

United Nations Development Programme



Area-Based Development Practice Note



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Executive Summary

This Practice Note provides an **overview of UNDP's area-based development (ABD)** programming and interventions, tailored for practitioners, policy advisors, and development partners engaged in designing and implementing localized strategies. It highlights the importance of ABD in addressing the distinct challenges of specific geographic areas, particularly in complex, crisis and post-crisis contexts. By prioritizing local ownership, inclusive participation, and flexibility, ABD provides an approach that bridges gaps in service delivery, strengthens resilience, and lays the foundation for long-term development.

ABD programming is **rooted in principles that emphasize adaptability and context sensitivity**, ensuring that interventions are responsive to the unique needs and opportunities of target areas in an integrated manner. The Practice Note underscores the importance of conducting a thorough context analysis to understand the socio-economic and political dynamics at play. This foundational step, combined with local ownership, informs the strategic design of interventions, ensuring that they are both relevant and effective. Clearly defining the geographical scope is also essential, as it enables focused efforts and the efficient allocation of resources.

A key aspect of operationalizing ABD is the **participatory planning process**, which actively involves local communities in shaping the interventions. This approach not only enhances the relevance of the interventions but also strengthens local ownership, ensuring that no one is left behind, which is vital for the sustainability of programme

outcomes. The document also emphasizes the need for ABD strategies to be adaptable, allowing for real-time adjustments based on evolving conditions and feedback.

Securing an effective multilevel coordination framework (regional, national and international) is conducive to fostering sustainable funding, another key component of successful ABD interventions. The Practice Note **outlines strategies for diversified and long-term financing**, highlighting the importance of aligning funding with identified priorities and maintaining financial flexibility to respond to changing needs. Effective internal management structures are also emphasized as essential for coordinating activities, ensuring accountability, and preserving the integrity of the intervention process.

Partnerships and coordination are identified as key factors in enhancing the impact and sustainability of ABD initiatives. The Practice Note advocates for **building strong partnerships with local governments, civil society, and the private sector**, which can significantly extend the reach and effectiveness of ABD efforts. Coordination among various stakeholders is also essential to ensure that interventions are implemented seamlessly and that efforts are aligned with broader development goals.

Monitoring is another critical component, enabling the continuous assessment of progress and the identification of areas needing adjustment. A well-defined **communication strategy** is equally important, as it ensures that all stakeholders are informed, engaged, and supportive of the

ABD initiatives. **Transparency** and clear communication are vital for building trust and securing the necessary buy-in from local communities and partners.

Ultimately, the Practice Note emphasizes that the long-term sustainability of ABD interventions is the primary goal. **Strategies to ensure sustainability focus on capacity strengthening, fostering**

local ownership, and sustained partnership, in support of the overall development process, allowing the benefits of the interventions to endure well beyond the lifespan of individual projects. By embedding these principles into the design and implementation of ABD strategies, development practitioners can create lasting positive impacts in the communities they serve.

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Acronyms

ABADEI	Area-Based Approach for Development Emergency Initiatives
ABD	Area-based development
CBC	Cross-border cooperation
CBO	Community-based organisation
CO	Country Office
CSO	Civil society organisation
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic information system
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
IDP	Internally displaced person
IDAF	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International financial institution
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JMDI	Joint Migration and Development Initiative
LAG	Local Action Group
LEDA	Local Economic Development Agency
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual
M4ED	Mayors for Economic Growth

M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PADIT	Articulated Platforms for Integrated Territorial Development
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PwD	Persons with disabilities
ReDSS	Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

Introduction

1

1.1. Purpose and Audience of the Practice Note

This Practice Note underscores the growing significance of the area-based development (ABD) approach¹ and provides a concise guide for UNDP practitioners in Country Offices and Regional Hubs, as well as stakeholders involved in or interested in implementing ABD.

It focuses primarily on crisis and fragile contexts, reflecting the evolving global landscape marked by multiple, interconnected crises.² The Note presents a way of working fully aligned with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus and is designed to facilitate its operationalization at the local level.

As a reference, the Note complements other key resources, such as the recent policy brief on area-based programming,³ emerging approaches to adaptive management,⁴ and the portfolio approach.⁵ It offers a step-by-step guide, covering the establishment, implementation, monitoring, and sustainability of the ABD process,⁶ with practical insights into its application.

The drafting process involved a thorough review of existing articles, evaluations, and reviews related to ABD, alongside consultations with

representatives from 21 Country Offices across all regions and experts in the field.

UNDP brings extensive experience and capabilities to support development partners in designing and implementing ABD solutions through:

- A widespread global presence, including offices and personnel in remote regions beyond capital cities;
- A commitment to evidence-based approaches that drive transformative change in governance, rule of law, inclusive institutions, and shared prosperity; and
- Its integrator role, actively bringing together diverse stakeholders to address common challenges.

- 1 Based on the broad consultation conducted with numerous UNDP Country Offices across regions, as well as insights gathered from observing the relevance across UNDP's corporate websites.
- 2 <https://www.un.org/en/desa/un-secretary-general-calls-radical-transformation-global-financial-system-tackle-pressing>
- 3 Fit for Purpose? Area-Based Programming in Contemporary Crisis and Development Response, Development Futures Policy Brief
- 4 <https://undp.sharepoint.com/teams/adaptivemanagement?CT=1691419838980&OR=OWA-NT&CID=5b8f3d5c-2cf9-6b9d-2d2a-9fa0473b15d4&WSL=1>
- 5 <https://innovation.eurasia.undp.org/portfolio-development/>
- 6 Distinguishing the ABD process from "Humanitarian Area-Based Coordination," which primarily focuses on coordinating humanitarian assistance within a specific area across one or more agencies, without involving local authorities or local actors in a leading role or ensuring local ownership.

1.2. Current Context



Crises are becoming increasingly protracted and cyclical. Crises, so often rooted in multidimensional development deficits, are ultimately development emergencies requiring integrated development solutions. Life-saving humanitarian assistance, and external peace interventions, while incontestably necessary, are insufficient to address the structural and underlying causes of this complexity. The nature of uncertainty and the magnitude of complexity does not lend itself to traditional forms of crisis response and recovery processes. Moving from crisis to crisis without addressing root development causes cannot meet the scale of crisis in the world today, or the challenges of what UNDP's 2021/22 Human Development Report calls a new global 'uncertainty complex'.⁷

Under the overarching 2030 Agenda, frameworks like the HDP nexus and efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local level are prompting organizations to reevaluate their approaches and adapt their operations to better address emerging needs at the country and local levels.

ABD provides a geographic framework for integrated programming, enhancing efficiency and impact in supporting engagement in crisis, recovery and local development processes.

Area-based development is not a new concept.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) first embraced this approach in the late 1980s in Central America.⁸ Subsequently, ABD was widely applied throughout the 1990s, often in post-conflict contexts. UNDP expanded its use in the early 2000s along with the EU's increased focus on regional development cooperation in its neighbourhood region and beyond. The approach further gained ground as UNDP implemented ABD in crisis settings in countries like Afghanistan and Somalia.

Conflict is a fundamental driver of poverty, and when coupled with the impacts of climate change, violent extremism, and inequality, it places immense pressure on humanitarian efforts. The HDP nexus serves as a comprehensive framework to address this challenge, with UNDP playing a central role as an integrator. ABD provides an integrated approach for implementing the HDP nexus at the local level.

UNDP's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan envisions six signature solutions (poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy, gender equality) in response to the increasing complexity of crisis, post-crisis, and development settings. Additionally, there is a compelling case for shifting programmatic approaches from individual projects to a portfolio approach that leverages partnerships, resources, and knowledge to accelerate progress toward the SDGs. This approach is also in line with UNDP's integrated local action approach.

UNDP's Crisis Offer, grounded in the Strategic Plan, defines new development solutions for addressing crisis and fragility through three approaches: Transform Protracted and Fragile Contexts, Anticipate and Prevent Crisis, and Sustain Development Throughout Crisis. These solutions are tailored to the specific context, whether at the regional, national, or subnational level, and often overlap within the same locales, making them complementary rather than mutually exclusive. UNDP Country Offices adopt various approaches based on the context, including stabilization, area-based development, governance-based engagements, and resilience programming – often integrating multiple interventions. Given its flexibility and contextual adaptability, ABD stands out as a strategic choice in crisis, post-crisis, and development settings because it:

- Facilitates the localization of the SDGs;
- Promotes the transition from a project-based to a portfolio-based approach;

7 UNDP's Crisis Offer, <https://www.undp.org/crisis/publications/undps-crisis-offer>

8 The PRODERE (Development Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees in Central America) started in 1989 in six Central American countries strongly impacted by decades of violence and civil wars. It operated in war-affected areas, primarily focusing on human rights, reintegration of returnees, participatory development planning, restoring basic services and reactivating the local economy using a decentralised, integrated, and bottom-up approach.

- Provides an integrated and holistic approach to implementing UNDP Strategic Plan's signature solutions at the local level;
 - Incorporates the HDP nexus at the local level by design and operationalization;
 - Emphasizes local actors' ownership, activates UNDP's integrator role, fosters cooperation, and builds partnerships with other stakeholders;
 - Brings local solutions to complex human mobility contexts – often a significant dimension in crises and fragile settings – by involving local communities regardless of their status (internally displaced persons [IDPs], refugees, returnees, host communities) in (re)integration dynamics; and
- Creates an enabling environment for the inclusion of marginalized and disadvantaged groups (e.g., women, youth, elders, migrants, IDPs, refugees, ethnic, LGBTQI+) in decision-making processes.

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Rationale for Area-Based Development Programming

2

If you aim to:

- ◆ Address development challenges or crises in a specific area or region through a well-informed and structured approach;
 - ◆ Stay engaged in crisis situations;
 - ◆ Implement a multi-level strategy that bridges the gap between central and regional/local entities;
 - ◆ Empower local actors and embrace a participatory and inclusive approach;
 - ◆ Apply inclusive local governance and support decentralization;
 - ◆ Focus on inclusive service delivery, infrastructure and local economic development;
 - ◆ Promote development solutions to human mobility, where relevant;⁹
 - ◆ Promote local peacebuilding, social cohesion, and inclusive service delivery, where relevant;
- ◆ Ensure the inclusion of all community members, especially disadvantaged and marginalized groups, leaving no one behind, and empower women, youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities (PwD), IDPs, etc.
 - ◆ Embrace flexibility with built-in feedback mechanisms, allowing for course corrections and the ability to seize emerging opportunities;
 - ◆ Adopt a holistic approach, moving away from isolated, fragmented projects toward a comprehensive, area-based, multi-sectoral process using portfolio-type methods within the target area or region;
 - ◆ Optimize resources and reduce transaction costs through coordination and joint initiatives (including within the County Office);
 - ◆ Operationalize the HDP nexus (inter-agency) in a practical way;

Then, area-based development is the optimal choice.

2.1. Principles of Area-Based Development

The area-based approach intervenes in multiple sectors, (i.e. economic, social, political, etc.), and seeks to mobilise as many stakeholders as possible at different levels:

- At the local level, to engage with the development context impacting people's daily lives,
- At the policy level of the area and
- At national level.

9 JMDI Toolbox on Migration and Local Development, UNDP-IOM 2015

For it to be successful, it must be comprehensive, inclusive, participatory, context-sensitive, bottom-up and, above-all, flexible.¹⁰ It requires adequate room for informed dialogue, analysis and planning among concerned local and external actors in the targeted area.

The rationale for following ABD principles is to achieve the following objectives:

- Address the area's key recovery/development challenges, as jointly identified by local actors and the population;
- Address the needs of the most disadvantaged, ensuring that no one is left behind;
- Operate efficiently through enhanced coordination; and
- Ensure long-term sustainability.

Area-Based

ABD relies on evidence-based analysis to identify specific development challenges within a geographic area. It employs a holistic approach to tackle the challenges identified in the area comprehensively.

Integrated

ABD encourages co-creation and fosters collaboration and joined-up or joint programming among national and international institutions, within and across sectors, in the broader developmental, peace, and humanitarian system. Effective integration necessitates active engagement and coordination among multiple stakeholders. Merely defining an area and working within its boundaries is insufficient. Proactive measures, both within UNDP and externally, are required to ensure that assessments, programming, and implementation within the area are genuinely multi-sectoral and involve relevant stakeholders.

Within UNDP, efforts focus on promoting collaboration and coordination among different teams and units within the Country Office operating in

a specific geographic area. Regular communication, information sharing, and enabling locally developed initiatives strengthen joint planning and alignment.

External collaboration and integration with other HDP actors such as government entities (central and local), local CSOs, the private sector, United Nations (UN) agencies, international financial institutions (IFIs) is vital. Working together minimizes duplication, gaps/underserved needs and cost while leveraging expertise. By actively involving multiple stakeholders and adopting a coordinated approach, ABD successfully integrates programming efforts within UNDP and the broader developmental and humanitarian landscape, facilitating area recovery and development processes.

