



Strengthening governance during the COVID-19 pandemic

A snapshot of UNDP's work across the globe

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The world is facing unprecedented pressures, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the climate crisis, political polarization and weakening multilateralism, reduced trust in governance systems both manifesting in and perpetuated by a rise in toxic information pollution, continued conflicts and displacement. These crises have exposed weaknesses in our systems and have compounded social, political and economic inequalities. They pose complex, multidimensional challenges that require systemic solutions.

COVID-19 is testing not only health systems and economies, but also the ability of public sector institutions to adapt and innovate in the inclusive delivery of services, while remaining accountable and transparent. The accompanying ‘infodemic’, with its enormous rise in the spread of misinformation and disinformation by both state and non-state actors has damaged public health initiatives, inflamed tensions and exacerbated stigma and discrimination.

Although these challenges are daunting, there is an important opportunity to make societies more inclusive and resilient through response and recovery efforts. UNDP’s approach to longer-term recovery is premised on the necessity of accountable, inclusive and effective governance, based on human rights and the rule of law, and supporting institutional transformation and civic engagement. Now, more than ever, we need to ensure the functioning of checks and balances, democratic oversight and broad-based public participation.

UNDP is the largest deliverer of democratic governance support within the UN system, strengthening effective, inclusive and accountable governance at national, regional and local levels across 170 countries. This short publication provides a snapshot of governance challenges that our country partners have faced, the ways that UNDP is responding while navigating the specific issues that COVID-19 has brought, and the impact of our work across the five regions where we operate. Links to further information on each project are also available, including to UNDP’s [Transparency Portal](#) and Country Office webpages.

You will see in the following pages how UNDP is working to support countries to address a diversity of governance challenges, including by supporting governments to address critical governance bottlenecks that constrain the delivery of essential services; supporting parliaments and other oversight institutions to operate remotely, as well as advising Election Management Bodies and other public authorities on modifications to electoral processes, where necessary; and promoting the dissemination of accurate information in order to enhance the pandemic response, and foster public debate, accountability and trust in governance systems.

Empowering vulnerable and hard to reach communities with COVID-19 information in Ghana

Governance Challenge

In Ghana, as in many parts of the world, COVID-19 has magnified existing vulnerabilities and inequalities experienced by marginalized populations. Public communications on COVID-19's risks have been primarily provided in English and a few local languages, tailored for urban settings and in formats that are not accessible for persons with disabilities. As a result, large segments of the general population, including persons living with disabilities, people in prison and persons in hard-to-reach areas, have limited access to reliable information on COVID-19.

UNDP's Role

Implemented in partnership with the Ghana Health Service, UNDP Ghana's rapid response plan focused on providing vulnerable and at-risk populations with accurate and context-specific information on COVID-19, to enable informed decisions and strengthen protection efforts for both individuals and communities. This intervention ensured that vulnerable persons are equipped with accurate information to improve their understanding of and adherence to government and WHO safety and protection guidelines. As part of this initiative, tailored communication materials in accessible formats - including braille, audio and sign language - were produced and disseminated to those who are visually impaired, hard of hearing and/or deaf. These materials offered simple, explanatory messages on the recommended COVID-19 protocols such as physical distancing, mask wearing and hand hygiene. To facilitate adherence to the COVID-19 protocols, the project also provided face masks and hygiene supplies (soap, hand sanitizers, etc.) to vulnerable groups within the 165 districts across all 16 regions of the country. The rapid response plan's multi-pronged approach developed audience-specific strategies that focused on engaging key community leadership, civil society organizations, and prisons among others. This included providing safe spaces for vulnerable groups to ask questions and receive advice; education sessions for people living with disabilities including the production of an **animation** in several local languages supported by the UN system in Ghana; as well as specially-designed training programmes for prison officers.

COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement rapid response plan
(May 2020- December 2020)

Project information:
<https://open.undp.org/projects/00119292>

UNDP Ghana:
<https://www.gh.undp.org/>



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By December 2020, more than 21,000 persons with disabilities in 165 districts across the country had been reached with relevant information in accessible formats on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus within their communities. In addition, more than 5,000 persons living with HIV were provided with public awareness information on sanitation, hand hygiene, mask wearing, respiratory etiquette and treatment adherence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prisons were able to curtail COVID-19 infection through the training of approximately 400 prison officials and wardens from 25 prison facilities on COVID-19 prevention.

 IMPACT

Fostering greater citizen participation in decision making in Liberia

Strengthening inclusive decentralized service delivery and social accountability through citizens participation (2021-2022)

Project information:

<https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/LBR/approved%20prod%20PBRSCP%202020%20-%202024.pdf>

UNDP Liberia:

<https://www lr.undp.org/>

Governance Challenge

At the end of Liberia's civil war in 2003, a national consensus emerged around the need for significant governance reforms to foster greater citizen participation to ensure equitable political, economic, and social development. Ensuring that Liberia's citizens were actively engaged in civic life called for legal frameworks to sustain decentralization reforms that would bring the government closer to the people, improve the delivery of basic social services, and broaden the space for civic engagement and participation.

