefully, I will get more support to expand my workshop into a factory that will produce more and train more young disabled people.”

UNDP has been working with various local partners — including CAUSE Sierra Leone, a youth-focused agency in Makeni — to support the project and address the issue of youth employment and empowerment. The $2.1 million youth employment and empowerment programme is funded through the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund and the Governments of Ireland and Norway. The programme is designed to strengthen national policy, strategy and coordination for youth employment as well as sustain the establishment of basic support services for youth, including mentoring for micro and small enterprises and the establishment of career advisory services in the country’s universities. As a result, 5,000 young people have started their own businesses. This is done through the Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports and the newly established National Youth Commission.

Back in Makeni, for Umaru, the impact of the project is not just that he now has a regular and significant income but that his social status as a dignified member of society has been restored. “The most important thing is that now I have hope for the future,” he said.

My life has changed. I run my own workshop and I am even training other disabled and polio victims.

With the support of UNDP, we have not only become settled but also financially stable.

Zambia: Villagers Turn Their Backs on Overfishing

BY VILLE SAIKKU

Mbete, Zambia — Sesi Nafukwe, who never had any agricultural experience before, is busy harvesting rice for the first time in Mbete village, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in Zambia. She is one of 700 women who have turned their backs on fishing from the lake after overfishing made it difficult to turn a profit.

These days, Nafukwe and the women in her local women’s association are making Kwacha 1.4 million (US$279) a year per household from the sale of the rice they are farming, after an initial investment of only Kwacha 300,000 (S450).

“We never knew farming could be so economically rewarding,” she said with a sense of surprise and accomplishment.

The women, encouraged by the success of the rice farming, have expanded their business activities to poultry, vegetable gardening and fish pond farming. With this new income, they are now able to support their families’ nutritional requirements and send their children to school.

The introduction of a resolving fund in 2009 dedicated to the environmental and economic management of Lake Tanganyika — an effort supported by UNDP and with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) — has enabled Nafukwe and many like her to take out small loans. With these loans, communities are investing in developing environmentally friendly, sustainable livelihoods. They are building fish ponds, raising poultry and growing crops like rice and maize.

At the same time, they are planting trees and pine trees to control sedimentation loss from the effects of erosion on the steep slopes of Lake Tanganyika. Sedimentation pollutes the water, prevents natural vegetation from growing and kills fish. Lake Tanganyika, the second deepest lake in the world, provides a habitat for 7 to 10 million people living in Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and Zambia. Since the project began, the sedimentation rate of Lake Tanganyika has fallen from 159 tonnes per day to 115 tonnes per day in the longue river current area, where 2 of the 11 participating villages are located.

Buka Buka Fish (Satis soppens) used to be caught throughout the year on the Zambian side of Lake Tanganyika up until the mid-1990s. Due to overfishing, changes in habitat and a wide range of other factors, the Buka Buka Fish is very rarely caught between April and October.

As fisherman John Simwiinga watched the fish stock in the lake dwindle, he realized he would have to turn to fish pond farming for survival. But Simwiinga lacked both capital and know-how. However, after attending a practical training on fish farming offered by the Lake Tanganyika programme, he received a loan of Kwacha 10 million ($1,923) to set up his dream business.

“I have stocked 15,000 fingerlings in these ponds,” Simwiinga said, pointing proudly at four ponds stretched over 130 square metres.

He now earns over Kwacha 15 million ($2,484) every six months, an income that he and his family had never before seen.

With the support of UNDP, we have not only become settled but also financially stable.

“Before we were nomads… cleaning trees and tightening our nets to catch the fewer remaining fish in the lake,” Simwiinga said. “But now, with the support of UNDP, we have not only become settled but also financially stable.”

Newly-created village communities are investing in developing environmentally friendly, sustainable livelihoods. They are building fish ponds, raising poultry and growing crops like rice and maize.