Inclusion and Participation

ABD embraces local ownership by involving all relevant actors at the local level in the assessment, design, implementation and monitoring (and evaluation) of interventions. ABD programmes are inclusive, promote gender equality,¹¹ consider environmental factors, incorporate local context, ensure conflict sensitivity, and encourage active participation.

In collaboration with development partners, ABD programmes advocate for the equal rights of women and underrepresented groups, combat discriminatory legislation and practices, challenge gender norms and stereotypes, and seek to end violence against women and girls.

By aligning local planning with national policies and priorities, ABD ensures its relevance and inclusivity within the country's broader context. In this way, ABD processes benefit from national development and recovery programs while contributing to national policymaking through the sharing of best practices and lessons learned. Priorities identified in both local and national plans should be demand-driven and locally led to ensure sustainability.

Through a co-creation approach that balances local participation with national alignment, ABD effectively addresses local needs, considers conflict

¹⁰ A Practitioner's Guide to Area-Based Development Programming. UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2006

¹¹ UNDP Gender and Recovery Toolkit, 2020

dynamics, and contributes to the overall development and policy priorities of the targeted area.

Adaptive

ABD is characterized by flexibility and adaptability. It acknowledges fluidity and complexity of global trends in both development and crisis contexts, and the need for program adjustments based on the non-linear nature of development and recovery processes, particularly at the local level. ABD promotes continuous learning and feedback loops to collect updated data and information for improving current and informing future

programming. Its flexibility allows for absorbing and integrating new initiatives into the ABD process, be them foreign or local investment opportunities or communities' innovative ideas.

ABD embraces a mindset of ongoing improvement, allowing for adjustments and learning from past and ongoing experiences. This ensures that programming efforts can respond effectively to evolving circumstances and better meet the needs of target communities. By continuously gathering feedback and applying lessons learned, ABD facilitates more effective decision-making and improved outcomes in future programming.

2.2. Steps for Area-Based Development

For ABD to be successful, it must be comprehensive, inclusive, participatory, context-sensitive, bottom-up, and, above all, flexible. The following steps are key to ensuring its effectiveness.

1. Clear delineation of the geographical scope or target area is crucial, as it enables focused efforts and efficient resource allocation.
2. Thorough context analysis to understand the socio-economic and political dynamics at play.
3. Build strong partnerships with local governments, civil society, and the private sector and identify champions and spoilers
4. Set up participatory planning processes, which actively involve local communities in shaping the interventions. This planning and data collection need to be adaptable allowing for real-time adjustments based on evolving conditions and feedback.
5. Set up effective internal management structures to coordinate activities, ensure accountability, and maintain the integrity of the intervention process.
6. Secure a proper multilevel coordination framework (regional, national and international) to foster sustainable funding, another critical component of successful ABD interventions.
7. Based on the data collection system, set up a monitoring system, enabling the continuous assessment of progress and the identification of areas needing adjustment.
8. Develop a well-defined communication strategy, as it ensures that all stakeholders are informed, engaged, and supportive of the ABD initiatives. Transparency and clear communication are vital for building trust and securing the necessary buy-in from local communities and partners.

Operationalizing Area-Based Development

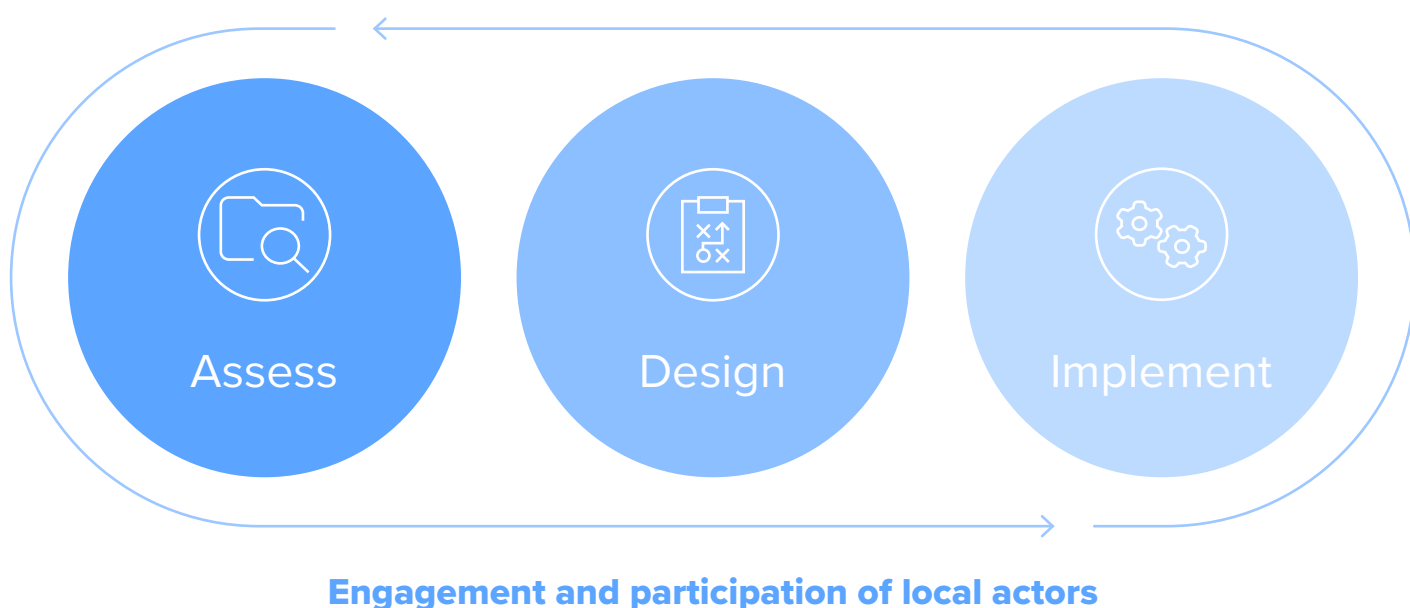
3

3.1. Design and Set Up

At this stage, the primary focus is on data collection and assessment. This phase is crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the context, selecting the work area, identifying implementation needs, and mapping relevant actors and institutions.

Another critical factor to be managed with flexibility is time. While an ABD cycle ideally lasts around 18 months, specific conditions such as donor constraints and crisis contexts may require different timelines.

It is essential to conduct the assessment phase through a multidimensional risk lens, including a conflict-sensitive perspective, where relevant. This approach fosters dialogue and collaboration among local stakeholders, helping to identify risks,¹² challenges, needs, dividers, connectors and available resources. The goal is to prioritize and propose solutions that can be implemented in a coordinated and integrated manner.



¹² UNDP's approach to risk-informed development



Context Analysis

To design an effective area-based program, a deep understanding of the social, economic, political, and environmental context of the target area is necessary. This understanding should encompass specific needs, challenges, opportunities, as well as local power dynamics and root causes of marginalization and inequalities. Initially, rely on existing information sources, which can include official central or subnational-level data. However, additional data may need to be collected through surveys, focus groups, or interviews with key stakeholders. The following sources are valuable:

- ◆ **National-level data:** Gather relevant data from national-level sources to provide a broader context for the area. This may include data from line ministries, central bureaus of statistics, academia, think tanks, UN agencies, or other international organizations.



Local Actors' Engagement and Participation

As a strategic component of any UNDP ABD process, **participation, supported by capacity building, is essential throughout the different phases**, summarized as follows:

- 1. Design and set up phase (initial macro-assessment carried out by UNDP ABD Team):** Local voices, key informants, and focus groups with concerned actors will be carried out to cross-check the validity of data gathered from the central level and other official sources, and to confirm macro challenges identified therein. Local perspectives and knowledge will then contribute to shaping the overall approach and main focus areas. In this case, participation is informal (dialogues and focus groups) and mainly reacting to UNDP stimuli (responding to questions and issues posed by UNDP); it substantiates with "local" inputs the initial UNDP/govt analysis.
- 2. During participatory planning phase (Local Working Group/Platform active and in the lead, with UNDP facilitation):** Structured and inclusive dialogue and planning mechanism, analyzing risks and resources, and defining priorities for intervention, gathered and ranked in the local action (recovery/development) plan.
- 3. During implementation:** Monitoring by local stakeholders (social control) and feedback into the original plan to adjust it and record progress/delay/deviations, refine implementation modalities as well as specific and overall consistency with the local development plan. Stakeholders' engagement in monitoring complements and reinforces UNDP's M&E framework.

- ◆ **Local-level data:** Obtain reliable data from local sources to gain a more specific understanding of the area and its dynamics. Local representatives of ministries, public bodies, CSOs, research institutes, academia, and key individuals or groups can provide valuable insights.
- ◆ **Surveys, focus groups, and interviews:** Conduct surveys, hold inclusive focus group discussions, and conduct key informant interviews to gather firsthand information and insights from stakeholders directly involved in the area.
- ◆ **Gender-disaggregated data:** It is also important to collect sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics. Gender statistics can reflect diverse groups of women and men, considering factors such as age, education, family composition, parenthood, country of birth and disability. These statistics provide evidence for the development of policies, programmes, projects, and legislation that respond to the specific needs of women and men as beneficiaries of interventions in a given context.

Additionally, conducting a political economy analysis is crucial. This analysis involves mapping different power brokers and understanding how their involvement will impact or be impacted by the programme. It will naturally identify both champions and potential spoilers or rent-seekers and help assess the level of interest and influence of the key stakeholders in the area.

In conflict-affected contexts, a conflict analysis is required. This analysis should identify potential hazards and assess dividers and unintended negative consequences that may arise from focusing on the area, following a "Do No Harm" approach. While not mandatory in non-conflict scenarios, it is still a recommended exercise.

By considering and incorporating these analyses, an area-based programme can navigate the complex social, economic, political, and environmental dynamics of the area more effectively. This ensures that interventions are well-informed and designed to minimize harm while maximizing positive impact.

Checklist:

Designing an Area-Based Development Process

- **Team composition:** Decide on the inter-portfolio team composition for the design phase. Keep the team relatively small, with no more than five members. Include at least one colleague with experience on ABD, an operations expert and a Gender Focal Point or Gender Expert. Ensure representation from the region being targeted. The Country Office will determine the team leader, whether it is a senior programmatic expert or the Deputy Resident Representative.
- **Define parameters and gather information:** Define the key parameters of the targeted area and identify additional indicators to consider. Collect existing information, including available data on the area and reports from previous and ongoing UNDP programmes, as well as those from other UN agencies and external actors. Focus data collection and analysis on both challenges and development potentials, as well as local resources.
- **Stakeholder mapping:** Conduct a comprehensive stakeholder mapping/assessment exercise, encompassing national and local government institutions, development partners, CSOs, NGOs, communities, the private sector and others. Assess their capacities, level of interest, influence, and mandates. Examine existing and potential linkages with the central level and explore possibilities for strengthening these connections. As part of the initial assessment, identify population groups most at risk of being left behind in the area and any underrepresented groups that could be targeted.
- **Conflict analysis:** Conduct a conflict analysis to identify the main drivers of conflict and local tension dynamics, related connectors, and dividers within the area. Explore the relationship between the executive and representative bodies of local government and identify their impact on local decisions.
- **Demographic profile:** Determine whether the area is predominantly mono-ethnic or inhabited by various groups. If multiple groups exist, assess whether any one group dominates overall or if different groups dominate different spheres (e.g., commerce, politics). Examine predominant religions, languages, demographics, identities, and vulnerability patterns and distribution.
- **Local market understanding:** Gain insights into the local markets and their connections beyond the targeted area. Investigate people's livelihoods and services linked to them, such as local value chains, financial institutions and input supply.
- **Basic and social services assessment:** Assess the provision of basic and social services in the area. Identify gaps in terms of access, quality, coverage, and related challenges.
- **Infrastructure assessment:** Assess the availability and status of soft and hard infrastructure and identify the most pressing needs in the area.
- **Review ongoing interventions:** Review existing or planned interventions in the area and assess the level of coordination and cooperation among stakeholders. Analyse the activities of other actors, map their interventions, and identify opportunities for complementarity. For instance, in Mozambique, focusing on the provincial level was a strategic choice following the central government's decision to introduce elected governors in 2019. In Myanmar, where UNDP does not engage with the *de facto* central authorities, the focus is at the community level.

