Human rights and development: Human rights are a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Human rights are central to UNDP support to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals as well as other commitments agreed by Member States. Over 90 percent of SDG targets overlap with human rights obligations in the normative framework, and Agenda 2030 envisions a world ‘of universal respect for human rights and human dignity’ where using a human rights-based approach no one is left behind in development progress. Addressing the root causes of human rights violations, especially in crisis and fragile contexts, is a vital investment to promote peace, justice and inclusive institutions and governance approaches throughout the spectrum of UNDP development assistance.

What we do

- Strengthen human rights systems and institutions to protect and promote human rights for all, especially vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- Support the expansion of robust civic space.
- Promote respect for human rights in the digital realm and safeguarding human rights in digital approaches.
- Support human rights and SDG systems integration including the follow-up to human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.
- Support efforts to secure the right to a clean, healthy and safe environment for current and future generations.
- Facilitate human rights mainstreaming across policies and programmes to achieve better development results.
- Conduct human rights due diligence to ensure compliance with international human rights standards.
- Support member states and businesses to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- Providing support to application of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy particularly in crisis settings which enables UNDP to actively manage and monitor risks.

Challenges we face

- Widespread impunity and lack of accountability for human rights violations.
- Increasing inequality, discrimination and systemic barriers and power imbalances that particularly affect women, girls, persons with disabilities and minorities.
- Shrinking space for civic engagement and rising trends of reprisals, acts of intimidation and retaliation against human rights defenders.
- Acceleration of digital service delivery which needs to robustly safeguard human rights.
- Climate change impacts recognized as the “greatest challenge to human rights of our era”.
- Human rights violations during rapid onset of crisis and conflict.
Our policy framework

- UNDP's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 which recommits UNDP to a human rights-based approach
- The Sustainable Development Goals
- Secretary-General’s Call to Action for Human Rights
- Our Common Agenda
- The UN Human Rights-Based Approach
- The UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy
- UNSDG Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism
- Engagement with Human Rights Council, Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, Universal Periodic Review process

Our partnerships

- Tri-Partite Partnership to Support National Human Rights Institutions (TPP) includes UNDP, the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), and aims to: provide a platform of collaboration for the UN system to build the capacities of NHRI and their regional networks; increase efficiency and effectiveness of support for NHRI.
- Human Rights-SDG systems integration partnership with OHCHR and the UN Development Cooperation Office (DCO) aims to support coordinated action to integrate human rights and SDG systems at country level, recognizing UNDP’s convening role. Supporting strategic engagement with human rights mechanisms and providing technical support on collaborative platforms for data collection, reporting, and planning to achieve the SDGs.
- Inter-agency collaboration on UN system-wide strategies including the UN SG’s Call to Action (C2A) for Human Rights. UNDP is co-leading various C2A workstreams and participating in its priority workstreams including on putting rights at the heart of sustainable development, the rights of future generations, new frontiers of human rights, gender equality and equal rights for women, rights in times of crisis, and public participation and civic space.

Country and regional examples

- UNDP, OHCHR and DCO established a repository with of 18 good practices from over 60 submitted across the UN system that show how the UPR process and recommendations advance the promotion and protection of human rights and are increasingly integrated and aligned in UN efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.
- The TPP in collaboration with the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) conducted a rapid regional needs assessment of NHRI in the context of COVID-19, and supported the development of six new tools to enable implementation of the Marrakech Declaration on the protection of human rights defenders and civic space with direct assistance to NHRI in Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

“UNDP is supporting countries to fulfill their human rights obligations – not only because it is the right thing to do but also because it is fundamental to achieving the SDGs.” Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator, Statement on Human Rights Day 2021

About the Global Programme

The Global Programme uniquely combines rule of law, justice, security, and human rights within an overarching umbrella framework, focused on preventing and responding to crisis, conflict and fragility through quality programming, knowledge brokerage and thought leadership, and policy support. The Global Programme’s Phase IV commenced in 2022 and is guided by and aligned to the UNDP Strategic Plan for 2022-2025. The programme promotes people-centred and human rights-based approaches to addressing the drivers and symptoms of inequality, exclusion, injustice and insecurity, and accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To learn more:

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