

UNDP Africa Regional Initiative

United Nations Development Programme



Transforming Governance



Photo: UN

1. Context

Africa has put its lost decades behind and made significant strides on the social, political and economic fronts since the turn of the century. The continent has since seen rapid democratic transitions, leading to more responsive and accountable governments.

Yet, the recent uprising in Burkina Faso, near state collapse in Mali and the growth of violent extremism underline the need to further widen political participation and the importance of giving everyone, particularly those that are marginalized, a voice.

Formal elections and democratic transfers of power have the potential of improving public service delivery and effective management of public and natural resources. Advances in constitutionalism, rule of law and the security sector can, in turn, improve access to justice and human rights. However, this requires development of human and institutional capacities across the continent.

During the recent Ebola crisis, many risked catching the deadly virus rather than believe what state institutions were telling them. This underscores the importance of investing in and developing a strong relationship between the state and its citizens. The continent needs robust governance systems that go beyond elections, outline the mutual rights and responsibilities of citizens, and describe what the citizens can expect from a capable state.

2. Approach

UNDP supports the continent's governance transformation agenda by 1) increasing space for political participation, 2) redefining the social contract through development of responsive institutions and promotion of civic and democratic values, 3) improving urban governance, and 4) tackling illicit financial flows.

UNDP's approach is anchored in strong partnerships with the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities, parliaments and political parties, civil society organisations, and think tanks, as well as South-South and Triangular cooperation.

3. Areas of work

Voice and Participation

- UNDP is providing technical support to regional and continental bodies to develop harmonised legal and regulatory frameworks on constitution making, election management, and professionalization of political parties based on good international standards. This work includes

support for domestication of these standards at national level.

- To enhance accountability and performance of government institutions, UNDP is providing technical and advisory services to enable the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to conduct national assessments and reviews. It also helps to integrate APRM national action plans into countries' development planning. UNDP is also supporting the development of integrated governance assessments to enable the increased use of data for national planning and the monitoring, measurement and assessment of performance of the state and its institutions.

Social Contract

- UNDP is supporting the establishment of a regional platform and publishing studies to measure public perceptions on service delivery and social cohesion on the continent to contribute to the development of common civic and democratic values.
- UNDP is working with regional institutions to mount campaigns on deepening and harmonising the social contract between the state and its citizens as well as among citizens.

Urbanisation

- With the majority of Africa's population projected to be living in urban centres by 2050, UNDP, together with UN-Habitat and other partners, is conducting research to better understand the challenges of governing urban centres. The research will inform a joint programme on how the growth of urbanisation can serve to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development.
- As part of the programme, UNDP will support regular interactions and experience-sharing platforms between mayors of megalopolies and urban centres in Africa and around the world to promote cross-fertilization of ideas, and wider diffusion of international models and standards of urban governance.

Illicit Financial Flows

- With Africa losing approximately USD 60 billion in illicit financial flows annually, UNDP is working on

research and engaging in policy dialogues to address this issue, especially as related to the extractive sector, based on the President Mbeki High Level Panel of Experts' recommendations. This includes training for critical regional institutions such as parliaments to enhance their understanding and oversight of processes that will combat illicit financial flows. Building on this work, UNDP will support the development and national domestication of regional strategies to curb illicit financial flows.

- UNDP is supporting research, cross-regional exchanges and policy development processes to understand, share and mainstream learning on how different countries, particularly commodity producers, successfully transformed and diversified their economies.

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Project Details

Project Period: 2014-2017

Executing Entity: UNDP Regional Service Centre

Partners: African Union Commission, Regional Economic Commissions, Regional Technical Institutions, UN-Habitat, President Mbeki High Level Panel of Experts, and Civil Society Organisations

Total resources required: USD 25,000,000

Total allocated resources: USD 15,000,000