Human Rights and UNDP

“We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development.”

World leaders while signing the UN Millennium Declaration

The three pillars of the United Nations are peace and security, human rights, and development, and constitute the founding principles of the UN Charter. In its efforts to advance human development, UNDP supports Member States and partners in grounding their national development plans, policies and processes in the human rights principles of participation, inclusion, equality and non-discrimination.

UNDP operates in 177 countries and territories supporting efforts to strengthen democratic governance. In more than 100 countries, UNDP supports human rights for development as part of its commitment to human development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

MATTERS OF FACT

- UNDP together with partners supports over 80 National Human Rights Institutions; including through the facilitation of partnerships with their regional and global networks;

- UNDP strengthens national capacities in various countries in Asia and Latin America and promotes spaces of dialogue and partnership towards the effective implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ILO Convention 169;

- UNDP is supporting over 30 States in the advancement of their national human rights agendas through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a process to review the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States every four years.

Human rights for development: UNDP’s comprehensive approach

The Human Rights portfolio of UNDP consists of the three following key areas:

- Support to National Systems for the promotion and protection of human rights;
- Promotion and application of a human rights-based approach to development programming; and
- Greater engagement with the international human rights machinery.

UNDP is not a specialized human rights agency. Its work focuses on capacity development. At the request of governments, UNDP designs and implements projects responding to development challenges. UNDP provides capacity support to governments through policy advice, facilitation and exchange of knowledge and best practices, regional collaboration among peers, provision of policy expertise, elaboration of innovative tools and methodologies, formulation and implementation of development projects.

When rights are made real, communities can participate in decisions affecting their lives. Photo: Sephi Bergerson, UNDP India.
UNDP promotes democratic governance through widespread support to national systems for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Poverty reduction policies are dependent on the inclusiveness of governance systems and processes and institutions and the ability of people to own the processes and truly make meaningful decisions which affect their lives. UNDP views democratic governance as essential for creating an enabling environment for MDG progress and for imbuing national and local institutions with systems, processes and values that respect people’s human rights and fundamental freedoms. More attention ought to be paid to the strengthening of governance systems that are conducive to human development, rule of law and human rights, which would address political, social and economic inclusion. This includes the strengthening of the National Human Rights Systems to uphold and protect national governance systems based on human rights norms and standards.

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) can empower people to know and claim their rights, and can advocate for legislation, policy and practice that are in line with the human rights treaties. To increase NHRIs’ effectiveness and role in the national human rights systems, UNDP, through its partnership with Office of the High Commissioner and the International Coordinating Committee (ICC) supports activities to strengthen their capacity. The UNDP-OHCHR Toolkit for Collaboration with NHRIs supports that effort.

The engagement of UN Member States with international human rights machinery is supported by UNDP.

UNDP’s partnership with the (OHCHR) provides a unique entry point to operationalize the processes of the various UN human rights machinerys (Treaty Bodies, and the Human Rights Council Special Rapporteurs and the Universal Periodic Review process) into relevant policy and programming thereby strengthening the linkages between the normative work of the United Nations system and its operational activities. This work is guided by UNDP’s internal human rights policies and frameworks and the direction contained in the milestone UN Resolutions: the 2000 Millennium Declaration, the 2005 World Summit Outcome and the 2010 MDG Outcome Document and the Human Rights Councils resolutions, which reaffirm the statutory commitment of UNDP to human rights and particularly their centrality to development and peace as the principal pillars of the UN.

Mainstreaming human rights draws attention to those who are often left behind, including ethnic minorities, indigenous people, women, children, the disabled and elderly.

UNDP together with other UN Agencies is working to mainstream human rights into efforts towards the achievement of the MDGs. UNDP’s Regional meeting on Human Rights and Social Justice for Persons with Disabilities (meeting in Europe and the CIS (June 2011) succeeded in creating a regional momentum for knowledge sharing, partnership building, and national follow-up on regional challenges, such as social integration, human development, economic and social rights of the rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Global Human Rights Strengthening Programme (2008-2013) carries out cutting-edge work through the identification and promotion of new and best practices and approaches in the area of human rights; it develops and tests guidelines on issues that have traditionally received marginal attention (such as energy and human rights) and it supports strategic global, regional and country level programming processes. An important objective of the Programme is also partnership building with other stakeholders, and institutional partnerships within UNDP and the UN system, to ensure a coherent corporate approach to the integration of human rights. Furthermore, the Programme substantively supports knowledge management and coordination through Huritalk - the UN Human Rights Policy Network, facilitating dialogue among development practitioners on how to best integrate human rights standards and principles in their work, and promotes south-south cooperation (e.g. human rights practitioners meeting and NHRI regional network meetings).

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