UNDP's Role

Strengthening Liberia's County Service Centers (CSC), the principal mechanism for service delivery in the country, is the primary focus of UNDP's support. UNDP is piloting a digital platform (mobile and web-based) that receives, compiles, analyzes and responds to citizens' perceptions of public services standards in real time. The analysis is also instrumental in monitoring the performance of public officials thereby strengthening accountability. To address the ongoing challenge of regular and sustainable access to energy, which affects citizens and government officials alike, UNDP is installing hybrid solar systems at eight CSCs which will both improve service delivery and generate revenue. The CSCs are also providing business coaching and mentorship (in partnership with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry) and psychosocial services to women, who are the main users of CSCs.

IMPACT >>

In a very short time, UNDP Liberia's efforts are making an impact on accountability for service delivery at the highest level. Concerns and issues gathered through the Citizen Feedback Mechanism now form a part of the President's Cabinet Agenda. In early 2021, the President issued a strongly worded statement on performance based on a briefing received from the Director General of the Cabinet informed by data gathered through the digital platform.



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Empowering women and youth in local development in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Governance Challenge

Gender inequality and a dearth of women and youth active in local governance is a pervasive problem in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), despite the ratification of conventions and protocols affirming the State's obligation to guarantee equal opportunities for women and youth participation in all areas, including the political and economic arenas. Fragility remains high due to an ongoing cycle of conflict, especially in the North Kivu region, further compounding the challenges, especially for women and girls.

UNDP's Role



UNDP DRC's approach of "governing for peace while strengthening the social contract" is working to improve social cohesion in three stabilized areas of North Kivu, using targeted initiatives designed to improve social service delivery and citizen participation, particularly among women and youth. Multifunctional centres partner with local civil society organizations to provide vital skills training that help women and young people develop and pilot income generating projects. Advocacy training is

an essential component, helping participants become more aware of and feel more confident in exercising their rights to public services and local governance participation. UNDP also works closely with local and subnational governments to strengthen their capabilities for development planning and participatory decision-making processes, processes that ensure the voices of women and young people are heard. Through its work with civil society organizations, UNDP is promoting tax literacy among local citizens to bolster tax collection thus securing the funding of public services.

While only halfway through the project, the communities are already benefiting from the strengthened capacities of community services, including the creation of local youth councils, collectives of women's associations, and local peace and development committees. The multifunctional centres are providing women and girls with frameworks for sensitization, as well as information and training on women's rights. Various vocational training courses are contributing to women and girls' sense of individual agency, including by building the entrepreneurial capacities of more than 2,500 women and girls. Moreover, through the participation of men in these activities, men's harmful perceptions of women's roles in rural activities have evolved, which should contribute to a positive change in the economic activities of the entities.

Strengthening women and youth leadership for inclusive, participatory and sustainable local governance in North Kivu

Partner: Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)

Project information:
<https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/COD/PRODOC%20K0ICA%20NK%20sign%C3%A9.pdf>

UNDP DRC:
<https://www.cd.undp.org>

 IMPACT

Promoting peace justice and inclusion in Tunisia

Sustaining Peace through the promotion of a peaceful, just, and inclusive society in Tunisia – SDG16+ Portfolio (2018-2022)

Partners: The Netherlands

UNDP Tunisia:
<https://www.tn.undp.org/>

Governance Challenge

Despite the significant progress made by Tunisia in realising the aspirations of the 2011 Revolution, events in mid-2021 suggest that these achievements are fragile, and potentially reversible. Many of the reforms of the democratic transition, such as in the justice and security sectors, anti-corruption, decentralisation, and the legal and institutional framework, remain incomplete. Moreover, even where progress is being made, the Tunisian people are not seeing the benefits. The social and economic situation remains dire (exacerbated by COVID-19), and there are persistent regional inequalities.

UNDP's Role

Since 2018, UNDP Tunisia has supported its government partners to reinforce the fragile achievements of the country's democratic transition, and support its efforts toward a peaceful, just, and inclusive society. To do this, UNDP is engaging in a whole-of-government approach involving various state institutions at the national and sub-national levels, complemented by a whole-of-society focus involving non-state actors (principally civil society organizations) to respond to the ongoing challenges and maintain service delivery to the country. The programme targets three of the country's more marginalized regions – Medenine, Tataouine, and Gafsa. Working with its partners, UNDP aims to strengthen key governance institutions and processes in an effort to promote democratic governance, consolidate the rule of law, and foster active citizenship. This includes working to ensure communities, in particular youth, women, and vulnerable groups, benefit from, and contribute to local development, so as to strengthen access to justice and human security, and to foster social cohesion.