- **Access to justice and legal services assessment:** Assess the existing legal ecosystem from a human rights perspective, identify gaps, coverage, and related challenges.
- **Existence or impact of cross-border conflicts:** Assess, through a political economy analysis, whether there are unresolved cross-border issues or conflicts in the area, their impact on the community, local government decisions, and other factors.
- **Budgeting of the territory:** Identify the major sources of local government revenues and expenditures and determine whether there are significant differences from neighbouring areas.
- **Ecosystem assessment:** Identify the principal ecosystems in the area, including forests, watersheds, protected areas, marine reserves, etc. Explore their relationship with communities, including cultural aspects, economic impact, environmental services, livelihoods, natural hazards, and vulnerabilities.
- **Gender analysis:** Apply a gender analysis, considering the UNDP Gender Strategy 2022 - 2025 through 6 Signature Solutions (poverty and inequality; governance; resilience; environment; energy; and gender equality) and 3 Enablers: innovation, digital transformation, and financing. Examine systems and structures that generate gender inequalities in the target context, aligning programming with the goal of shifting these systems and empowering women.
- **Comprehensive risk assessment:** Map and analyse the risk landscape in the area, including by reviewing interlinkages and potential cascading impacts across different risks, sectors and levels, preferably using existing tools/methodologies based on scientific and local information.

Designing an ABD process can be intricate and may present challenges. Be attentive to unintended outcomes and mindful of potential tensions between neighbouring areas due to perceptions of inequalities or unfair coverage or treatment.



Defining the Geographical Area Scope

Where possible, the area of intervention should be consistent with the subnational political-administrative structure in place – regions, governorates, provinces, districts, municipalities, etc. – or, in certain cases, based on homogeneity criteria defined beyond administrative boundaries. In cross-border contexts, the area can coincide with subnational administrative boundaries as set in the concerned countries. In any case, define the geographical area while considering the information obtained during the context analysis phase. Utilize a detailed map of the area to identify its borders, ecosystems, natural resources, stakeholder locations, infrastructure, and connectivity. Incorporate multiple layers of available data to support your analysis in the root cause analysis and theory of change stages.

In some cases, a crucial factor may be the long-standing presence in the territory.

For example, Afghanistan’s situation post-regime change in 2021 prompted the UN to adopt a ‘stay and deliver’ approach. UNDP took this further by presenting development solutions and establishing a presence throughout the country through the Area-Based Approach for Development Emergency Initiatives (ABADEI) programme. This sustained presence played a pivotal role in influencing local authorities, engaging donors, and building partnerships with other actors. In a similar vein, the historic presence on the ground in countries such as Angola and Tunisia was one of the reasons for the selection of a target area.

When local-level data is unavailable, and decisions rely on local knowledge, negotiations with the central government (if accessible) and a data collection exercise become necessary. This process should include focus groups and interviews with key informants.



Examples of Defining the Geographical Area with Area-Based Programming

Liberia: Based on a national poverty dataset, seven of the poorest counties (out of a total of 15) were identified in the UNDP Country Programme Document. However, in practice, the Country Office faced challenges in targeting these areas due to factors such as government pressure and limited resources. Furthermore, identifying the specific districts and communities within those counties proved difficult.

Yemen: In a process called “Geo Bundling” and in partnership with the World Bank, districts were identified for targeted project interventions based on a significant data collection process. The aim was to focus on districts that demonstrated “developmental potential” within the context of a protracted crisis.

Syria: In partnership with UNHCR, UNDP developed a programme called Area-Based Return Support (ABRS), targeting seven governorates with significant voluntary returns of IDPs, high needs and potential tensions among returnees, IDPs, and host communities.

Leverage digital tools to confirm or challenge biases that may arise from the experience and knowledge of staff or local actors. This approach reduces the risk of perpetuating detrimental patterns and employs digital tools such as GIS and “social network” platforms.

In crisis contexts, the process of selecting the target area is typically more straightforward. It often revolves around identifying locations affected by disasters or those experiencing conflict-induced displacement. Crisis situations present opportunities to establish a presence in regions that are less likely to be contested by central government officials. A prime example of this is the ongoing project “Decentralization for Development” in Mozambique.¹³



Designing Your Portfolio

Once you have organized and interpreted the available data, you can initiate a root cause analysis to identify the primary challenge and develop a theory of change. Factors such as ethnicity, religion, age, gender, vulnerability, conflict dynamics, and the environment should be considered.

Data and evidence are fundamental in this phase. Investing time and resources in gathering data (including gender-segregated data) and analysis is a key long-term investment. In some cases, the necessary data may already be available, emphasizing the importance of tapping into the experience and knowledge of national staff and partners, as identified during the data collection phase.

Checklist:

Designing Your Portfolio

- **Set realistic and ambitious goals:** Consider the responses of various actors, including power brokers, in your stakeholder map. Focus on those who can either support or obstruct your proposed actions, regardless of their background (central or local government, traditional governance, de facto authorities, civil society, private sector, etc). Balance ambition with realism.
- **Embrace flexibility and negotiation:** Be prepared to negotiate while remaining flexible and realistic, without compromising the evident needs, challenges, or opportunities substantiated by data

¹³ UNDP had long intended to focus on Sofala Province, but this had not been a priority for the central government. However, after a cyclone hit in 2019, a needs-based targeting approach was agreed, which created an opportunity to work in the region.



Presence

Throughout the consultations with Country Offices, the importance of a local presence was continually highlighted in the context of area-based programming. At the same time, it was recognized that sub-offices are increasingly difficult to establish partly because of funding reasons but also due to the necessary approvals from government. In this context, Country Offices are developing new and innovative approaches of how to maintain a presence at the local level.

Algeria & Mozambique Country Offices adopted an approach of having staff embedded in local institutions. In the Mozambique example, this is coupled with a local office.

Colombia – Following a long history of engagement at the subnational level, much of it through an area-based approach and supported by sub-offices, the Colombia office has recently had to rethink this local presence. This has evolved into the current system where there is an individual at central level responsible for territorial coordination who reports to the DRR. Reporting to that person are 12 staff based throughout the country, each of whom have a liaison function. These individuals are employed by projects and 80% of their time is dedicated to the project. However, for the other 20% of their time they fulfil a liaison function, and this is reflected in their Terms of Reference. Dependent on the level of activity in the specific region, the Country Office have defined three models.

Model one represents an isolated project operating in the field. Model two focuses on establishing connections rather than strictly adhering to an area-based programming approach. Projects in this model may complement and feed into one another.

Model three involves conducting a territorial assessment and subsequently developing an area-based approach based on the findings.

Myanmar – In a context where there has been political turmoil and displacement coupled with historical regional disparities and differences, a presence at the subnational level is essential. The Country Office has therefore identified four strategic locations, one of which is Rakhine state, and committed to a minimal presence of a focal point and administrator in each one of those locations. Any further investment in this structure is contingent upon mobilizing resources.

- **Identify champions and spoilers:** Recognize potential champions and spoilers within the community and engage with both. Invest extra time and effort in understanding and addressing the concerns and motivations of potential spoilers and develop an engagement plan with key interest actors.
- **Engage central-level institutions, organizations, and individuals:** Even though area-based development primarily targets local areas, recognize the importance of engaging central-level institutions and individuals. Multi-level coordination is a crucial aspect of the intervention.
- **Define targeting broadly:** Not all activities need to occur physically within the target area. The key criterion is that they bring benefits to the local population. For instance, value chain programming can benefit local primary producers, even if processing occurs outside the region. Similar arguments apply to infrastructure investments and governance issues. However, most resources should be invested directly in the target area or region.
- **Mainstream gender:** Make sure the data is segregated by sex/gender. Although numbers are important, it is pertinent to also consider how gender relates to the content of policy measures, to gain a better understanding of how women and men, girls and boys, will benefit from them. A gender-responsive policy ensures that the needs of all citizens, women and men, are equally addressed. Both dimensions – gender representation and gender responsive content – need to be taken into consideration in all phases.
- **Apply the multidimensional risk assessment:** Ensure that the results of the analysis are adequately integrated into the portfolio design so that they drive interventions in the area.

→ **Adapt to evolving situations:** Start with a well-defined area but remain open to evolving circumstances. Be prepared to update and amend your approach as needed. Flexibility and pragmatism are key in responding to changing contexts. Opportunities may arise to expand the target area or broaden the scope of action based on successful interventions or negotiations with stakeholders. For example, successful programming via an area-based approach resulted in mainstreaming the full approach, or some of its tools and mechanisms into national policies, in contexts such as Algeria, Cuba and Mozambique.

→ **Design capacity strengthening activities** for colleagues in the Country Office, if needed, and local stakeholders, including local authorities.

→ **Avoid substitution of national and local capacities** through continuous capacity strengthening (on the job, trainings, workshops, etc.)

→ **Ensure financial, technical, and human resources** from the beginning to implement quick wins during the design phase and initiatives prioritized by local stakeholders to build trust.

→ **Note:** Ensure the quality of the data collection process

When conducting data collection, it is crucial to ensure the quality of the process. Here are **key considerations**:

→ **Validity:** Use standardized data collection procedures to ensure accuracy and reliability. Do not assume that the data collected is accurate; cross-reference it with other assessments and similar data sources.

→ **Transparency:** Make the data collection methodology transparent. Engage key stakeholders and local communities in discussions about the process, including assumptions, limitations, and data sources. If possible, engage communities in data collection, data analysis and dissemination. This allows stakeholders to assess the data's accuracy and credibility.

→ **Adequate coverage:** Tailor the data collection process to match the scope and nature of the planning exercise. Avoid overextending the scope beyond what is necessary. Also, be aware that lack of diversity negatively affects the reliability of data and undermines evidence-based policymaking.

→ **Gender:** Take into account the different needs, vulnerabilities, gender power dynamics, capacities, and perspectives of women and men in all aspects of data collection, including team selection, methodology, and analysis. Ensure gender sensitive formulation of the research questions, use inclusive definitions of concepts; avoid male bias, prejudices, and generalisations. Also, develop gender-sensitive methodology and tools.

→ **Coordination:** Maintain coordination throughout the data collection phase and the entire process.

→ **Sharing findings:** Share data and reports not only with local and national stakeholders but also ensure that the report's structure, style, and content are suitable for the audience. This helps the reader prioritize issues and take relevant actions within their areas of responsibility.

→ **Usability of data:** Ensure that data is disaggregated geographically to the level most useful for decision-makers. Cross-check population figures with multiple sources and disaggregate by sex and age. Compare this data with participant numbers.

- **Relevance:** Before collecting new data, review existing data sources and cross-check data against other available information. Ensure that the cost of data collection does not outweigh its benefits.
- **Timeliness:** Conduct data analysis promptly. Share findings and analyses quickly to support decision-making and further data collection.
- **Continuity:** Implement a planning-cycle approach, collecting data with increased granularity over time and updating findings as decision-making requirements change.

- **Managing expectations:** Avoid creating unrealistic expectations among participating communities regarding the outcomes of the process. Manage the expectations of other stakeholders, including local authorities and partners, regarding the scope and use of the data collected.

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Myanmar



Resource mobilization is a crucial aspect of any intervention, and there are various avenues to explore:

- 1. Donor collaboration:** Start by developing agreements with an initial donor, then consider expanding funding through support from other donors or seeking additional funding from the original donor. In such cases, the initial donor can advocate for joint fundraising efforts in a coordinated manner, ensuring multi-year funding.
- 2. UN and external funding windows:** Align your funding strategy with local priorities and explore specific funding opportunities within the UN and external organizations that target thematic areas such as renewable energy, the environment, gender equality and women's empowerment, etc.
- 3. Engage other actors:** Based on the local planning process, engage with other stakeholders and encourage them to fund projects derived from the plan. This is further discussed in the partnership section.
- 4. Government investment:** Explore the possibility of both national and subnational governments investing resources and aligning with national policies, plans and funds, as detailed in the dialogue box below.
- 5. UNDP's portfolios** funding alignment to local priorities.
- 6. Local resources and local solutions:** Emphasize the use of local resources, including local technical expertise, labour, and available experience, materials, tools, and equipment. Encourage the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, such as community-based organizations (CBOs), communities, local service providers (including small contractors), and local governments. Solutions should be developed collectively avoiding top-down approaches. Investing in local resources not only enhances community empowerment but also fosters dignity and self-reliance.

The programmatic goal of the area-based development approach is to establish a portfolio of locally owned, context-sensitive initiatives that are participatory and designed to have a significant impact on human development at the local level.

Your funding strategy should align with the partner landscape and may involve a full-fledged ABD programme, a modular/component structure, or a test/scaling-up approach for an ABD portfolio. It is essential to engage in partnerships with other actors and stakeholders working in the same regions or on similar topics, including local and regional governments from across the world that might have faced similar challenges, even in different contexts/settings.

