Gender equality and democratic governance
UNDP strives to ensure that women have a real voice in all governance institutions, from the judiciary to the civil service, as well as in the private sector and civil society, so they can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision making. When women participate in decision-making there are benefits for women, men, children, communities and nations.

UNDP works with its partners to promote women’s political participation in all governance institutions, strengthen women’s legal rights and access to justice, assist national partners to ensure that public services benefit women and men equitably, and enhance national capacities to reduce gender-based violence.

Promoting women’s political participation
Despite progress in recent years, only 19 percent of the world’s parliamentarians are women and discrimination against women persists in laws and practices. MDG indicators also show that governments are currently failing in their obligations to ensure that services are delivered effectively, particularly to women. UNDP works with partners to increase the number of women in public office, and enhance women’s leadership, including in post conflict situations. UNDP works to:

- Reform electoral laws and processes to bolster women’s representation as voters and candidates through an electoral cycle approach. UNDP’s Global Programme on Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS) aims to advance gender mainstreaming in electoral assistance and support interventions to enhance women’s political and electoral participation; (www.undp.org/gpecs)
- Conduct research and provide training on good practices for making parliaments more gender sensitive;
- Make political parties more accessible and accountable to women;
- Develop capacity, skills and networks of women candidates and representatives. The online workspace iKNOW Politics is a joint project of UNDP, UN Women, NDI, IPU and the International IDEA designed to serve the needs of elected officials, candidates, political party leaders and members, researchers, students and other practitioners interested in advancing women in politics (www.iknowpolitics.org);

MATTERS OF FACT 2010
- Only 19 percent of national parliamentarians in 2011 are women; an increase from 11.3 percent in 1995
- Only 25 parliaments currently meet the target of 30 percent women members
- Fewer than 3 percent of signatories to peace agreements are women
- About 24 percent of the people interviewed, heard, seen or read about in mainstream media are female, only 16 percent of stories focus on women
- 186 countries are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Among women aged 15 to 44 years, violence causes more deaths and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined

Photo: Adam Rogers / UNCDF
• Strengthen national gender machineries to ensure gender equality considerations are represented across all arms of government;
• Strengthen civil society to enhance the voice, participation and civic engagement of women.

Public administration & local governance: Making institutions more gender-responsive
Access to public services such as healthcare, water supply, sanitation and education are essential prerequisites for development. Women often have more difficulty accessing the services they need and are entitled to. Also, women are often under-represented in public administrations, particularly in senior positions. In response, UNDP supports governments to:

• Develop policies and design public services to ensure that women and men benefit equitably;
• Meaningfully include women in planning, budgeting and policy-making processes for the delivery of services at all levels;
• Support public administration reforms to advance gender equality in all levels of government;
• Increase the numbers of women representatives at the local level;
• Strengthen national statistics and planning offices capacities to collect, analyze and use statistics on use of and access to services by women and men.

Strengthening women’s legal rights and access to justice
Without the necessary legal frameworks and access to justice, women are unable to have their voices heard, exercise their rights, challenge discrimination or hold decision-makers accountable. Rule of law is the foundation for both gender justice and women’s security. In many countries women account for the majority of the poor and marginalized citizens who face discriminatory laws and who are not aware of or who cannot access their rights. UNDP supports governments to:

• Strengthen legal and policy frameworks for gender equality;
• Strengthen linkages between formal and informal legal structures to advance gender equality;
• Ratify, implement and report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
• Support national human rights institutions to advance the realization of women’s rights;
• Strengthen the justice sector to end impunity for sexual and gender-based violence.

Preventing and addressing gender-based violence
Up to half of all women have experienced violence behind closed doors at the hands of their intimate partners. Gender-based violence (GBV) is pervasive in all regions of the world and remains a serious obstacle to achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment, and the MDGs. GBV often escalates in the context of natural disasters and in conflict situations and their aftermath, and the links between GBV and HIV are now better understood.

To address GBV, UNDP works with national partners to: design laws and national, local and sectoral policies to reduce gender-based violence; build the capacity of judges, prosecutors and police to address cases of gender-based violence; support women’s organizations to provide support to victims and to advocate for change; work with the media to raise public awareness and break social taboos; work with men and boys to prevent gender-based violence.

UNDP in action
• UNDP’s electoral support in Burundi has contributed to higher numbers of women in decision-making, now with 46 percent women in the upper house, the highest percentage in Africa.
• In Kyrgyzstan, UNDP’s Promotion of Women in Parliament Initiative has led to legislative changes such as a temporary gender quota in the electoral code, which has now resulted in a parliament with 26.6 percent women, up from zero in 2005.
• In the Pacific, UNDP is working with governments to advance legislative compliance with CEDAW.
• Women lawyers in Somalia participated in training to assist with sensitive cases for women through UNDP’s Access to Justice Project.
• In Colombia, the involvement of 1700 women in local policy and development initiatives on women’s concerns was supported by UNDP’s gender training.

For more information, visit
www.undp.org/women
www.undp.org/governance
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