Villagers have turned their backs on overfishing in the wake of a recent study by UNDP’s Chief Technical Advisor Keith Wright that said a recent study on the project demonstrated an immense impact. “The study showed that there was an average increase in the income of the youth by more than 197 percent. Communities also reported that there was improvement in their food security, and the likelihood that they could afford school fees,” Wright said.

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**ARAB STATES**

**Swedish Village, occupied Palestinian territory –** The Swedish Village, a remote village of fishermen in the far south of the Gaza Strip in the occupied Palestinian territory, is home to some 95 households living under extreme poverty. Visitors to the Village—built by the Swedish Government in the 1960s—can immediately see the poor infrastructure and inappropriate living conditions tolerated by its 700 inhabitants, who live on less than US$1 per day.

Part of a larger fishing community in the Gaza Strip, the fishermen of that area have faced years of neglect in terms of development activities. But that is not their only worry.

“We were born fishermen. My father was a fisherman and my grandchildren before him. Before, fishing was safer and more productive. Now, we are subject to different risks,” said Kamel Abu Odah, a 50-year-old fisherman with a family as extremely poor and in need of a small grant to get back on their feet.

His business has expanded, and his brother and nephew are also benefiting from the project. His records show that his income and expenditures, Abu Odah and his two sons have resumed their daily fishing trips. His business has expanded, and his brother and nephew are also benefiting from the project. His records show that his income and expenditures, Abu Odah’s fishing nets and his two sons have resumed their daily fishing trips. His business has expanded, and his brother and nephew are also benefiting from the project. His records show that his income and expenditures, Abu Odah and his two sons have resumed their daily fishing trips.

To date, the Programme has created 12,000 permanent employment opportunities through grants for micro-enterprises and has helped over 66,000 families to graduate from poverty to economic self-reliance.

DEEP’s strategy is to help people decide on the best means to address their own needs, come up with their own solutions and feel ownership of their new small business or other income-generating initiative. Its participatory approach makes sure that projects are tailor-made for specific communities. The Programme’s goal is to overcome the long-term problem of dependency produced by the political crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory.

In Gaza, DEEP faces many challenges due to restrictions, resulting in a lack of raw materials, a rapid increase in prices and an unstable exchange rate.

In the face of all these restrictions, UNDP, with its partners, is striving to make sure the programme operates smoothly. To date, the DEEP programme has managed to provide support to more than 500 families to improve their livelihoods, ranging from Abu Odah’s fishing nets to helping a young woman in the West Bank set up her own photo and video studio. UNDP’s work is aided by local non-governmental organizations and partners.

Through DEEP, participating families are not only improving their livelihoods, but also beginning to perceive themselves differently as agents and producers of their own well-being, as they attend DEEP meetings and speak of their needs and experiences.

“My life has changed. Now, I am planning to build a concrete ceiling,” said Abu Odah, whose home is covered with tin like many in his community. “You cannot imagine how cold winter gets here, since we live close to the beach. My grandchildren always get sick.”

Abu Odah is one of many of DEEP’s successes. The Programme was nominated for the Palestine International Award for Excellence and Creativity in October 2011, based on its pioneering approach to sustainable socioeconomic development to fight poverty in the occupied Palestinian territory.

DEEP’s methods undergo continuous review, improvement and modification to remain relevant and responsive to the needs of Palestinian families. Its success in the occupied Palestinian territory is suggesting possibilities for expanding the programme regionally.
Indonesia

FIGHTING FOR
SOCIAL JUSTICE

BY TONI SOETIPTO

Tobololo, Indonesia – Three years ago, Indonesian housewife Ibu Odah had little knowledge of legal affairs.

Not long ago, domestic violence was usually handled within the family. Now, the mother of two is at the forefront of a legal fight against domestic violence in the remote island of Ternate, in the North Moluccas province of Indonesia.

With the knowledge and expertise that she has acquired, Ibu Odah is now able to provide free legal advice to victims of domestic violence in Tobololo village. As a trained paralegal, Ibu Odah has so far handled three cases of domestic violence and succeeded in bringing them to the local judicial court.