Checklist:

Resource Mobilization:

- **Know your partners:** Build relationships with potential partners and understand their interests and priorities.
- **Develop concepts/fiches:** Create concise one or two-page outlines of specific programming initiatives.
- **Highlight and leverage objective ABD advantages:** Needs-driven, locally owned, institutionally coordinated, cost effective.
- **Engage and discuss openly:** Do not embark on significant proposal development without at least an indication of interest from a donor. Ideally, involve the targeted donor in the design process and highlight the importance of investing in the “soft component” to develop an area-based development process.
- **Leverage government relationships:** If there is a strong relationship with the host government, consider leveraging it, but exercise careful judgment to avoid potential pitfalls.
- **Strategic use of seed funding:** In crisis contexts, strategically use seed funding as an opportunity for engagement, as discussed further in the coordination section.

Global Programmes

Global programmes, often referred to as ‘global funds’ or ‘vertical funds’, focus on specific global issues or themes. These programmes cut across regions and aim to address specific problems vertically, unlike the horizontal approach of country-based aid models.

Global programmes primarily cover sectors such as health (e.g., Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, and Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization [GAVI]) and the environment (e.g., Global Environment Facility [GEF] and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol). These programmes concentrate resources on interventions targeting specific issues.

It is worth noting that environmental funds (GEF & Montreal Protocol) currently offer limited opportunities for establishing an area-based approach due to donor and central government dictates, slow approval processes, and sector-specific focus. However, exceptions exist, such as UNDP Ecuador’s establishment of an area-based approach funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF)¹⁴ and GEF for reforestation.¹⁵

In contrast, health funds, despite their specific focus, offer opportunities to establish area-based programmes. They provide financing and agreements with central governments to operate in specific areas and regions, including opening sub and project offices, serving as hubs for area-based programme establishment (e.g., Angola).¹⁶

Joint Programming

Joint programming involves various modalities, with the Peace Building Fund or the Human Security Trust Fund being relevant ones. It requires the involvement of at least two agencies and often targets cross-border contexts, necessitating extensive planning and negotiations. Many interventions under joint programming originate from local-level planning exercises.

¹⁴ <https://www.greenclimate.fund/>

¹⁵ <https://www.thegef.org/>

¹⁶ ProAmazonia Amazon Integral Forest Conservation and Sustainable Production Programme, www.proamazonia.org

Once the theory of change has been developed, and a portfolio has been structured to address identified challenges, the team, along with senior management and operations colleagues, must determine the implementation modalities. These modalities encompass not only development of projects to execute the portfolio but also required operational arrangements, including location and logistics. This phase is foundational for the subsequent fieldwork. Always prioritize local ownership of the process, with UNDP acting as a facilitator and integrator, ensuring transparency and technical guidance.



Participatory Planning Roll-Out

Considerations for Stakeholder Engagement and Kick-off Activities

Several and well-articulated methodologies for local stakeholder engagement and participatory planning have been developed and applied by UNDP and its partners; they can be adapted and applied in different contexts. They are referenced in detail in Annex 3. For immediate reference, the main considerations and steps for stakeholders' engagement are hereby schematically summarized:

Establishing a Local Working Group¹⁷ at Municipal and/or Intermediate Level

In agreement and coordination (depending on circumstances) with local authorities, aim to have between 15 to 25 participants in the group to ensure a diverse representation across society and sectors. Local working groups should be identified based on the stakeholder's analysis taking into consideration

local power dynamics. Special attention should be paid to involve traditionally excluded groups and minorities.¹⁸ Apply context analysis lenses to identify power dynamics that play a crucial role in enabling or preventing an inclusive approach. Depending on the context, consider including representatives from:

- Local authorities.
- Service sectors (health, education, social services) at both the local and secondary planning levels (e.g., province, region) as a step toward a multi-level approach (in coordination with UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA).
- CSOs and academia.
- Private sector representatives, including cooperatives, farmers' associations, Chambers of Commerce/Industry, and others. (in coordination with FAO, WFP, IFAD, UNIDO).

¹⁷ LWGs can take different denominations (local action groups, voluntary committees, community task force, etc.) depending on the context, scope and involved actors.

¹⁸ Local Working Groups, Committees or other participatory mechanisms at local/community level, can raise to play the role of local infrastructures for peace. In conflict settings local working groups could serve as a space to actively promote peacebuilding related processes. https://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resources-conflict/pdfs/UNDP_Local%20Peace%20Committees_2011.pdf

- Representatives from, women, youth, elderly, PwD, LGBTQIA+, and indigenous groups.
- Religious, community and tribal leaders if relevant to the context.
- Representatives of refugees/IDPs/migrants, in coordination with UNHCR, IOM to bridge humanitarian, peace and development efforts.

Assessing Risks and Resources

Ensure the following steps are taken:

- Facilitate discussions and exchange of experiences pre- and post-crisis, analysing the current situation.
- Cluster participants into different focus groups, each representing a specific sector.
- Assess, analyse and understand multiple risks across and within systems in the area to drive implementation of programmes, projects and other interventions.
- Develop a risk management/reduction strategy in collaboration with stakeholders and the implementation team.
- Utilize digital geo-referencing tools to pinpoint critical areas.
- Create a Multi-Sectoral Local Action Plan, covering short, medium, and long-term perspectives, complete with cost analysis and identification of available resources and financial gaps.
- Capacity strengthening: It is very important to build capacities from the design phase and through to the implementation and monitoring of the process. This approach empowers stakeholders, reduces dependence on international aid, and increases sustainability.
- Identify and implement “quick wins” during design of local action plans to contribute to build trust and increase motivation.

The Role of Multi-Sectorial Local Action Plans

These plans serve as platforms for coordination by local authorities and communities. They can incorporate also sectorial national resources and

international partners’ support and thus be aligned with national priorities and programmes. This exercise optimizes available resources, reduces resource gaps, and results in a more realistic and efficient cost estimation for the plan. It reduces transaction costs and enhances aid effectiveness. In case where local plans exist, consider integrating interventions and programmes within the local development plans and budgets to enhance its scale up and institutionalization.

Community Engagement and Ownership

Community engagement addresses the vulnerability of institutions and individuals to demographic and economic shocks. It identifies factors weakening their capacity to withstand, adapt to, and recover from these shocks. Prioritized responses are determined through participatory processes based on an understanding of local vulnerability drivers, lack of capacities, and the likely impacts of different response strategies in the short, medium, and long term. It is worth reiterating that it is key to ensure CBOs and underrepresented groups are structurally and directly involved in the process.

Engagement with National Government Institutions and Partners

Supporting local governance encompasses more than just capacity strengthening for **risk-informed** planning and decision-making, including budgets at the local level. It also involves strengthening and risk-informing the enabling environment, fostering the principles of good governance and multistakeholder engagement, enhancing coherence within and across sectors at all levels, connecting the “local” to other levels: national (related to policies, strategies, sectoral guidelines, resource allocation) and international partners. This approach allows the sizing of interventions’ costs, optimizes synergies, reduces resource demands, and enables effective coordination.

Make sure to include representatives of refugees/IDPs/migrants in participatory mechanisms, in close coordination with relevant UN agencies. Participation of partners from the Humanitarian sector will be crucial in the exercise of bridging humanitarian to development and peace actions.



In Mozambique, constitutional changes in 2018 opened the way for a second round of decentralization reforms. The most immediate impact of these changes was the election of Provincial Governors for the first time in 2024. The UNDP Country Office, building on its long experience with area-based development in the country, launched the Decentralisation for Development programme in 2020.

- The programme works in partnership with the Government of Mozambique through the Ministry of Economy & Finance and State Administration & Public Services.
- Based upon the new legislation the programme targets the Provincial level with the development of a strategic planning process aligned with the SDGs.
- This approach also complemented well with other actors, GiZ and USAID, both of which are targeting the municipal level.
- The programme targets three provinces and has taken advantage of a previous crises to maintain presence in one location which was historically contested by the Government.
- The programme works via staff who are embedded in Government Offices at the local level. In certain locations this is coupled with a UNDP presence.
- In terms of training and capacity strengthening the programme works with and through the Ministry of Economy using its staff and this has facilitated the ownership of the Strategic planning process at the national and subnational level.
- When it comes to implementation of projects developed as a result of the strategic plan the programme employs a NIM modality transferring funds to a specific account at the Provincial level.
- The intent is that the strategic planning process after having been piloted in three provinces as part of the Decentralisation 4 Development Programme will be scaled up to all provinces.

Key Considerations for Effective Implementation

- **Engage central-level institutions:** Explore opportunities for engagement with central-level institutions right from the start. Look for any new legislation related to municipal or regional governance that the intervention can leverage as an entry point.
- **Challenge assumptions:** During the initial analysis, avoid preconceived ideas and test existing assumptions. Engage with relevant local actors and involve them in the process. Handle this engagement wisely and tactfully to avoid raising unrealistic expectations.
- **Empower local actors:** When working in the target area, prioritize the involvement of local actors, such as local government and CBOs and ensure the inclusion of all groups. Address historical exclusions, such as the case of the Roma in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
- **Establish local presence:** Maintain a local presence, which has traditionally been achieved through projects or sub-offices. However, cost considerations and bureaucracy, both internal and external, can present barriers. Another favourable arrangement involves embedding staff within regional government structures if the context allows.
- **Promote coordination and partnerships:** Invest time and effort in coordination and partnerships at every level. This commitment may require resources upfront but yields long-term dividends.
- **Leverage local institutions:** Whenever possible, collaborate with and work through local institutions right from the beginning avoiding the substitution of capacities. This approach significantly increases the chances of achieving deeper impact and long-term sustainability.



Adaptability and Thematic Focus

While the area-based development approach is holistic and multisectoral by nature, it can be adapted to nearly any context, with its defining feature being the comprehensive targeting of a specific geographic area while adhering to the principles outlined above.

Even in the most daunting situations where engaging with local authorities, whether de jure or de facto, is limited (as seen in Yemen, Syria,

Myanmar), ABD remains a powerful approach to tackle emergency and recovery needs of the selected area in an integrated and inclusive manner.

The scale of the programme will depend on the available resources and the level of intervention that the context permits. Nevertheless, **it is crucial to reiterate that the cornerstone in all cases is participatory local planning.**

Examples of ABD application in different contexts (non-exhaustive)

Disaster response	Ecuador, ¹⁹ Dominican Republic, ²⁰ Nepal
Protracted crisis	Yemen, Syria, ²¹ Lebanon
Forced displacement	Lebanon, Jordan, Sudan, Syria, Turkey ²² Yemen, ²³ and Bangladesh Rohingya Crisis ²⁴
Urban programming	Mayors for Economic Growth, ²⁵ Syria
Post conflict settings	Historically a large experience of this coming out of Central America (PRODERE), the Balkans -most notable examples being Bosnia & Herzegovina ²⁶ and Serbia ²⁷
Conflict anticipation & prevention	Tunisia ²⁸
Stabilization	Mozambique, Nigeria, Lake Chad Basin, Iraq, Libya

Area-based development presents an opportunity not only to strengthen local/community recovery, resilience building and risk-informed development dynamics but also to promote coordination and synergy between local and central levels, across systems and stakeholders. In any area-based

intervention, collaboration with the central level will be a key component. It is important to note that the specifics of this collaboration may vary, especially in conflict settings where the legitimacy of local authorities may be contested.

19 After Action Review: Ecuador Earthquake April – October 2016, UNDP Crisis Response Unit

20 <https://habitatdominicana.org/en/pnud-y-habitat-dominicana-firman-acuerdo-para-apoyar-a-familias-y-comunidades-vulnerables-afectadas-por-el-huracan-fiona/>

21 Syria <https://www.undp.org/syria/our-focus/basic-infrastructure-service-rehabilitationce->

22 The Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan <https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/>

23 UNDP's crisis Response in Hodeidah / Yemen January – June 2019 Lessons learned and recommendations

24 After Action Review of UNDP's Response to the Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh, September 2017 – September 2018

25 <https://eum4eg.com/about/>

26 Summative Evaluation Report of Srebrenica Regional Recovery Programme & BIRAC Region Development and Cooperation Project <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/12106>

27 Can development prevent conflict? Integrated area-based development in the Western Balkans – theory, practice and policy recommendations. Working Paper WPO2/2008. Center for the Study of global governance (LSE), Rastislav Vrbensky

28 <https://www.undp.org/fr/tunisia/blog/citizen-led-social-safety-nets-what-can-governments-learn-social-solidarity-initiatives-covid-19> Crisis Anticipation <https://www.undp.org/crisis/getting-ahead-crisis-curve>

Key Considerations to Keep in Mind

- 1. Service mapping and accessibility:** Begin by mapping available services in the target area and assess their accessibility for all groups. Consider whether specific ethnic groups or other underrepresented communities have historically faced exclusion. Examine aspects like economic opportunities, social cohesion, and political representation. Are certain groups, such as youth, elderly individuals, persons with disabilities, women, particular ethnicities, or IDPs, refugees and returnees excluded from specific aspects of community life?
- 2. Transparent planning:**²⁹ Establish a clear and transparent planning process that adheres to principles of inclusion, participation, integration, and adaptability. Ensure that the local population is well-informed and provided with opportunities for input and feedback throughout the process. Transparency and community involvement are fundamental.
- 3. Planning oversight:** Determine which local institution or body will oversee the planning process and, importantly, the decisions regarding investments. Avoid creating a separate entity tied exclusively to the programme. Instead, consider utilizing or building upon existing territorial structures. Elected local bodies may lack technical or thematic expertise, while appointed deconcentrated bodies typically possess technical knowledge but may lack local legitimacy.
- 4. Adapt to specific challenges:**³⁰ Customize the planning process to address the specific developmental challenges or the primary root causes of humanitarian needs identified in your context analysis.