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In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP sharpened its focus on strengthening governance systems, strengthening human security, and helping to make the justice system more people-centred. The development of a Business Continuity Plan enabled the Parliament to continue working during the country's lockdown. Approximately 23,000 inmates and 7,000 prison staff were provided with protective equipment to prevent them from contracting and spreading COVID-19. In consultation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, 26 civil society initiatives, initially focused on strengthening the partnership between civil society and youth centres for the implementation of the sectoral vision for youth, were swiftly reoriented towards the response to COVID-19.

Building Inclusive and Accountable Parliaments for a Peaceful Somalia

Governance Challenge

In the face of multiple challenges – from terrorism and clannism to weak institutional and governance structures – the Somalia Federal Government has made achievements towards consolidating peace and security through dialogue. This has resulted in the adoption of its constitution in 2012 and helped complete the legal framework for the state formation process in 2016. However, Somalia's parliaments face significant challenges in their pursuit of state building, federalisation, and eventual peace. The Federal and Federal Member State (FMS) parliaments need additional capacity to fulfill their constitutional mandates; Members of Parliament (MPs) require more knowledge about the parliamentary functions, while parliaments need advisors to assist them to fulfill their roles; finally, parliamentary secretariats still require support to adequately support the work of MPs. Yet there is a strong political will to ensure the country's parliaments are responsive to its citizenry and contribute to national peace and state building to help drive its broader development goals.

UNDP's Role

Since 2018, UNDP Somalia has worked with multiple government partners to help strengthen the parliaments' responsiveness and effectiveness. The establishment of a Speakers Forum provides a platform for parliamentarians to share and discuss their own challenges and experiences. There is now a forum for interaction between the Parliaments, citizens, civil society organizations, and the media to enable citizens to be informed and to monitor the work of the parliaments, as well as to be involved in the law-making process. Cross-sectoral activities have also been organized, with particular focus on gender participation, youth empowerment, and anti-radicalisation. Finally, UNDP has fostered the implementation of the Ninth National Development Plan to strengthen the capacities for dialogue, research, and analysis on inclusive politics in Somalia.



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Building Inclusive and Accountable Parliaments for a Peaceful Somalia
Somalia (Parliamentary Support Project II- 2018-2021)

Partners: UNDP and Multi Partner Trust Fund (contributing countries are Switzerland and Norway)

Project information:
<https://open.undp.org/projects/00099031>

UNDP Somalia:
<https://www.so.undp.org/>

UNDP Somalia responded quickly to the changes brought on by COVID-19, providing technical and operational support that enabled the Federal Parliament to amend Joint Rules of Procedures and continue functioning during lockdowns. Zoom subscriptions and communications equipment ensured the continuation of planned sessions and voting as well as virtual plenary halls for both houses and all committees. Similarly, the Parliamentary Oversight Committee was able to facilitate the constitutional review process together with the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs and the Independent Constitution Review and Implementation Commission. As a result, 2,169 Somalis participated in the consultations on the review of the constitution which contributed to drafting of the 3rd version of the revised Constitution. This version of the revised Constitution will be further discussed after the establishment of the 11th Federal Parliament and the new administration, following the National Consultative Council's (NCC) Agreement from May 2021, on the state building priorities.

IMPACT

Supporting recovery and stability through local development in Iraq

Iraq: Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development Programme (LADP)

Partners: the European Union and UN Habitat

Project information:

<https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/all-projects/supporting-recovery-and-stability-in-iraq-through-local-development.html>

UNDP Iraq:

<https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home.html>

Governance Challenge

COVID-19's ripple effects have impacted all areas of life in Iraq. The country's economy has suffered from the steep decline in global oil prices, which is crucial in a country where oil accounts for 90% of government revenue. This imbalanced reliance on a volatile commodity highlights the country's ongoing fragility and the need to ensure a more equitable allocation and management of national resources, better governance, public finance reforms, improved accountability, and effective anti-corruption measures.

UNDP's Role

COVID-19 forced UNDP Iraq's multifaceted support to the country's local governance to pivot to a recovery mode, while at the same time continue to support its collaborations with the local authorities and civil society organizations. In particular, the project sought to build the capacities of local authorities through demonstration initiatives on how to create enabling environments for economic development through employment and entrepreneurship. Good governance, transparency, and accountability of the governorate's decisions and actions are key elements of each activity of the Programme. A key component focuses on strengthening the effectiveness and transparency of local government systems and public services including the decentralisation of power to local authorities. This bottom-up decentralisation was supported through peer-to-peer cooperation between the EU, local authorities and their associations, and Iraqi governorates to provide support and exchange of experience in decentralised public services.^[1] The project included the transfer of know-how and best practices to improve management processes in the Iraqi local authorities in decentralised sectors. In addition, an initiative was launched to help civil society organizations facilitate dialogue between citizens and their local authorities.