To an outsider this may not be considered very significant but within her community, where domestic violence is viewed as a private affair and where many victims tend not to speak up for fear of retaliation, this is seen as a remarkable achievement and a positive beginning.

Not long ago, domestic violence was usually handled within the family according to adat (social customs), not by official legal channels.

Ibu Odah is one of hundreds of thousands of people who have benefited from a legal empowerment and assistance project supported by the Government of Indonesia and UNDP. It seeks to expand access to justice for all Indonesians but particularly for the poor and marginalized.

The project, which is funded by the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, helps to increase the poor’s awareness of their legal rights, as well as developing the capacity of government and non-governmental actors to better serve and protect the rights and interests of the poor.

With the backing of her husband, Ibu Odah signed up for paralegal training after learning about the importance of social justice at a community meeting organized in her village by one of UNDP’s programme partners.

Even though Indonesia has recently graduated to become a lower middle income country, half of the country’s 240 million people still live on less than US$2 a day and women make up the bulk of the most vulnerable population. Legal awareness remains low in the country, mainly on account of poverty and illiteracy.

An assessment of legal awareness in five provinces by UNDP and the Government of Indonesia recognized the importance of access to justice in combating poverty and the need to focus on the poor and marginalized and their access to justice. This has in turn informed the national strategy for access to justice that is included in the ongoing national development plan.

Over 450,000 poor and disadvantaged people facing legal problems such as land disputes, discrimination, domestic violence and corruption have benefited from the programme.

In Central Sulawesi Province, people from Tangkumah village and surrounding areas have been able to defend their land and mangroves from destruction by a private company that illegally. The community managed not only to preserve their way of life but they also protected their land from destruction.

Meanwhile, in Ternate, Ibu Odah’s domestic violence campaign has resulted in a breakthrough for women’s rights on the island. One of the cases she handled involved an unmarried couple and she was able to push for a legal conviction from the judicial local court despite the fact that the country’s Anti-Domestic Violence Law had previously been applied only to married couples.

Ibu Odah hopes that other women in her community will follow in her footsteps, and that in the future there will be many more people like her working for social justice.
China

DISASTER RELIEF AND EARLY RECOVERY: BUILDING BACK BETTER AND GREENER

UNDP’s earthquake recovery programme in Sichuan Province has benefited villagers Qing Liehua and Qiu Shibin. (UNDP China)

I am busy and productive every day, and am able to financially support myself. I have hope for the future.

BY ZHANG WEI
Qinghe Village, Sichuan Province, China — Before the devastating Wenchuan earthquake in southwestern China on 12 May 2008, 62-year-old Qing Liehua’s family was chicken farming. After the earthquake destroyed his home in Qinghe Village, Sichuan Province, however, he lost everything, including his chickens.

Qing was one of the 40 million people who were affected by the earthquake, which killed almost 90,000 people. The destruction left behind untold levels of poverty and loss in communities that were already living a marginal existence.

At the request of the Government of China, UNDP stepped in, launching a two-year, US$5.3 million programme to assist 20 of the poorest villages that were affected by the earthquake. With its already long-standing presence in China, UNDP was uniquely placed to assist.

As a result, UNDP’s rehabilitation programme tackled issues like livelihood rehabilitation, legal support and social services for victims such as counseling, as well as ramping up energy and environmental planning and community-based disaster risk management.

As recovery continued, the need for a specific strategy to help the extremely poor became more and more apparent. Like most disasters, the earthquake had a disproportionate impact on the poorest and most vulnerable, including women, children and the elderly.

As a result, UNDP’s disaster risk reduction training helped communities respond more effectively to subsequent disasters. In July 2010, torrential rains engulfed Luojiazui Village in Gansu Province. As the local reservoir overflows with water and the dam threatened to collapse, the village committee safely evacuated villagers to higher ground, applying emergency response skills learned from drills.