- 5. Coordination with International Actors:** Coordinate with other international actors based on their mandates or expertise: prioritise complementary over competing agendas based on added values and comparative advantages and enhance legitimacy in the area.
- 6. Capacity strengthening of local actors,** including but not limited to local authorities, to enable social and technical sustainability.
- 7. Sustainability through legal frameworks:** Whenever possible, embed local planning initiatives in existing structures and legal frameworks that can sustain this approach in the future. However, when UNDP supports such processes, make sure to allocate dedicated funding for quick-win projects arising from the local planning process. These funds serve as incentives for local authorities and actors, provide negotiation leverage for planning process design, and, most importantly, deliver tangible results that local citizens can see.

Prioritizing Areas of Work Within a Portfolio

The participatory local planning process serves as the foundation for identifying priority investments, which are further enriched by context analysis. These investments encompass various specific, though interconnected, interventions, including the local economy and livelihoods, education, health, gender equality, provision of local services, access to justice and security, social cohesion and cultural matters, and more. These priorities pinpoint the thematic areas of focus and can be more effectively addressed adopting a systems approach. This approach involves understanding how each sector or thematic area interacts and connects within the geographical context, as well as the ripple effect of one intervention on another. By following this method, planned interventions form a portfolio of interventions for engagement, transcending traditional sectoral silos and emphasizing learning by doing.

29 CASE EVIDENCE ON 'CAPACITIES FOR INTEGRATED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING' <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Integrated-LDP.pdf>

30 For example, in contexts where there has been displacement, then "Durable Solutions" and "Host Communities" must be at the forefront of any local planning process. This will in all likelihood require specific technical support to the planning group and opens up the possibility for partnership with partners engaged in the field



Influence Government Policy

Engagement on territorial development is a flagship programmatic area for UNDP in Cuba. The UNDP programme PADIT (Articulated Platforms for Integrated Territorial Development) has forged a decentralization and local development agenda in what is a very centralized state. What started as a UNDP programme has now become a national policy, with UNDP supporting the implementation of that policy. Working groups at municipal level are still weak but the current legislation opens a golden opportunity to support and strengthen their capacity. A Territorial Development Index has been developed and a Municipal Law is scheduled to be approved in 2024. The PADIT programme has been the initiator of these changes, initially in four pilot provinces before spreading country wide and finally becoming the government policy.

Systems thinking takes a holistic view when developing solutions, considering all facets of a system (in this case an area) and its environment. The UNDP Strategic Plan provides clear direction for UNDP to move beyond individual projects and embrace portfolios. Increasingly, UNDP Country Offices are crafting value propositions based on a portfolio approach to address diverse issues and challenges, such as the future of work, digitalization, tourism in specific economies, community resilience, and more.³¹



Rural-Urban Programming

There is a growing body of work that is extending its scope to target cities and urban areas. Since 2015, more than half of the global population resides in urban centres. Furthermore, cities are responsible for generating over 80% of the global GDP and consuming nearly two-thirds of the world's energy. They also contribute to more than 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, the role of cities and rural areas in the 2030 Agenda is paramount. The OECD estimates that at least 65% of the 169 targets behind the 17 SDGs will not be reached without active engagement of local and regional governments.³²

Cities often face multifaceted challenges that are interconnected and require an interdisciplinary approach that goes beyond sector-specific or technical solutions.³³

Rural areas are complementary to cities through connections related to the flow of people, goods and services. Over the past three decades, the

share of the global population living in rural areas decreased continuously. The urbanization is expected to continue over the coming decades with more than 50% of the global population living in urban areas.³⁴

Within the UNDP, there is an increasing recognition of the need to prioritize urban areas and their rural continuum. This shift presents opportunities for fostering connections between urban and rural areas (through rural-urban partnership), particularly in the domains of food production, energy supply, and water resources. This approach creates a win-win scenario that benefits both rural and urban areas alike.

Finally, there is a growing body of work on the application of area-based approaches in urban settings during crisis contexts, which is discussed in the Annex.

31 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EWg9XgkuUdMY8XAU3YY95GVAUrGq0gbK/view>

32 OECD. Available online at: <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/oecd-programme-on-a-territorial-approach-to-the-sdgs.html>

33 Source <https://innovation.eurasia.undp.org/urban-transformation/>

34 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1328171/rural-population-worldwide/#:~:text=Over%20the%20past%20three%20decades,continue%20over%20the%20coming%20decades.>



Examples of Urban-Focused ABD Portfolios

The City Experiment Fund³⁵ and Mayors for Economic Growth (M4EG) engage cities in systems thinking based processes of unpacking local complexities and designing portfolios of interventions that in time can help effectively address key urban challenges. Additional information is available here:

- Blog on the urban transformation stencil/model ('Agora')
- Blog on the dynamic management approach

The Heart of Amman, a partnership between UNDP Jordan, Impact Hub, the Greater Amman Municipality and the Japanese Government, is a platform intended to allow all to take part in revitalizing Amman, by expanding local economic opportunities while creating a greener, healthier, more walkable, inclusive, and youth, women and child friendly city for all that call Amman home.³⁶

The Urban Risk Management and Resilience Strategy speaks to the importance of UNDP employing an area-based approach in urban context to ensure integrated programming.³⁷

The UNDP-UN Habitat Smart Urban Resilience Framework for Africa adopted at Africities in 2022, makes the case for area-based development in the context of urban settlements on the African continent.³⁸

Finally, there is a growing body of work on the application of area-based approaches in urban settings in crisis contexts, which is discussed in the Annex. It is important to note that UNDP is a member of the Global Alliance on Urban Crisis and has contributed to publications such as **Urban Area-Based Approaches in Post-Disaster Contexts: Guidance Note for Humanitarian Practitioners**.³⁹



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35 <https://innovation.eurasia.undp.org/urban-transformation>

36 <https://www.undp.org/jordan/projects/heart-amman>

37 <https://www.undp.org/publications/urban-risk-management-and-resilience-strategy>

38 https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/africa/UNDP-UNH_CN-Smart-Urban-Resilience-in-SSA_Kisumu2022.pdf

39 <https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/10825IIED.pdf>

UNDP conceives stabilization as:



A time bound, integrated programme of activities in areas cleared and held through military action intended to create confidence in, and provide support to an ongoing peace process internationally recognised, including through a Security Council mandate, while laying the building blocks for longer-term peace building and development by delivering a peace dividend to local communities and seeking to extend legitimate political authority.”⁴⁰

There is a clear connection between the two approaches, particularly in the context of stabilization programming, where success can pave the way for the evolution of an ABD approach. In such situations, ABD essentially serves as an exit strategy for stabilization efforts.

However, it is important to note that the top-down and security-driven approach employed in stabilization programming needs to be coupled with an increased role for key local stakeholders’ engagement to better align with the principles of area-based development and make it an effective complement. Furthermore, wider concepts of stabilization are based on a human security comprehensive approach, entailing a multidimensional perspective of security (food security, community security, livelihood security, institutional security, etc.) that are compatible with

the ABD approach, particularly when agency for community participation and engagement is ensured.

Stabilization programming has been effectively implemented in various contexts, including Iraq and Libya, and is currently being employed in Mozambique as well as across a belt of the Sahel region, spanning from Senegal in the West to Chad in the East. UNDP has also engaged in more limited, though significant, hybrid stabilization efforts, including in Syria. Stabilization initiatives typically concentrate on specific geographical areas and adopt an integrated approach, with a focus on three primary pillars: the rehabilitation of essential infrastructure and basic services, enhancing physical security and access to justice, and revitalizing the local economy.

 **Cross-Border Programming**

Border areas often represent regions that are geographically isolated from the capital and have a history of being economically disadvantaged. Borders can artificially separate ethnic groups, and in situations of civil unrest in one country, border regions in neighbouring countries often become initial refuge areas for displaced populations. These border regions also present significant opportunities for fostering trade, joint investments in mutually beneficial infrastructure, and cultural connections. However, they can also be potential flashpoints, especially when the border is disputed, leading to conflicts over access to water, grazing rights, and control of strategic areas.

Given the various factors mentioned above, border regions provide an ideal setting for implementing an area-based approach. There are well-documented examples⁴¹ of successful initiatives in such areas. In the context of cross-border programming, the target areas are those surrounding the border. Still, it is equally important to engage the central government, especially when there are disputes regarding the border’s location and border crossings. The opportunities presented by freedom of movement and trade in border regions are significant.⁴²

40 Source UNDP Stabilization Approach Summary Document

41 Background paper for the 3rd Regional Workshop on Integrated Community Development Budapest, Hungary, 6-8 June 2023, Integrated community development and other territorial approaches in Europe and Central Asia.

42 There is no better example of this than the European Union.

Implementing an area-based cross-border programme requires two Country Offices to align and collaborate on a specific approach. Below are some of the best references and examples illustrating this method:

Africa Borderlands Centre⁴³

The Center was officially launched in May 2021 and has merged into the Nairobi Resilience Hub. In the lead up to its establishment, there was extensive research and inputs with regards to the area-based approach in borderland regions. This effort included identifying several locations across the African continent where such an approach is appropriate. The Center advocates for a portfolio approach and emphasizes that the connections within and among borderlands offer a basis for utilizing ‘geographical areas’ as entry points, rather than relying solely on issue- or sector-based programming. To facilitate this, the Center has developed a Guidance Note on Programming in Borderland Regions, which identifies four main themes:

- Strengthening agriculture and livestock production, increasing productivity, and enhancing associated value and supply chains
- Providing access to finance and supporting the entrepreneurship of micro and small enterprises engaged in informal cross-border trade.
- Investing in climate-resilient small-scale infrastructure to enhance production and trade.
- Strengthening vertical and horizontal social cohesion.

The UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)

The PBF is increasingly investing in cross-border and regional approaches. The 2020–2024 strategy envisions allocating 20% of funding to the Cross-Border and Regional Approaches

Window, with the other two windows, Facilitating Transitions and Women and Youth Empowerment, receiving 35% and 25%, respectively.⁴⁴

This increased focus on cross-border and regional approaches is driven by evidence indicating that most conflict drivers nowadays either originate regionally or have a transboundary/regional impact on neighbouring countries. The PBF has published a specific guidance note on cross-border and regional approaches, outlining three different typologies of programming that the Fund supports:

- Cross-border projects that focus on the border area and address similar dynamics on both/all sides.
- Cross-border projects that also focus on the border area but address asymmetrical conflict dynamics, described as spill-over effects from one country to its neighbour(s).
- Regional projects that address shared conflict dynamics involving neighbouring countries.

These projects are typically joint UN projects involving two or three countries, with at least one of the countries being eligible for PBF funding. One of the two or three countries should take the lead, and one agency should also lead the development and implementation of the project on all sides of the border.⁴⁵

EU Cross Border Cooperation⁴⁶

EU cross-border cooperation, or CBC, is a significant component of EU policy towards its neighbouring regions. Its relevance depends on the location of Country Offices, CBC provides a means for UNDP’s partners, such as government institutions, municipalities, and CSOs, to access funding. Additionally, there are valuable learning opportunities associated with this approach.

Cross-border cooperation promotes collaboration between EU countries and neighbouring countries that share either a land border or a sea crossing.

43 <https://www.undp.org/africa/africa-borderlands-centre>

44 Peace Building Fund Strategy 2020 – 2024.

45 Guidance Note on PBF Cross border and Regional Programmes, January 2020.

46 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/cross-border-cooperation_en

Funding can also be allocated to programmes involving several EU and neighbouring countries within the same sea basin, for instance. UNDP is not eligible to apply for CBC funds. Nevertheless, UNDP ABD can support local governments or other partners in preparation of application or documentation to apply. CBC encompasses three primary objectives:

- Fostering economic and social development in border regions
- Addressing common challenges related to the environment, public health, safety, and security
- Facilitating improved conditions for the mobility of people, goods, and capital across borders.

5.1. Management



Working in today's context of permanent crisis & declining trust requires governments & other players in development to broaden the palette of approaches to prevent lock-ins to a single course of action.