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IMPACT >>

The activities reoriented to COVID-19 reached nearly 5,390 neighbourhoods, hospitals, and public places. In total, 70,000 awareness efforts – featuring information on symptoms, prevention, debunking myths, and psychological health – were disseminated to raise awareness and share important health messages about the pandemic, and were estimated to have reached 31.7 million people across Iraq, roughly 81% of the population. Meanwhile, the management of key decentralised public services related to economic development was supported. Up to 400 people participated in employment training in traditional crafts, tourism, and nature conservation, receiving new skills and valuable opportunities for temporary employment.

[1] <http://www.new.ladp-iraq.eu>

Strengthening rural local governance in Bangladesh

Governance Challenge

In Bangladesh, local government institutions play a critical role in both the urban and rural development of the country. However, insufficient decentralization, limited human and institutional capacities, and lack of resources often constrain their ability to perform as expected and to fulfil their mandates. As a result, local governments suffer from poor transparency, accountability, and limited citizen engagement particularly at the two lowest tiers of Local Government Institutions, the Upazila Parishads and the Union Parishads.

UNDP's Role

In 2017, UNDP Bangladesh was engaged to address the challenges in the two Parishads (251 Union Parishad and 18 Upazila Parishad). The multifaceted programme includes facilitating meetings and public hearings between local governments and citizens; conducting awareness raising events at the local level, including through social media; supporting the development of websites to inform citizens; and strengthening women's leadership, the promotion of women's rights and the prevention of violence against women. Research and policy analysis are helping to drive needed policy reform, advocate for key policies and guidelines, and strengthen the connections between the Government of Bangladesh's Local Government Division and the local governments. At the same time, training programmes on the cornerstones of effective and engaged governance, including on the legislative process, anti-corruption, gender equality, climate change, youth engagement, SDG localisation, and targeted leadership development for women representatives are provided to appropriate constituents.



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Since launching in 2017, the project has produced tangible results. Both Parishads have published annual reports indicating improved capacity in the disclosure of information for better transparency and accountability. Both have also published their Five-year Plan, a mark of strengthened capacity in participatory planning. Improved access to decision making in Union Parishad has resulted in 80 percent of projects / schemes being prepared based on the recommendations of the Ward Meetings participants. Out of 38 public hearings conducted on a piloting basis, a total of 579 issues were raised by the citizens of which 242 (42 percent) were instantly resolved. Policy advocacy resulted in the circulation of 17 Upazila Committees Job Responsibilities; Women Development Forum Operational Guidelines; and Annual Reporting Guidelines of Upazila Parishad and Union Parishad. In terms of results related to the COVID-19 response, approximately 8,000 Local Government Institution functionaries received personal protective equipment. With UNDP's support, the Parishads also provided vital support to their constituents including a COVID-19 awareness campaign which reached more than 2 million villagers; masks, sanitizer, and soap were provided to 199,730 people; 259,060 people were provided access to handwashing facilities to reduce the likelihood of infection; and 2,000 poor people in the project areas received cash support during lockdown with funding from another UNDP project.

Efficient and Accountable Local Governance (EALG) Project 2017-2022

Funding Partners: Embassy of Denmark, Embassy of Switzerland, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Implementing Partner: Local Government Division (LGD), Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives with technical support from UNDP.

Project information:
<https://open.undp.org/projects/00105480>

UNDP Bangladesh:
<https://www.bd.undp.org/>

IMPACT

Promoting disability inclusion in Cambodia

Programme to Promote Disability inclusion 2020-2021¹

Partners: CoWater Sogema, MPTF/Jp – UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Project information:
<https://open.undp.org/projects/00090589>

UNDP Cambodia:
<https://www.kh.undp.org/>

Governance Challenge

Despite a comprehensive national legislative and policy framework aligned with international conventions, several challenges remain for disability inclusion in Cambodia. These include limited implementation of the National Disability Law, policies and plans; insufficient financial resources; and limited understanding of disability inclusion in broader policies and programmes. In addition, disability awareness among the general population is low and reducing stigma and discrimination remains a significant challenge. For women and girls, they not only face the discrimination typically experienced by women in Cambodian society, which continues to perpetuate gender stereotypes, they also face the discrimination and negative attitudes commonly experienced by persons with disabilities. As a result, they are at increased vulnerability to physical, emotional and sexual violence and are more likely to be reluctant to demand their rights as compared to men and boys with disabilities.