In all, almost 8,000 people have directly benefited from UNDP’s work, demonstrating that trusted development partners can play a vital role in disaster recovery, even in places like China where the Government’s capacity to respond is already high. Lives and homes have been successfully rebuilt, local employment opportunities have been created and communities have been empowered to respond better to disasters while protecting their livelihoods and families.

Meanwhile, in Qinghe Village, Qing has not only received a new shelter and chickens, both with UNDP’s support, but he also benefited from the expertise and advice of Professor Shu Gang from Sichuan Agricultural University. Shu helped him to improve breeding techniques and secure a dependable market for his stock.

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By raising chickens I have made a good profit and now other people in our village have begun to raise chickens as well,” said Qing, who is now helping his neighbour, Qiu Shibin, to establish a successful livestock business.

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NEW UNDP REGIONAL REPORTS IN 2012


This inaugural report reviews the current state of crime in the Caribbean and offers a set of recommendations to reduce and prevent violent crime while advancing human development.

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Africa Human Development Report

Africa has undergone an economic renaissance but food security remains an issue on the continent.

UNDP’s first African regional Human Development Report, to be released in mid-2012, will examine the conditions upon which Africa can become food-secure and the long-term implications for human development in the region.
Kyrgyzstan

PROTECTING THE PRIVACY AND DIGNITY OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

BY LARISA BASMAKOVA AND JEFLOZ KUVATOVA

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan – When he learned that he had acquired HIV from injecting drugs, 25-year-old Mirlan (not his real name) sought help from the Regional AIDS Prevention Centre in Jalalabad, Kyrgyzstan. One day in 2005, television reporters showed up with a request to film the Centre’s work.

Hoping to attract attention in the press, the chief physician asked Mirlan to do an interview with the reporters. He refused, but still ended up on TV, clearly identified as a person with HIV. While Mirlan wasn’t looking, the doctor had held open some curtains so the reporters could film him without his knowledge.

After the broadcast, Mirlan’s life took a dramatic turn for the worse, deepening the downward spiral that began when he stopped taking anti-retroviral drugs and lost a successful business. People jotted him on the streets of his small provincial hometown, and refused to serve him in stores. Classmates at school called his children “AIDS carriers.”

He would not live to see the end, but Mirlan’s case highlighted how stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS can become too much to bear.

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

A small country with a limited economic base, Kyrgyzstan has faced a challenging decade in fighting HIV/AIDS. Budgetary resources have been short, and health care spending has declined sharply, even as a new threat from HIV began to emerge.

Kyrgyzstan still has a relatively low prevalence of HIV but the virus is spreading at one of the fastest rates in the world. The country’s location, at the crossroads of drug trafficking through Central Asia, has helped drive the number of injecting drug users up by 50 times in the last two decades, with a current total of around 25,000. Mostly men, they account for about two-thirds of HIV cases. Recent increases in the number of women and children with HIV indicate the epidemic is slowly but surely spreading into the general population.

Stopping the spread of HIV requires coordinated actions on many levels: new laws and state programmes, prevention and care services, resources, partnerships and behavioural changes. Kyrgyzstan started with few of these pieces in place. But with assistance from international partners such as UNDP, it has begun to put them together.

PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW

Early HIV initiatives focused on directly reaching communities most vulnerable to the virus, especially injecting drug users. In 2000, UNDP helped Kyrgyzstan become one of the first countries in Central Asia to pilot syringe exchange programmes. In 2002, it became the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to offer methadone substitution treatment to heroin and opium addicts.

Important momentum came in 2005 from a new national AIDS law that UNDP helped develop and get approved by the Parliament. That law is now considered one of the best in its kind in the post-Soviet region. It grants priority access to primary care facilities and medication for people living with HIV, and stipulates punishments for cases of stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS — like the one Mirlan filed. For the first time, the law called for legal distinctions between voluntary and compulsory treatment, with a requirement for informed written consent in all cases except those mandated by court order.