System & portfolio approaches help in doing that by providing governments & donors a constant flow of policy options, building organisational muscle for learning & adaptation & continuous commitment to a transformational direction. Specifically, they help generate:

- ◆ New frames on complex issues that open up pathways for different policy options, preventing lock-ins to a single course of action.
- ◆ Coherence: Where interventions are commensurate with the nature of complex problems: long term, interconnected and evolving in unpredictable ways.
- ◆ High frequency insights and adaptation: In a fast-changing world, the premium is on high frequency generation of new insights that create room for adaptation & learning.
- ◆ A different path to scale: As there is no single solution to the current set of complex crises, generating impact at scale requires continued design of interventions from emerging insights (as opposed to “funneling” of a multitude of pilots in the hope that one will scale).”

Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator, May 2023

From a management perspective, one of the main challenges associated with employing an area-based approach is the need to overcome internal thematic divisions. UNDP programming has primarily revolved around projects. These projects are organized around thematic pillars, with senior and experienced staff members responsible for overseeing these portfolios. Naturally, there can be some competition among them for recognition and funding.

In practice, area-based approaches at UNDP have typically evolved from large projects that, due to their scale and significance, involve actors and projects from other thematic areas. In such situations, it is crucial to establish a clear vision from the outset that the project will engage the entire

Country Office and serve as a conduit for broader programme elements. To make this successful, alignment and commitment are required from the Project Manager, Resident Representative, Deputy Resident Representative, and programme team leaders. While this alignment is usually the case because it offers mutual benefits, occasional personality clashes and misunderstandings may still arise. In recent years, with the development of the portfolio approach and the shift towards adaptive management, there is an increasing opportunity to explore alternative methodologies.

In summary, UNDP sees adaptive management as a holistic management approach that touches all corners of our offices, it requires a significant shift in how we do business on the ground.

For instance, it requires dedicated structures and processes (e.g. empowering management arrangements, adaptive programme design, learning loops). Also, the adaptive management approach requires an enabling environment (in- and external) marked by leadership styles and partnerships that are empowering, encouraging experimentation and placing high emphasis on learning. All quite fitting not only with the area-based development, but also with the portfolio approach.

Area-based development requires structures and process that enable adaptation as and when the context evolves, or assumptions prove (partially) wrong. A key characteristic of adaptive management is that it encourages and provides space for experimentation, especially in areas that suffer conflict or crisis. These complex or even chaotic contexts prompt us to act while missing the 'luxury' of engaging and trusting in linear planning (cause and effect relations are not or difficult to detect in such environments) - reference to Cynefin framework.

Lastly, adaptive management considers key aspects of ADB such as working in a participatory and inclusive manner, providing localized multi-disciplinary solutions, empowering local actors, bridging gaps both within offices and outside (incl. donor relations). The portfolio approach aims to address the thematic divisions and provides a holistic approach to tackling contemporary challenges, such as workforce dynamics, environmental concerns, green energy, and the circular economy.

Checklist:

Management

→ **Establish a physical presence:** Having a physical presence in the area or region is essential. This can take the form of an office or staff embedded within local structures, depending on the context. Embedding staff is often the more cost-effective and developmentally sound option. However, in certain crisis situations, having a dedicated office may be more appropriate. Examples from Yemen, Tunisia, Angola, and Afghanistan

illustrate different approaches, while Algeria and Mozambique demonstrate successful use of embedded staff.

→ **Employ locals reflecting local diversity:**

When hiring staff, use context analysis lenses to prioritize individuals from the local community who reflect its diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability and capability. If suitably qualified local staff are unavailable, consider recruiting from outside the local area. There may be specific challenges, such as women working in Afghanistan, but these challenges can be addressed by local teams.

→ **Ensure that gender is mainstreamed:**

The 2030 Agenda provides important frameworks for fostering synergies between the sustainable development and human rights commitments to effectively mainstream gender to achieve gender equality, empower all women and girls and strengthen their autonomy. Make sure to introduce gender mainstreaming methods and tools, set gender equality objectives, launch gender equality action plan/strategy, develop gender equality competences, promote equal opportunities and establish gender information management system.

→ **Empower local representatives and dual reporting:**

Ensure there is an empowered local representative and a dual reporting line for projects operating in the region. This means that project staff in the region report both to the head of the local office and to the thematic Project Manager, typically based in the capital. Myanmar provides a good example of this approach.

→ **Establish a confidential grievance**

mechanism: Create a mechanism that allows concerns to be raised and addressed with management in a confidential manner, giving all stakeholders a voice.

→ **Appoint a central focal point:** Designate a central-level focal point who represents the area-based programme and serves as the point of contact for the local-level lead. Ideally, this role will be filled by the Deputy Resident Representative.

→ **Promote cross-collaboration:** Develop a mechanism that breaks down existing thematic silos and encourages collaboration between different projects. Managing an area-based approach often relies on relationships between individuals, so having empowered local leadership with direct access to Country Office leadership is essential. In cases where staff are embedded locally, this complexity is heightened, but the same principles of empowered local leadership apply. Ensure there is a mechanism for local staff to meet and interact.

→ **Analyse context and partnerships:** Conduct a thorough analysis of the context and partners and decide on the implementation methodology. UNDP typically uses either Direct Implementation (DIM), where UNDP executes the project, or National Implementation (NIM), where national partners, often the government, take the lead. There can also be support for NIM where certain high-risk activities or procurement are handled by UNDP. For more details, refer to the UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP) Portal.

5.2. Partnerships

In this Practice Note, a partnership is defined as an agreement among parties to collaborate in pursuit of mutual interests. Potential partners can generally be categorized into the following groups:

Central Government

In almost all cases, UNDP operates within an area with the consent of the central government. A significant challenge that ABD can help address is contributing to multilevel coordination between the central and local levels. Especially in highly centralized government systems, creating opportunities for greater autonomy at the local level can involve complex negotiations. However, UNDP can draw on successful experiences from countries like Algeria, Cuba, Mozambique, and Tunisia, where local-level inclusive planning and informed decision-making have been strengthened. The common thread in these cases is the acknowledgment and utilization of the country's own legislation and legal framework in support of the ABD process and its mainstreaming at policy level. Even in highly centralized states, opportunities exist, and the key is to identify and leverage them. Interestingly, in challenging contexts like Syria, the voluntary return of IDPs and refugees can create opportunities for local-level operations. More stable contexts like Liberia and Sierra Leone, in turn, despite having specific subnational regions identified in their Country Programme Documents,

struggle to implement an area-based approach. The primary challenge here often boils down to resource allocation, with governments hesitant to focus limited funds on specific areas or regions.

According to UNDP experience and wide consensus amongst researchers and practitioners, ideally, the main counterpart should be identified in the local authority in charge of the area, be it political, such as the Governor's office or Mayor's office or, in case it exists, the local planning department or a body with similar attributions and function. Its mandate should be as wide as possible and cover all sectors, therefore avoiding a siloed approach from the onset. At national level, where conditions allow, the counterpart should be positioned so as to have a broad mandate and to be well connected to line ministries and departments. In many countries, the Department for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Economy or a similar entity becomes the national counterpart.

For instance, in Mozambique, UNDP partners with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, while in Algeria, with the Ministry of Interior. The choice of institution depends on the specific context, but other potential partners include the Prime Minister's Office or, where it exists, the line ministry in charge of local administrations.

Subnational Government

It is important to define the appropriate level(s) of engagement below national level, based on several structural and contingent factors – e.g. agreement with the national government, volume of resources available, nature and location of

the main recovery/development challenges to be addressed. There are various models but, in essence, we can categorize the different levels of government as follows:

Levels	Presence
Central	Exists everywhere
Intermediate (Regional/Provincial)	Only exists in certain countries
Local (Municipal/District)	Exists everywhere
Community	Exists everywhere but is very much the micro level and in most cases it is informal

Local and regional governments play a pivotal role in recovery and development processes and, as such, are considered by UNDP when it comes to empowering and strengthening the capacity of local actors. When deciding which level to target, the decision will depend on the specific context. However, consider the following factors:

- **Collaboration over competition:** Consider what other actors are doing and aim to complement their efforts rather than competing with them.
- **Alignment with central-level agendas:** If central-level legislation and agendas are focused on a particular level, align your approach to complement and build upon those policies or initiatives.

One important consideration when operating at the subnational level is to engage with both deconcentrated appointed bodies and elected local officials. In many cases, the choice may be predetermined but consider the advantages and disadvantages: an appointed authority (governor in most cases) although not elected usually has a direct connection with central level executive bodies and can exert influence therein. An elected authority (mayor, local council member), on the other hand, may lack political influence at central level while enjoys legitimacy and credibility vis-a-vis his/her constituency. Depending on the context (including definition of responsibilities and functions between central and local authorities)

adjust your programme design accordingly. For instance, when working with locally elected bodies, incorporate capacity strengthening elements. Conversely, when dealing with deconcentrated appointed bodies, more emphasis can be placed on facilitating their integration into and input to the process.

International Organisation and Other Partners

This category encompasses UN agencies, international NGOs/businesses, local and regional governments for decentralized cooperation, and, increasingly, academic institutions. Apart from the coordination aspect, which we will discuss in the following sections, there are two key themes within this relationship:

- **Shared interests in specific programmes/interventions:** In several scenarios, UNDP collaborates with UNHCR on area-based programmes in contexts involving displacement, such as Myanmar and Syria. Similarly, UNDP may partner with other organizations during the planning process and in funding specific outputs and priorities.
- **Service delivery contracts with external parties:** In some cases, UNDP enters contracts with external parties for the delivery of specific services. For instance, UNDP engages international NGOs as implementing partners, typically when substantial resources are available, as seen in Afghanistan

and Myanmar. In other instances, UNDP contracts private consultancies or partners up with academic institutions to conduct specific research and analysis. While these relationships are contractual in nature, in most cases, there is also a partnership dimension, with the external entity sharing

a vested interest in the final product or result. Such collaborations, especially with academic institutions and local and regional governments, provide an excellent platform for learning, reflection and advocacy across various aspects of UNDP's work.

Examples of Partnerships on ABD with UN Agencies and IFIs	
Liberia & Sierra Leone	Liberia and Sierra Leone Country Offices are working on developing a joint cross border programme and have a staff member who is shared between the two offices.
Yemen	Have a very productive relationship with one of their donors, the World Bank. This has been particularly useful in promoting the programme and garnering additional support.
Syria	It is one of several country offices working in a displacement/return context that have developed a partnership with UNHCR. This involves joint programming in Governorates where there is significant voluntary return. Notably, in this example, there is an international staff member who is funded by both organisations.

Stakeholders

This situation mirrors that of international organizations, with the primary distinction being the greater number of entities involved. Additionally, in many cases, these organizations have a vested interest in programme implementation and may directly participate in and benefit from programme activities. One particular group that deserves special attention here is the private sector.

It is crucial to establish mechanisms that align with the perspectives of local markets and identify specific actions and investments likely to support them, while improving social and environmental standards. These actions can encompass various areas, including supporting local value chains, addressing specific infrastructure needs, resolving local taxation issues, addressing skill gaps (which remains an issue regardless of the level of unemployment), and enhancing marketing and promotion efforts.

The challenge lies in creating a forum that represents local businesses and fosters a connection with public sector structures. There are numerous examples of how this can be achieved, with one of the most enduring being the Local Economic Development Agencies (LEDAs).⁴⁷ For further

insights into this topic, valuable resources are also available through the Istanbul Centre for Private Sector in Development.⁴⁸

Checklist:

Partnerships

- **Examine central-level legislation:** Analyse central-level legislation, where applicable, and identify laws, regulations, and practices that offer potential for embedding the ABD process or in any case to foster coordination.
- **Identify key partners:** Identify both institutional and individual key partners who play pivotal roles in the programme.
- **Recognize potential challenges:** Simultaneously, identify potential obstacles or spoilers. At the very least, remain aware of their presence and discreetly monitor their actions.
- **Determine intervention level/region:** Based on the local context, decide on the level or region where the programme will operate.

47 <https://www.ideassonline.org/public/pdf/BrochureAdelENG.pdf>

48 <https://www.undp.org/policy-centre/istanbul/global-initiatives>

- **Engage with local authorities:** Initiate contact with local authorities, whether appointed or elected, and adapt your interactions based on the specific context.
- **Explore international partnerships:** Assess the region or area of operation to identify potential international organizations for partnership. In some cases, when specialized

knowledge, skills, or experience are required, consider expanding the search beyond the immediate region and consider territorial partnerships with local and regional governments for peer-to-peer collaboration.

- **Map local organizations:** Similarly, assess local organizations for potential collaboration.

5.3. Coordination

Coordination, as defined in this Practice Note, is the process of organizing people, groups and institutions to collaborate effectively. This collaborative approach increases the likelihood of achieving desired results. Coordination occurs internally within UNDP and extends to interactions with governments and other actors, both international and local. While the internal and governmental aspects have already been extensively covered, this section primarily focuses on interactions with external actors.