© UNDP Cambodia

UNDP's Role

Through its varied activities, UNDP Cambodia is strengthening the capacities of national and regional Disability Action Councils so as to hold the government accountable for the implementation of the National Disability Law and the National Disability Strategic Plan. This includes working to bolster Cambodia's Disability Law; support disability inclusion organizations to engage in policy development processes and provide training in disability and inclusive development; and build the capacities of the Disability Action Council, Disability Action Working Group at the line ministries and the Provincial DACs in disability inclusive planning and budgeting. The effort is part of a broader portfolio of disability-related initiatives including the UNPRPD-funded project focused on access to justice for persons with disabilities.

IMPACT >>

UNDP Cambodia's impact on the lives of persons with disabilities is evident at both the personal and policy levels. At the personal level, by bringing the National Disability Law in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, persons with disabilities are now able to access driving licenses, thus improving their socio-economic opportunities. UNDP also worked with various organizations to roll out Cambodia's first tuk tuk modified to enable persons with disabilities to drive. At the policy level, inclusive governance initiatives helped increase the number of civil society organizations actively engaged in amending the National Disability Law and strengthening Cambodia's National Disability Strategic Plan. In addition, the framework and action plan set milestones for progress by 2023, while the legal amendment aims for stronger compliance with the UNCRPD. When COVID-19 hit, UNDP conducted a national situational analysis and assessment which has strengthened understanding on the part of policy makers, UN agencies, and development partners on the rights and wellbeing of persons with disabilities and their access to services under the pandemic's challenging circumstances.

¹ <https://www.kh.undp.org/content/cambodia/en/home/projects/inclusive-governance-for-service-delivery-and-social-accountabil.html>

Strengthening representative bodies in Mongolia

Governance Challenge

The promulgation of the new Constitution in 1992 marked the beginning of the emergence of local self-governing bodies in Mongolia. Citizens' Representative Hurals (CRHs) - elected councils at sub-national level – have stabilized and now play an important role in the consolidation of democracy. However, challenges remain in making them truly representative of their constituencies and as responsive and accountable institutions. The turnover rate among CRHs' members is high, compounding the situation.

UNDP's Role

Since 2017, UNDP Mongolia has worked with the CRHs to provide the skills and tools needed to fulfil their mandated representative, legislative, oversight, and budgetary obligations. By focusing on building expertise on local governance, the CRHs have revised their governing laws and strengthened both local budget management and vital checks and balances. Regional and national forums provide a space for dialogue and consensus building between central and local governments. Improved information portals and websites are enhancing both transparency and citizens' access to CRH decisions as well as the ability to share best practices and experience amongst the CRHs themselves. In addition, a competitive small grant scheme supports the CRHs' oversight and representation efforts with a focus on marginalized groups including women, youth, the poor and vulnerable.

As the project nears its close, the results have been impressive. According to the Public Perception of Local Self-Governing Bodies survey, the level of public awareness about the CRHs has increased by 22.8 percent compared to the 2015 baseline. Citizens' awareness of the CRHs' decisions reached 50 percent in Ulaanbaatar (16 percent above the baseline), and 61.6 percent in rural areas (a 40 percent improvement). In addition, the CRHs' reporting efforts to their constituents increased thus increasing public awareness of their decisions. Of 8099 elected CRH representatives, 80 percent attributed their knowledge and skills to UNDP's induction and other training; among the 2164 women representatives, the percentage jumped to 89.7. With the pandemic, training went online and reached 70 percent of the new representatives from 330 districts following the October 2020 election. In addition, 13 e-learning programmes were created on key subjects concerning the newly revised local governance and budget laws and uploaded on the www.khural.mn website for wider outreach.

**Strengthening Representative Bodies in Mongolia
(2017-2021)**

Partners: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Project information:
<https://open.undp.org/projects/00096426>

UNDP Mongolia:
<https://www.mn.undp.org/>



Delger B, Governor of Gurvanbulag soum, Bulgan aimag

Strengthening parliamentary democracy in Armenia

Governance Challenge

Modern Parliament for a Modern Armenia (MAP) (2019-2022)²

Partners: SIDA, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UK FCDO

Project information:

<https://open.undp.org/projects/00082042>

UNDP Armenia:

<https://www.am.undp.org/>

UNDP's Role

UNDP supports the National Assembly in strengthening the separation of powers and its parliamentary roles, and sets the standards for public participation. At the same time it is leveraging technology to lay the groundwork for a digitally transformed future. It is piloting several innovative, participatory mechanisms such as two-way communication with citizens, mobile committee sessions and e-draft law consultations to bring the National Assembly closer to its constituents. This has allowed the