Subsequent policies and regulations built on the new law. The Criminal and Administrative Code partially decriminalized some activities involving drugs without an intention to sell. In 2007, a new regulation encouraged referrals of drug addicts to syringe exchange and methadone therapy programmes, rather than simply cutting them off to jail. This measure has helped reduce the overall number of prisoners in Kyrgyzstan by almost half, from 17,000 in 2007 to 9,500 in 2009.

To support these changes, UNDP has helped government officials develop a training programme on HIV for law enforcement agencies. As an outcome of the Ministry of Internal Affairs’ new law on drug use, all police officers working with high-risk populations are trained to learn about issues such as the vital importance of needle exchange programmes in protecting key populations at highest risk, and the rights of people with HIV under the Constitution and other laws, as well as personal protection measures.

The difference can be seen on the streets. Police officers who once harassed and arrested injecting drug users now send them to programmes that can save their lives.

IMPROVING PLANS AND SERVICES

The year after the 2005 AIDS Law, the Government adopted a national AIDS programme to conform to it. The programme built on the latest international standards, such as by counting activities in the multiple areas required to address HIV, including health, justice, law enforcement, education, social protection and information. It prioritized at-risk populations, such as injecting drug users and prisoners. To implement the programme, UNDP, in cooperation with other international organizations, assisted with setting up a national committee to coordinate HIV activities, along with a unified system for monitoring national and provincial activities.

The programme has helped ensure that HIV and harm reduction services — comprising testing and outreach, as well as syringe exchanges and methadone substitution programmes — now reach 60 percent of injecting drug users. By 2011, the Ministry of Health was operating 30 methadone treatment centres. Three additional programmes were running within prisons. In Bishkek, which has had some of the longest-running needle exchange and methadone treatment services, HIV infection rates among users are half the national average.

Consultations on testing have been introduced in healthcare organizations across Kyrgyzstan, and public advocacy has converged the message on billboards, radio and television, that testing is an important routine medical procedure. Around 350,000 people now undergo it each year.

The national programme has strongly emphasized civil society participation in stopping the tide of HIV infections. Under the protections of the 2005 AIDS Law, more groups of people living with HIV have formed, and civil society leaders, for the first time in Central Asia, have publicly emerged from marginalized communities, including former injecting drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men.

UNDP has worked closely with these groups to provide seed funding and develop the technical skills they need to advocate, run organizations and provide services, including in connection with the public health system. As HIV threatens to spread beyond injecting drug users some non-governmental groups have planned Kyrgyzstan’s first services tailored to women and girls living with HIV.

For the first time in Kyrgyzstan, a court case legally upheld the human rights of a person living with HIV.

Kyrgyzstan today has a foundation in which people living with HIV are given a voice to define their lives. The country’s location, at the crossroads of drug trafficking through Central Asia, has helped drive the number of injecting drug users up by 50 times in the last two decades, with a current total of around 25,000. Mostly men, they account for about two-thirds of HIV cases. Recent increases in the number of women and children with HIV indicate the epidemic is slowly but surely spreading into the general population.

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For the first time in Kyrgyzstan, a court case legally upheld the human rights of a person living with HIV.
BY SUNČICA PLEŠTINA
Vukovar, Croatia – “As an employee of a retail chain, to my greatest regret, I was the witness of an armed robbery. It was an extremely traumatic experience that forced me to change my job,” writes M. K., who requested anonymity in her letter to the President of the Vukovar Court. “Four years after the event, I received a summons to testify against the suspected perpetrator, and my agony increased. I was fearful of meeting the suspect and of his reaction.”