Government

Once again, this has been discussed in previous sections. To reiterate, a key aspect of area-based programming is bridging the gap between the central government and the region or area of focus. Effective relationship management is vital for aligning priorities and programmes accurately.

Even in the most challenging contexts, where the government lacks recognition from significant segments of the international community (e.g., Afghanistan) or has strained relationships (e.g., Syria), it is imperative to engage and seek consensus. The objective is to find common ground that allows for programming acceptable to both parties, such as supporting voluntary return and enhancing (re)integration trends in Syria or community development initiatives in Afghanistan and Myanmar.

Other Actors

This category mainly includes international and local CSOs but can also encompass other entities like consultancies, businesses, and academia. Ideally, a UNDP team operating in a region should coordinate with all relevant parties, be aware of their activities, and establish linkages that can evolve into partnerships at all levels. This exemplifies the integrator role frequently referenced in UNDP's work. The challenge lies in managing time and determining where and how to focus efforts.

The starting point should always be answering the questions: Who, what, where? Know who is operating in the area, what they are doing, and where they are active. If this information is not readily available, gather it. Begin with UNDP and UN agencies before extending your search to other organizations. Secondly, explore existing coordination mechanisms and actively participate in them. If no coordination mechanisms exist, but multiple actors are working in the region, consider initiating one. Even if it is nothing more than an informal gathering held every two or three months, it can be worthwhile for fostering collaboration.



Settings with Activated Humanitarian Cluster System

In crisis contexts, a common challenge is the abundance of meetings and coordination events, making it impossible to attend them all. Additionally, the existence and functionality of official coordination structures at the sub-national level will vary depending on the specific situation. During sudden or protracted crises, coordination typically follows the UNOCHA-led Cluster System.⁴⁹ Even in displacement scenarios where UNHCR takes the lead, the coordination structure remains quite similar. The key is to ensure that your coordination efforts are well-aligned, both at the central and local levels, and to adopt a targeted approach. These coordination fora are an opportunity to showcase the value added of development action in crisis settings.

Participating in the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and associated coordination mechanisms, such as thematic groups, should be standard practice. However, it is crucial that information from regions outside the capital is integrated into these discussions.

Ad hoc groups often emerge, and UNDP should participate at a minimum and sometimes even take a leadership role. For example, in Mozambique, UNDP leads the Decentralization Working Group, which has facilitated the organization of the first joint UN, donor, and government field visit to specific provinces. In Syria, UNDP together with UNHCR co-chair the Return and Reintegration Technical Working Group within the HCT/UNCT.

Checklist:

Coordination

- **Active participation:** Actively participate in existing coordination structures at all levels. The Resident Representative should be involved in both the UNCT and the HCT, at a minimum. Staff at the local level should not overlook relevant coordination mechanisms.
- **Effective participation:** Participation goes beyond merely attending meetings or events. Contribute by discussing UNDP's work, sharing viewpoints, and demonstrating intellectual leadership over time.
- **Leadership roles:** When feasible, take the lead in various coordination groups. This role provides an opportunity for intellectual leadership if executed effectively.
- **Promote equality:** Advancing gender equality is critical to all areas of a democratic society, from reducing poverty to promoting the health, education, protection and the well-being of girls and boys. Take steps and speak up to promote a culture of gender equality, diversity and inclusion.⁴⁹
- **Advocate for space:** Negotiate and, when necessary, advocate for your place within the coordination landscape. Maintain professionalism, even when facing challenges, and exercise patience and assertiveness. For example, during the review of UNDP's work in Cox's Bazaar, addressing resistance and challenges related to UNDP's efforts on Host Community Support and Coordination required careful handling.
- **Invest in coordination:** As a Country Office, be prepared to allocate resources to the coordination function, potentially involving additional staff or personnel.
- **Integrated roles:** Ideally, assign responsibilities for both programmatic and coordination functions to the same staff members. Avoid having individuals solely dedicated to coordination.

49 <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/the-global-cluster-coordination-group>

→ **Maintain credibility:** Never join coordination structures with the primary intention of securing funding. Such intentions become apparent quickly and can undermine your credibility.

→ **Government engagement:** Depending on the context and the government's level of participation in local coordination mechanisms, serve as a conduit for government involvement and enhance relationships between the government and other stakeholders. Exercise caution, as there may be meetings where government presence is not desirable.

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5.4. Monitoring

The foundation of any monitoring system is the programme design. In the case of ABD programming, due to its emphasis on local ownership, there are greater opportunities for involving and engaging local communities in monitoring programme outcomes. This lays the groundwork for an innovative monitoring system that truly empowers the ultimate beneficiaries of the intervention. To this end, the local recovery/development plan should embed monitoring from the onset. Engage and leverage the **local working groups** tasked with data analysis and identification of priorities in the framework of the planning process.

Plenty of information is available on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), making the UNDP Handbook for Monitoring and Evaluation for Results⁵⁰ a valuable starting point. However, the real challenge lies in data collection and management. Since area-based programmes typically focus on specific geographical regions outside the capital, they require disaggregated reliable data (for example, Colombia Country Office is testing a beneficiaries data monitoring app). In many cases, such data may not be readily available. For instance, regional-level employment statistics are often lacking. In some cases, where resources and time permit, information can be gathered and analysed also through digital solutions (POwerapps App, in Colombia). Afghanistan and Yemen serve as examples⁵¹ from crisis contexts, but these are resource-intensive endeavours, often unfeasible in many situations. Instead, it often involves using existing knowledge and experience alongside targeted data collection and analysis. Looking at examples from development contexts, Cuba's PADIT programme has developed a comprehensive monitoring system focusing on Result-Based Management and based on Key Performance Indicators related to activities, results and impact, covering both municipal and intermediate levels. It informs UNDP programming as well as the national development plan 2030 and the 2030 Agenda,

substantively contributing to the institutionalization and sustainability of the programme outcomes and products.

In addition, using gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation is highly recommended to reveal whether a programme addresses the different priorities and needs of women and men, to assess if it has an impact on gender relations, and to determine the gender aspects that need to be integrated into monitoring and evaluation systems. It is crucial to recognize that data gaps, particularly concerning gender, age, and ethnicity, tend to perpetuate exclusion and hinder the delivery of evidence-based interventions for disadvantaged groups. The digital realm provides cost-effective avenues for direct communication with specific target groups. For instance, UNDP Lebanon successfully piloted online chat platforms as an interactive survey tool with both the Syrian refugee and host community populations.⁵²

Checklist:

Monitoring

- **Begin with thoughtful design:** Start with programme design, focusing particularly on indicators and baselines. Prioritize indicators for which data is readily available. Often, interventions use indicators like 'increase in employment' without a concrete plan for data collection and verification.
- **Leverage existing resources:** Examine what data already exists and, whenever possible, utilize proxies or substitutes. In developmental contexts, subnational level data may be available. In crisis situations, the Humanitarian Cluster System can serve as a data source. However, accessing existing data can sometimes be challenging.

50 <https://www.undp.org/turkiye/publications/undp-handbook-planning-monitoring-and-evaluating-development-results>

51 ABADEI Programme has developed an Information Management System (IMS) that allows continuous monitoring of activities implemented at area level through a complex and adaptable set of indicators. Inspired by a similar, though broader IM system developed by Syria CO, the ABADEI IMS is a valid reference for ABD monitoring from a crisis context.

52 <https://www.undp.org/lebanon/publications/speak-whatsapp-understanding-life-worlds-syrian-refugees-and-host-communities-lebanon>

- **Embrace time series data:** Employ time series data, which is collected regularly and provides a cost-effective means of tracking changes over time.
 - **Harness digital tools:** Make full use of the digital sphere, as it is highly empowering and enhances reach and efficiency. Access to smartphones and the internet is increasingly common, expanding options for data collection.
 - **Gender responsive monitoring:** Make sure that monitoring tools and methods are gender responsive/sensitive. The inclusion of explicit gender equality objectives and indicators at the planning stage also strengthens accountability in terms of the progress made on gender equality issues. Ensure that sex/gender disaggregated data is collected and analysed.
 - **Prioritize data sharing:** From the outset, emphasize the importance of data and establish agreements with governments and other agencies to facilitate data sharing. This proactive approach sets the stage for effective data management and collaboration.
- **Make informed decisions:** When little or no data is available, base decisions on discussions within the working group as well as with staff and rely on historical knowledge and experience. Support this process with informal interviews or qualitative exercises.
 - **Address security challenges:** In certain situations, such as in Syria, Somalia, and Yemen, UNDP staff may be unable to access specific areas due to security concerns. In these cases, monitoring tasks must be delegated to a third party. Although this is a specialized issue, there is extensive experience in implementing such an approach, notably in the listed Country Offices and historically in Afghanistan. Satellite imagery offers an alternative means of monitoring inaccessible areas, primarily for verifying the construction or repair of infrastructure or the cultivation of specific crops. It is important to note that this type of monitoring is limited to tracking physical changes and entails cost considerations.

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Syria



ABD focuses on local contexts, creating stronger connections and communication with the local population. Again, engage and leverage the local working group to collect data that reflects the programme's impact based on the design and monitoring. Then, present this information in an easily understandable format accessible to all stakeholders, often requiring presentation in at least two languages. Consider developing simple infographics for easy comprehension, avoiding complex tables and extensive written text.



Effective Communication at the Local Level

The Country Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina reflected upon the Srebrenica Regional Recovery Programme which ran from 2003 – 2016. In what was a very challenging context, they highlighted the importance of communication with the local population.

The following points were made:

1. The Project Manager regularly addressed the national media in Sarajevo, often on a weekly basis, and maintained constant contact with local media. By learning the local language and engaging with local media, he was able to build rapport and gain the trust of the local population.
2. The office implemented an open-door policy, which proved crucial given the context. Many people in Srebrenica had lost family members, homes, and endured significant trauma, and they felt aggrieved that the UN had not done more. UNDP was seen as a representative of the UN by the local people, many of whom visited the local office to voice their grievances. In line with the open-door policy, the team provided a space for expressing their concerns. While, in most cases, there was little more the team could do beyond listening, this act of acknowledgement was nonetheless important for building trust and providing a sense of support.

In ABD, effective communication with local stakeholders and population is crucial. It should be a two-way process that allows local people to voice their proposals and grievances. Maintain a visible presence that is accessible to the local community, utilizing available options including local media, both traditional and online. In areas with limited local presence, leverage digital platforms and local media to facilitate communication with the local population.

It is also important to use gender-inclusive language, which means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes. Given the key role of language in shaping cultural and social attitudes, using gender-inclusive language is a powerful way to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias. Above all, maintain a unified message when communicating about ABD, ensuring consistency in conveying throughout the process the holistic approach and the results achieved to all stakeholders.

Checklist:

Communication

- **Develop a simple communication strategy/ plan:** This will outline who the target groups are, the different communication messages and the mediums through which those messages will be conveyed.
- **Target local ownership by local institutions and people:** Strive to ensure the process is led and key communication messages are conveyed by local institutions and communities.

- **Language:** Have the key issues on the intervention, plans and intent, formulated in simple language and make sure these messages are translated into the local language.
- **Pictures and diagrams:** Wherever possible, communicate messages using visual tools: it can be far more powerful than the written word.
- **Gender sensitive communication:** Use inclusive language which promotes gender equality and the equal and fair visibility of women and men. Ensure that women and men are represented equally, challenge gender stereotypes, avoid exclusionary forms, use equal forms of address, create a gender balance and promote gender equity through titles.
- **Visibility:** Put the local partners at the forefront of any communication message in particular when it comes to branding. This can be challenging and may well require negotiation with the donor, but it is important particularly from a sustainability perspective, that local people see and are aware of the local leadership of ABD process.
- **What channels/mechanisms to employ:** Study the local context and employ the most appropriate medium this maybe local newspaper, radio, television, the internet etc. In particular the digital space is becoming ever more relevant and empowering but consider the digital divide.
- **Feedback:** Ensure that there is two-way communication, and it is not just a case of local people being communicated to but that there are mechanisms whereby they can communicate back. Again, the digital space offers lots of opportunity in this respect.
- **Staff/stakeholders capacity:** Ensure all staff and key stakeholders understand and are aware of the importance of good communication and realize that listening is equally important as speaking. This will require training and staff development.

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Sustainability is not about continuing phases of a project or programme but rather what remains once UNDP is no longer active. In short, it is about long-term impact. From the outset, the development solution should be defined and coupled with a common vision that all are working towards.



Examples of Sustainability

Algeria: The CO, taking advantage of changes to legislation introduced at central level on planning, piloted a new local level planning methodology. After having been implemented in eight locations some of its mechanisms and tools are now to be mainstreamed by central level.