National Assembly to remain open and functioning during COVID-19 restrictions. UNDP also facilitated an open dialogue on the socio economic impact of the pandemic and piloted some of the first post-legislative scrutiny of laws imposing emergency restrictions on the population. The project works closely with civil society in Armenia and one such joint activities is the Civil Society and the National Assembly platform (CSO-NA Platform) offering safe spaces for dialogue and cooperation between all three branches of power and civil society and for mainstreaming gender equality throughout the country's law-making processes. Several partnerships forged by this platform contributed to gender mainstreaming in the legislative, budgeting, and oversight processes; commitments for championing equality principles among the MPs; and the introduction of sensitive practices and instruments in the National Assembly. UNDP also assisted the National Assembly in the establishment of a research and training centre to provide research and analysis capacity for the Assembly and Members of Parliament and to enhance and strengthen law- and policy-making.



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IMPACT >>

The Modern Parliament for a Modern Armenia initiative is already showing significant impact. It has contributed to fostering a culture of openness by spearheading dialogue between civil society organizations and MPs. It has set in motion processes that have led to legislative amendments to a number of key laws including amendments to the Labour Law, laws on Local Self-Government, criminal and civil codes, rights of persons with disabilities and the introduction of paternity leave (adopted). In May 2020, the civil society cooperation digital platform established by the project had a virtual discussion devoted to domestic violence issues in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the participants (MPs, Ombudsman, civil society representatives, experts and international organizations) presented recommendations for rapid response and effective preventative mechanisms. This was the first virtual meeting conducted through this platform involving representatives from the parliament, civil society, human rights defenders office and other stakeholders. The meeting resulted in several follow up discussions with the respective ministries to identify possible means of support, with ongoing consultations focused on the collections of testimonies and analysis.

² Learn more about the initiative in the following links here: <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2019/modern-parliament-for-a-modern-armenia.html>
<https://gpgovernance.net/a-modern-parliament-for-a-modern-armenia-global-partners-governance-work-with-the-national-assembly-of-armenia/>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y9g_99CQTk

Accelerating an inclusive digital transformation in Moldova

Governance Challenge

The Republic of Moldova boasts a strong foundation for a fast and impactful digital transformation, including a good eGov platform, a vibrant and agile ICT sector (contributing 7 percent to the country's GDP) and 98 percent internet coverage. For all of this digital strength, however, like much of the rest of the world, Moldova was not able to pivot quickly enough to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The education of more than 150,000 pre-school children was put on hold due to a lack of equipment and online teaching capacity. Businesses, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), were damaged financially when they were unable to work with their customers and partners in the traditional ways. Healthcare systems struggled, affecting those with the virus, those with "everyday" health concerns, and the professionals who cared for them.

UNDP's Role

In 2019, the country engaged UNDP to support the development of a national vision and strategy for the digital transformation of Moldovan society through 2030. To this end, UNDP launched the Digital Readiness Assessment (DRA) to identify the main gaps in, and opportunities for, the digital transformation of the country. To strengthen the digitalization of public services, UNDP is facilitating the participation of private sector and local pioneers through the launch of several Innovation Challenge Funds for solutions in health, education and mobility designed to address the complex challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. UNDP is also supporting Moldova to build a network of change agents to test portfolio approaches in addressing digital literacy both in the private and public sectors and which leaves no-one behind. The main purpose of the network is to increase the usability rate of existing digital solutions and raise the demand from citizens (especially those in the remote regions) for new digital solutions. Vulnerable groups, especially women and older people, are targeted by the project. This network is seen as the future national digital platform – as a forum for discussion, raising awareness, agreeing on actions, etc., that will be run together with national partners such as the eGov Agency, and other institutions. UNDP is also facilitating digital collaborative data platforms for evidence-based policy making that build on established data collaborations with the European Space Agency and the private sector.

Acceleration of Digital Transformation of Moldova (2019-2022)³

Partners: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

Project information:
<https://open.undp.org/projects/00126635>

UNDP Moldova:
<https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home.html>



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The impact of UNDP's work thus far shows promise. The Government is considering the establishment of a new institutional framework for accelerating digital transformation by nominating a Deputy Prime Minister on Digital Transformation; expanding UNDP's role to include the development of a new 'whole-of-society' inclusive approach for digital transformation; and the exploration of innovations and opportunities for engaging citizens, the private sector, academia and other development partners to further build the digital public offer, private solutions and digital literacy. As UNDP launches the first Digital Innovation Challenges, its goal is to create an appetite for local private sector companies to innovate digital solutions for old and new challenges in health, education, etc. This new avenue for engaging the private sector, while also investing resources in digital skills, should pave the way for greater uptake and acceptance of digital solutions.