According to M. K., who requested anonymity in her letter to the President of the Vukovar Court, she was joined by the office staff. Branka Lučić, the office head, and the office staff (generally psychologists and social workers), provided support and counselling to the witness. Support offices like the one in Vukovar were created by UNDP, working together with the Croatian Ministry of Justice and Supreme Court. In just three years, the seven witness support offices in operation—four set up in 2008 and another three created in 2011—have already provided support and counselling to 7,500 witnesses, and the number is rising steadily as the availability of these assistance becomes more widely known. Originally intended to provide protection to the victims of war crimes committed during the 1991-95 war that accompanied the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the offices soon expanded to address the needs of any victim who otherwise might be too fearful or traumatized to testify. Assistance has been provided in cases of domestic violence, assault, robbery, rape, murder, corruption and organized crime in addition to war crimes. The offices provide services free of charge, and witnesses enjoy full confidentiality. When the first four witness support offices were created in 2008, UNDP hired the office staff (generally psychologists or social workers), provided them with specialized training, and secured and refurbished offices and waiting rooms. The private waiting rooms serve as a focal function, as they give witnesses a secure refuge where there is no risk of an encounter with their assailants in the courthouse corridors. The offices also enlisted the help of a network of trained volunteers, many of them law students; this now numbers over 200. UNDP and the Government then launched a nationwide public awareness campaign informing citizens that the victims of crimes have rights that are protected and where they should turn for help. A dedicated website was also created at www.unmhr.hr/rights-with-practical-information-about-trial-proceedings. Finally, starting in November 2008, a leaflet detailing the services of witness support offices and contact information was attached to every court subpoena. These efforts prompted an increase in the number of visitors to the support offices, and this in turn improved the response rate for witnesses in court cases. After a first successful year, the Ministry of Justice and court administration undertook to cover the costs of the support offices, ensuring their sustainability. A second wave of Witness Support Offices was created by UNDP and by early 2011 every major Croatian city had one. All seven of the offices were set up on a budget of under 51.1 million, with funding from UNDP, the Netherlands, Spain, the United States and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; the Ministry of Justice has pledged to take over funding for the three new offices in 2012.

Frightened of being recognized as a victim, M. K. received contact information for the office and attended a session at the courthouse to prepare for testifying. “As an employee I was expected to provide the courtroom with accurate and complete information about the incident,” she said. “But I was, of course, too frightened to do that.” At this point, her confidence was replaced with fear. “I felt like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders.”

The Croatian model of witness support offices has been recognized internationally as a success story and a model for other countries. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe praised the work of UNDP in a 2011 resolution, calling the programme “a cornerstone for justice and reconciliation in the Balkans” and urging that witness support offices be established and funded across the region.
she was a girl. Pilar used to do with her mother when to collect the firewood they will use to cook with during the coming days, just as to collect the firewood they will use to cook with during the coming days, just as to collect the firewood they will use to cook with during the coming days, just as 8-year-old daughter, Pamela. Together she is supported in this duty by her of effort for 48-year-old Pilar Valladolid. wood fire has always required a great deal in the highlands of La Mar Province in the serious violations of human rights and have been registered by the Truth and facts about the actions of the State Guatemala, thousands of confidential by Héctor Morales Delgado. Guatemala – After 36 years of internal armed conflict in Guatemala, thousands of confidential facts about the actions of the State have been registered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They include serious violations of human rights and attacks directed at the civilian population. Simply the news of knowing what could have happened to my son already changes life for us.

All of this information is on record but has resulted in few legal proceedings. Rebecca Morales, III, maintains that hope for knowing what could have happened to my son already changes life for us.

Despite signing the Peace Accords in 1996, this Central American country has been able to comply with certain transitional justice processes offer hope for knowing what could have happened to my son already changes life for us. Morales says.