El Salvador: The Local Economic Development Agencies (LEDA), established within the framework of UNDP-led PRODERE, are still functioning and in some cases thriving amongst the most performing development institutions in the country, almost 30 years after their establishment.

Indonesia: In Indonesia, the Ministry of Villages was looking for a more effective system for allocation of resources to investments within the 70,000 villages which exist within the country. IFAD who are providing a USD 5 billion loan on this topic also wanted to see evidence of a more systematic approach. The UNDP Country Office, with the Support of the Innovation Hub in Istanbul, is piloting Social Innovation Platforms (SIP), which provide an excellent means of identifying local priorities employing an inclusive and participatory approach. The plan is to now scale up this and approach with 100 to 150 villages and based upon the results of that exercise apply it country wide.

Cuba: Provincial and Local Working Groups established by UNDP in the framework of PADIT programme are now institutionalized as part and parcel of the national development policy.

The subsequent design and mode of operation will either assist in delivering upon this overarching goal or work against it. Practices such as NIM modality, working with and through local structures and aligning with national priorities will increase the likelihood of success. The key to long-term sustainability is that local people and local institutions take ownership of the programme activities and continue to employ and even develop further long after the external support has finished. Examples can include maintenance and continued use of infrastructure; however, where the really interesting sustainability results come are in maintaining institutions and long-term behaviour changes. Examples of this can include local governments continuing to support local planning and other initiatives. Several of the Local Economic Development Agencies (LEDA) established by PRODERE programme in Central America continue to thrive almost 30 years after UNDP support was phased out.

Checklist:

Sustainability

- **Start with a clear developmental vision:** Begin with a well-defined developmental vision and create a plan to work toward achieving it.
- **Formulate an exit strategy:** Develop a strategy for the eventual conclusion of the project.
- **Engage your team:** Openly discuss the above two points with your team and involve them in the planning process.
- **Prioritize alignment:** Emphasize alignment with national priorities and prioritize working through national institutions and systems.
- **Balance ambition with realism:** While it is important to have ambition, avoid being overly ambitious in the initial design. Propose changes or initiatives that are realistically achievable and sustainable. Balancing ambition with realism may require negotiation with donors.
- **Continuously review progress:** Throughout the implementation process, regularly review progress and make necessary adjustments. Establish a feedback loop for ongoing improvement.
- **Plan for gradual phase-out:** When concluding UNDP activities, opt for a gradual phase-out approach based on the exit strategy initially designed with local stakeholders. Ensure clear communication and discussions with local stakeholders for gradual implementation of the exit strategy and complete takeover by local actors.

Summing Up

In a rapidly changing world facing significant challenges such as conflict, climate change, pandemics and underdevelopment, the dynamics of external aid are continuously evolving. There is an increasing focus on 'crises', many of which are rooted in multidimensional development deficits that ultimately require integrated development solutions as development emergencies. Under the 2030 agenda, the SDGs and the HDP nexus provide the overarching frameworks through which these challenges are to be addressed. UNDP through its 2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan embraces this changing landscape, outlines the six signature solutions and makes a strong case for shifting programmatic approaches from individual projects to portfolios.

This Practice Note, built on a consultative process with 21 UNDP Country Offices from across regions and several key informants, makes the case for the continued relevance of an ABD approach in the current environment, given the characteristics and principles upon which it is based. Furthermore, it highlights some of the rich and diverse experience of UNDP's contemporary ABD portfolio at the Country Office level while also referencing three decades of UNDP leadership, as well as relevant corporate guidance to inform the design and implementation of ABD programmes. From a forward-looking perspective, the Note highlights UNDP's shift to a portfolio approach, while also referencing new innovations that Country Offices are employing.

As a result of this consultative process, a checklist/key consideration approach has been developed, which Country Offices can apply in the establishment, implementation, monitoring, and sustainability of an ABD process. Finally, UNDP and the wider area-based and local development practitioners' community have produced a vast body of knowledge on the topic over time. The annex to the Note aims to cluster, group, make accessible, and in some cases "rescue" additional references to relevant materials, allowing users to delve deeply into specific tools, guidance notes, and other technical references. It is meant to be a living document and will be updated regularly.

Annex 1: Key Resource Persons

Name	Country Office	Expertise
Anne Dalitz	Yemen	Working with large datasets to select geographical areas and collaborating with the World Bank
Petrus Vandepol	Yemen	Local governance interventions in fragile contexts
Hala Rizk	Syria	Local governance and area-based approaches in conflict settings; return and reintegration; collaborative dispute resolution; social cohesion – local peacebuilding
Paloma Blanch	Syria	Supporting the return and reintegration of displaced populations and host communities in Syrian governorates through area-based programming, in partnership with UNHCR. Her position is jointly funded by both agencies, giving her experience in working with UNHCR
Lurdes Gomez Rubio	Syria	Strong background in ABP in post-conflict contexts across multiple countries
Abdo Seif	Yemen/Saudi Arabia	From Yemen CO, with experience in Saudi Arabia, possessing strong knowledge of ABP and large-scale data exercises
Hosni Mouelhi	Tunisia	Working with centralized and strong states
Daniela Lima	Acc Lab Angola	Experience in employing a portfolio approach and overcoming internal struggles and challenges
Ligane Sene	Sierra Leone/Liberia	Experienced in cross-border programming and employed by two country offices, a unique arrangement
Jonathan Derio	Assistant Resident Representative Algeria	Working with a centralized and strong state
Farida Kadri	Head of Governance Algeria	Local governance, local and national ownership, local multisectoral/multi-stakeholder platforms
Habiba Rodolfo	Head of Governance Unit – Mozambique	Governance/decentralization, institutional anchorage with national policies/priorities

Cristino Pedraza Lopez	Chief Technical Advisor on Decentralization for Development Project – Mozambique	Decentralization/governance/integrated local development, national and local ownership, multisectoral platforms
Arvind Kumar	Project Specialist ABADEI Programme Afghanistan	Data management/area-based programming in complex crisis context
Giorgi Vardishvili	CPR Cluster Lead Georgia	Complex crisis/conflict contexts
Biljana Cvetanovska Gugoska	Head of Governance Macedonia	Incorporating local planning into national plans
Suzanne Ahmeti	Inclusive Prosperity Cluster Lead North Macedonia	Roma inclusion/integration
Adnan Cheema	Myanmar	Application of ABP in a polycrisis context
Alessandro Caselli	Myanmar	Management of a field/sub-office where an area-based approach is implemented
Singay Dorji	Myanmar	Management of a field/sub-office where an area-based approach is implemented
Juliata Sopacua	Senior Advisor Programme Integration & Analysis Indonesia	Influencing government policy and applying the Social Innovation Platform
Lina Fernandez Pizano	Head of Exploration Colombia	Private sector
Jairo Alberto Matallana Villareal	Head of Rule of Law & Crisis Response Colombia	Practical application of area-based/territorial management in a Country Office
Jenny Galvis (Spanish)	Territorial Coordinator Colombia	Practical application of area-based/territorial management in a Country Office
Alexandre Prieto	Project Manager Cyprus, previously Bosnia and Herzegovina	Post-conflict scenarios
Xavier Hernandez Ferre	DRR Dominican Republic	General application of area-based programming
Maria Eugenia Morales	Programme Officer – Environmental Sustainability and Resilience, Dominican Republic	Sustainability and resilience
Edwin Gomez	Economist in the Human Development unit and field Coordinator for the AB project, Dominican Republic	Project management
Ricardo Nunez	Programme Officer – Local Economic and Human Development, Cuba	ABD in a centralized context
Grethel Valladares	PADIT Team coordinator, Cuba	ABD in a centralized context

Individuals from Specific Units (Non-Country Office)

Kristoffer Tangri	Partnerships & Programmes Africa Border Lands Institute	Cross-border programming
Catherine Osborn	Policy Advisor – Forced Displacement	Displacement & return and reintegration contexts
Nynke Kuperus	Country Coordinator	Adaptive management initiative
Ayan Abshir	Country Support Analyst	Adaptive management initiative
Milica Begovic	Head of Strategic Innovation	Portfolio approach
Tina Stoum	Project Manager Mayors for Economic Growth	Urban contexts/portfolio approach

Senior GPN Experts who reviewed the Reference Note

Diana Salvemini	Global Coordinator and Technical Advisor, UNDP-GEF
Patrick Duong	Global Lead – Governance for Public Goods and Services, Istanbul Regional Hub
Rajeev Issar	Policy Specialist in Climate Risks and Risk Governance, UNDP Global DRR Team, Geneva
James Vener	Climate and Cities Technical Specialist – UNDP/UNHABITAT
Barbara-Anne Krijgsman	HDP Nexus Senior Advisor UNDP – PKP/CB

Annex 2: Other Organizations and Area-Based Development

ABD, despite being a methodology employed by UNDP for over 40 years, remains a relevant and topical issue. Partly, this is just a trend but, significantly, more and more organisations are seeing it as a means of breaking down thematic silos and targeting the needs of a specific area via a multi-sectoral approach. Urban programming has been very much to the fore in recent years. Below are highlighted some examples, which provide background on what ABD means for other organisations and where and how they are applying it. The intent is for Country Offices to be better informed, particularly when negotiating potential cooperation and partnerships.

World Bank

The World Bank favours a Community Driven Development approach that supports bottom-up decision making and local capacity development. The target group includes deprived communities or specific vulnerable groups. The focus is on the provision of public goods, including the construction of schools and health facilities, rural roads, water supply and sanitation systems, the introduction of nutrition programs, and support for irrigation, rural livelihoods and microenterprises. A weakness of this approach is its long-term sustainability as inevitably there are not enough resources to cover all of the communities. The World Bank is currently employing this approach in Yemen, and historically, there was a program in Afghanistan, the National Solidarity Program, with a similar approach.

European Union

The principle of the EU Regional Development approach is reducing economic, social and territorial disparities. There are a number of funding mechanisms within the EU, most notably the European Regional Development Fund⁵³ that specifically focuses on this agenda. More importantly, in the context of this paper, the whole

concept of Regional Development has been applied by the EU in the Balkans and some Eastern Partnership Countries such as Armenia and Georgia as well as influencing EU programming at the global level.

In terms of Rural Development, the EU adopts the “LEADER” (Acronym derived from French: “*Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Économie Rurale*”) that stands for “links between actions for development of the rural economy”. The focus of this approach is on the how, not the what. The key to the delivery of LEADER is a local public-private partnership called the Local Action Group (LAG), which defines the content of a Local Development Strategy (LDS), develops it and then selects the priority projects to be financed to support the implementation of the LDS. LAGs are structured similarly to UNDP-promoted LEDAs, mentioned in this Note.

The **Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)**⁵⁴ is another EU approach, which is an extension of the LEADER program, involving not only rural areas but also urban areas. It has a strong emphasis on the inclusion of the relevant stakeholder groups in the decision-making on the local development. The main difference between this approach and the LEADER is that the former covers larger areas and can also include urban areas.

FAO

The FAO adopts an approach referred to as Integrated Community Development. This is based on the principles of the Territorial Approach to Development, yet also utilizing the benefits of community development, such as stimulating community cohesion, cooperation and building of social capital. The development process materializes in the form of a Community Development Plan with focus on agriculture and rural development based on local specificities, needs and opportunities.⁵⁵

53 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/erdf_en

54 http://elard.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/community_en.pdf

55 Background paper for the 3rd Regional Workshop on Integrated Community Development Budapest, Hungary, 6-8 June 2023, Integrated community development and other territorial approaches in Europe and Central Asia

UNHCR & IOM

Both of these organisations, in line with their respective mandates, are increasingly employing an area-based development methodology with regards to “Durable Solutions”.

Global Shelter Cluster

There is a growing recognition that area-based/settlement-based solutions are a viable approach in fragile and crisis contexts. The Urban Settlements Working Group (USWG) was established in May 2017, co-chaired by Catholic Relief Services, Impact Initiatives and InterAction, under the auspices of the Global Shelter Cluster.⁵⁶ This group went on to develop specific guidance for the implementation of area-based programming.⁵⁷

Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat⁵⁸

The Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) was created in 2015 to maintain focused momentum and stakeholder engagement towards durable solutions for displacement-affected communities in East Africa and the Horn of Africa. ReDSS comprises 14 NGOs.

It is a coordination hub that seeks to improve programming and joint learning, inform policy processes, enhance capacity strengthening and enhance coordination in the collective search for Durable Solutions. In this respect ReDSS has produced a Guidance Note on Area-Based Development as well as various training/learning materials.⁵⁹

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56 Urban Settlements Working Group Area-Based Approaches in Urban Settings Compendium of Case Studies, May 2019 Edition

57 Settlements Approach Guidance Note Where Boundaries and Action Merge, December 2020

58 <https://www.regionaldss.org/>

59 Training Guide on Area-Based Durable Solutions Planning, For Practitioners & Policy Makers, 2020 ReDSS

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