³ Learn more about the initiative in the following links here: https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/_tekwill-in-fiecare-coal.html; <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/platforma-studii-md-creat-cu-sprijinul-pnud-ofer-toate-instrum.html>; <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/in-toiul-pandemiei-de-covid-republica-moldova-avanseaz-pe-calea.html>

Bringing government closer to the people in Albania

Sustaining and Advancing Local Governance Reform STAR3 (2021 – 2023)⁴

Partners: European Commission, Sweden, Switzerland, Albania

Project information:
<https://open.undp.org/projects/00118883>

UNDP Albania:
<https://www.al.undp.org/>

Governance Challenge

Decentralisation and local governance are important priorities in Albania's reform agenda as a result of the reorganization of its municipalities in 2014 (known as Star 1) followed by a Decentralisation and Local Government Strategy in 2015 (Star 2). These priorities are focused on the devolution of functions and competencies to the local level and the regulation of some important aspects of governance such as the institutionalization of central-local dialogue, transparency, information, and consultation. As it segues into the Star 3 phase, Albania is working to consolidate and expand its past achievements, which remain fragile and will require more time to mature and become part of the country's work culture and collective ethos.

UNDP's Role

UNDP Albania's work on the Star reforms dates back to their launch in 2014. With Star 3, UNDP's focus is to improve the capacities of Albania's central institutions for more effective decentralisation and local governance policymaking and monitoring; to both expand and sustain local service delivery innovation and best practices; and to strengthen local government accountability to its citizens for enhanced participatory governance. With its partners, it is working to ensure the country's municipal

systems and standards are enhanced, expanded, and consolidated for improved service delivery and overall municipal performance, by equipping 1/3 of all municipalities with tailored and functional integrity plans. It is also expanding and consolidating the country's One Stop Shop (OSS) information system to more than 240 administrative units in 50+ local governments to ensure transparency, efficiency and reduced bureaucracy, corruption and bribery in all their forms. The project also seeks to make the OSS approach integral to service delivery, ensuring that it is aligned with national systems and that both people and governments are equipped to use it.



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The One Stop Shop system was introduced to the first municipalities in late 2018. By mid-2020, the system was operational in 48 out of 50 targeted municipalities. UNDP's assistance resumed in July 2021 with the aim to consolidate usage of the system where it was operational and expand it to about 240 municipal administrative units in 2021-2022. The ultimate goal is to make it an exclusive form for municipal administrative service delivery. To date, participating municipalities have processed more than 30,000 services for the citizens and businesses with an average of 50 services per municipality per month. The system is still only partly used but is expected to stabilize and then to at least triple by the end of 2022.

⁴Learn more about the initiative in the following links here: <https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/presscenter/articles/2018/helping-albanian-municipalities-boost-service-delivery-to-citize.html>

<https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/projects/star-3-consolidation-of-the-territorial-and-administrative-ref.html>

Supporting a more inclusive constitutional process in Chile

Governance Challenge

The COVID-19 pandemic found Chile immersed in an intense debate about the institutional foundations upon which its transition to democracy and consolidation were based. Political leaders and the Government responded to the political crisis by proposing a series of policy reforms, and by outlining a process to potentially replace the Constitution, including a referendum (which took place in October 2020) and a process for developing a new model, including adjustments to the electoral process to accommodate pandemic mobility restrictions. The opportunity to redraft the constitution offers an unprecedented opportunity to promote gender equality. This opportunity also extends to Indigenous peoples, who have been traditionally absent from representative institutions and positions of power in Chile. The current constitution does not recognize the rights of the country's indigenous peoples, who comprise 9% of the population.

UNDP's Role

UNDP has been supporting the constitution-making process since its early stages. Elections are key to ensuring legitimacy to the constitutional process. To secure this, UNDP launched a strategy to promote participation and to make the electoral process more inclusive, partnering with the electoral service and civil society organizations to boost participation in the October 2020 plebiscite and May 2021 elections, which were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Inclusion in the process is also critical to meet people's expectations regarding the process and UNDP has worked along with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Women to ensure full political participation on the part of the country's indigenous people and women.

During a two-month period, UNDP Chile's strategy to encourage electoral participation, promote measures to prevent the spread of the virus during elections, and to engage indigenous peoples, reached an audience of more than 5 million people through radio and social media advertising. As a result, UNDP was invited to brief the congressional commission which ultimately decided, based on technical assessments and advice provided, to postpone the April 2020 elections due to the pandemic. In addition, UNDP's work promoting a discussion on indigenous peoples' rights in the constitutional process has opened the possibility to directly collaborate with members of the Constitutional Convention to support participation and consultation with indigenous peoples throughout the drafting process. These and other improvements have paved the way for further contributions to the process and direct work with the recently elected Constitutional Convention and its members in the ongoing drafting stage.