La Mar Province, Peru – Cooking on a wood fire has always required a great deal of effort for 46-year-old Pilar Valladolid. She is supported in this duty by her 8-year-old daughter, Pamela. Together they have to walk more than an hour to collect the firewood they will use to cook with during the coming days, just as they used to do with her mother when she was a girl. Pilar and her family live in a small town in the highlands of La Mar Province in the northeast corner of the Ayacucho region in the Peruvian Andes. Her husband José and their four sons usually return home in the evening after a long day harvesting potatoes. There are more than 3,000 potato varieties in Peru, and farmers like José are the guardians of this rich agro-biodiversity. Cooking over a wood fire has always been the norm here. In the poorer areas of Peru, families live in houses made of clay walls and earthen floors. They eat, sleep and relax in one common space. Traditional wood fire kitchens have a low level of energy efficiency. They use too much wood and since they are not equipped with chimneys, the smoke produced remains indoors, damaging the health of the families who depend on them. Improved cook stoves are more energy efficient than traditional ones, since they generate the same level of heat with up to 50 percent less firewood, reducing the emission of greenhouse gases. At the same time, the improved stove design includes a chimney to eliminate the smoke from the house, reducing the inci- dence of respiratory illnesses. In 2009, UNDP developed a pro- gramme with Peru’s Ministry of Energy and Mining that provided 25,000 improved cook stoves to the poorest and most vulnerable people in the country. The programme is cross-cutting in nature, addressing a number of development challenges, including health, climate change and forest preservation. Two new partners have since signed on, the regional governments of La Libertad and Arequipa. Altogether, improved cook stoves and access to energy

Thanks to my improved cook stove, everything has changed; the smoke always goes outside.

At the head of this institution because he himself was persecu- cuted during the armed confrontation. The main strength of Guatemala’s transitional justice programme is the support it receives from the combined with of PAJUSt’s partners. With UNDP’s technical and expert support, for example, PAJUSt has been able to invest- gate human rights violations through archival, forensic, anthropological and criminal means. This improves the pros- pects of success for the programme and is producing visible progress in achieving justice and national reconciliation. For her part, Ana Carla Ericastilla, Director of the General Archive of Central America, says that nearly 13 million pieces of data out of 20 million available have been digitized to date, with technical support coming from the Government of Switzerland. This archive now includes systematized information from various national and departmental security forces, and essentially provides a detailed account of numerous violations against the human rights of more than 2,000 Guatemalans. “We opened a room with electronic service for public access to declassified documents,” says Ericastilla. These docu- ments have attracted hundreds of people per day who peruse them for information about friends and loved ones. Rebecca Morales believes that the data obtained from the archives and exhumation processes offer hope for knowing how her son Marco Arnoldo died. Her son lived with her when he was abducted just a mile from where the majority of exhu- mations have taken place. “I cry every time I think about how my son already changes life for us,” Morales says.

Governments of Denmark, the Nether- lands, Sweden and the United States, and

The Development Advocate 11
What is the Sound of a Tree Not Falling?

Forests are the lungs of our planet. Yet, forests the size of 25 football fields are lost every minute, adding to greenhouse gases.

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Down
1: This is equal to MC multiplied by MC (6)
2, 3 and 20: Instinct more years... (10,11,5)
5: 1 down for people (4)
6: Acronym, important indicator in the 29 across (3)
8: The bottom billion comprises one thousand of these (7)
9: Development gives people... opportunities (3)
19: As the world warms, this becomes the new black (5)
27 down, 17 across and 14 down: Working together... means... and... and... all of (3,2,2)
28: Less of this and more of 26 down and 31 across, please (3)

Across
10, 4 and 11: Alongside democracy, an important principle for good governance (4, 2, 3)
7 and 25: Keeps your surroundings going (13,14)
12: Acronym, UN deforestation programme (6)
15 down and 16, 18 and 30 across: UNDP's tagline (9,5,9,7)
22: There are seven billion of these (6)
23 and 24: The opposite of Big Money (5,7)
23 across and 5 down: UNDP programme featured in this publication.../... work (3,4)
26 down and 31 across: Anagram, of blue, T (3-4)
29: Acronym, UNDP's flagship publication (3)

FOR SOLUTION, GO TO PAGE 2.