Supporting the Constitutional Process in Chile (2020-2021)

Partners: UNDPA, OHCHR, UNW, the Electoral Service (SERVEL)

Project information:
<https://open.undp.org/projects/00133490>

UNDP Chile:
<https://www.cl.undp.org/>



Preventing corruption in Mexico

Rendición de cuentas,
participación ciudadana y
prevención de la corrupción
para el desarrollo sostenible
(2009 - 2022)

Partners: USAID

Project information:

[https://open.undp.org/projects/
00115120](https://open.undp.org/projects/00115120)

UNDP Mexico:

<https://www.mx.undp.org>

Governance Challenge

Despite efforts towards reform, political corruption has been an endemic problem for Mexico for many decades. This pervasive corruption poses threats to the country's political stability, business environment, private investment and development. In an effort to turn the tide, the Government presented its National Development Plan to Congress in April 2019 which included efforts to strengthen citizen involvement, accountability, and oversight as well as strategies to counter the causes and effects of corruption.

UNDP's Role



UNDP Mexico is providing support to Mexico's National Development Plan at the national and subnational level through a series of scalable initiatives designed to reduce the risks of corruption thereby increasing citizen trust in the country's public institutions. To strengthen citizen accountability, UNDP supported a series of dialogues between government agencies, academia and civil society organizations, backed up by mechanisms

to improve institutional responsiveness and citizen participation. Civil society organizations were also engaged to help design and implement the National Anti-corruption Policy, the normative instrument that outlines the anti-corruption efforts of the Mexican Government. UNDP developed a virtual platform to provide training programmes for public servants on the principles, values and rules of integrity and ethics. Technical tools and methodologies were developed to identify, measure and reduce the risks of corruption in public policies, linking federal and subnational government entities to carry out audit functions. Finally, tools have been developed to train Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) on the design and implementation of business codes of conduct and to identify and mitigate corruption risks.

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Advances have been made in the programme's key initiatives. Citizen oversight mechanisms have been piloted in five federal states, offering Mexicans administrative control and citizen participation previously unknown in the country. The Corruption Risks Assessment, developed with the support of civil society organizations, helps the public institutions in charge of implementing the programme to identify potential risks of corruption and propose preventive and corrective measures to mitigate them, thus generating a tangible impact on the Public Management. UNDP's "Ethics and integrity in public service" course was successfully completed by 413 public servants. A virtual platform was installed in the Ministry of Public Function, and 3,022 public servants have now completed the course. This effort was mentioned in the Second Government Report of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Corporate integrity trainings have helped SMEs to comply with Article 25 of the General Law of Administrative Responsibilities. Likewise, the programme has contributed to compliance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which establishes that countries must take measures to prevent corruption in the private sector, as well as provide for the corresponding sanctions in case of non-compliance.

Promoting a Culture of Peace for the Bolivian Elections

Governance Challenge

Bolivia's general elections of October 2019 were followed by widespread and violent protests due to issues of transparency and legitimacy. With the following general elections scheduled for October 2020, it was essential to address citizens' ongoing concerns by strengthening the credibility of the country's Electoral Management Body (EMB) and to establish mechanisms for preventing the potential for renewed violence.

UNDP's Role

To restore the credibility of the EMB and instill confidence in the country's electoral process, UNDP deployed electoral experts, combining international and national staff to ensure a complementarity between the international experience and UN neutrality with the knowledge and understanding of local contexts. The experts provided technical advice and training related to all phases of the electoral process on voter results management, data security, voter registration, and operational and logistical planning. EMB equipment and offices damaged during the 2019 unrest were replaced or repaired. UNDP supported a series of dialogues with various electoral stakeholders, such as political parties, political candidates, civil society and academia, to promote more transparent communication and information sharing by the electoral stakeholders with the general public. Of these, several dialogues focused specifically on improving women's participation.

Considering the challenges of attribution, UNDP's contribution to the peaceful outcome of the 2020 (general) and the 2021 local elections, stakeholders confirmed that the project made a critical contribution to the credibility of the electoral institutions and process. A series of lessons learnt and evaluation exercises with various stakeholders concluded that the project was essential to complement the work of the local electoral institutions with additional expertise in specific areas, to provide the solution for the acquisition of modern equipment (mainly informatic), to support the realization of communication events, as well as dialogues targeting specific populations such as indigenous communities. Above all, the project brought to bear UN neutrality and impartiality which led to increasing the credibility of the electoral process.



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Culture of peace and strengthening of the Electoral Body (2019-2021)

Partners: UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Canada, UN Peacebuilding Fund, EU, Embassy of Sweden, Corte Nacional Electoral, Department of Foreign Affairs and Development, AISEC

Project information:
<https://open.undp.org/projects/00124004>

UNDP Bolivia:
<https://www.bo.undp.org/>

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