

FAST FACTS

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Development Programme



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Civil Society and Civic Engagement in the Arab States Region

The peoples' movement that spread across North Africa and other parts of the Arab world in 2011 was an expression of a growing demand for government accountability, especially by young people. It resulted in political transitions or reforms in six countries, affecting the lives of more than 100 million people. In spite of significant gains, many countries still face pressing problems—slow democratization, civil unrest, rising unemployment, weak institutions and challenges in constitutional processes for ensuring fair elections. These challenges underline the importance of collaborative and accountable state-citizen and citizen-citizen relations in achieving social peace and cohesion.

The UNDP strategy for countries in transition is geared towards deeper engagement with diverse stakeholders. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are crucial partners for UNDP in the Arab States region in bringing about real changes in society that are sustainable and owned by the people. We work with civil society on three clusters of issues: community development, citizen engagement, and justice and the rule of law.

UNDP in action

Community development

- In partnership with CSOs and national authorities, UNDP implemented a jobs programme for people living with HIV in seven Arab States including **Algeria, Djibouti, Jordan and Lebanon**. The initiative included vocational and microcredit training for 24 local and national youth CSOs. In **Palestine**, working closely with the Ministry of Health and United Nations agencies, a Global Fund-supported programme addressing HIV has worked with 22 CSOs to prevent the spread of the virus while providing more than 2,000 people living with HIV in Gaza and the West Bank with treatment and care services. The programme also



Mobile courts bring justice to the residents of Xaaji Kheyr village in Puntland, Somalia. Photo: UNDP Somalia

includes activities aimed at reducing stigma, with a special focus on religious leaders, the media and legal aid professionals.

- UNDP helped civil society partners in countries such as **Djibouti** to integrate environmental considerations in development plans, forge effective partnerships, secure resources, and implement programmes to support sustainable, low-carbon, climate-resilient development pathways. In **Lebanon**, through local cooperatives, more than 3,000 small farmers are benefiting from a UNDP initiative that supports beekeepers, from production to marketing.

- UNDP and its civil society and government partners launched [several programmes](#) to protect Syrian female refugees in and around camps in Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah in **Iraq's** Kurdistan region. Since October 2013, UNDP has been providing survivors of violence, rape or abduction and trafficking with free legal counseling services, and recruits lawyers to help and represent victims and their families. Survivors are also referred to health providers for psychosocial support.

Citizen engagement

- In the wake of the revolution, UNDP began civic education programmes in **Libya** and **Tunisia**. In **Libya**, UNDP engaged youth, women and marginalized groups in the democratization process by facilitating events on political campaigning and public relations for 170 women candidates. Eight of these women are currently members of the General National Congress, Libya's transitional parliament. UNDP also produced voter education material and trained 300 CSOs on how to bring about greater voter awareness and civic engagement.

- UNDP's support to citizen engagement in **Libya** was extended to the constitution-drafting process. In particular, UNDP elicited insights on citizens' opinions on aspects of the Constitution through a national survey targeting the general public, political actors, academia and CSOs. UNDP also launched the [I Want... in My Constitution](#) initiative in which nearly 1,000 Libyans shared views and formulated recommendations for the Constitutional Drafting Assembly.

- In **Tunisia**, UNDP supported a civil society-led national dialogue on the constitutional process, in which more than 1,500 civil society activists took part. Ten reports of citizen recommendations were submitted to the National Constituent Assembly by CSOs. UNDP also supported the establishment of [a civil society anti-corruption coalition](#) and its work in developing a national anti-corruption strategy in partnership with the Ministry of Administrative Reform.

- UNDP embarked on [a range of projects](#) that aim to educate and empower citizens, especially those in poor and marginalized communities to become active participants in this historic and dynamic process. In 2013 in **Egypt**, 76,000 national identity cards were issued to women in rural areas. In **Tunisia** 4,200 women were trained and sensitized on democratic processes, such as the constitutional process, transitional justice, prevention of violence, and citizenship. As a result, the proportion of seats in parliament held by women rose to 12.7 per cent in 2013 from 2.6 per cent in 2000.

- In **Egypt**, UNDP is working with the [Local Development Observatory](#) and the [Social Contract Center](#) to assess local governance in the governorate of Fayoum. UNDP

supported local governance assessments nationwide, in which citizens were able to rate the efficiency of the solid waste management service (as low as 15.83 per cent), informing local government of the realities faced by people in rural communities.

- Since 2012, UNDP has supported a range of innovative projects in the region aimed at piloting approaches to increase civic and political participation of youth. This included support for establishing a public oversight organization in **Yemen** tasked with monitoring human rights among youth, developing an interactive computer game on local governance in **Jordan**, promoting the participation of youth in local councils in **Somalia** and empowering young people through opportunities to participate in democratic political processes and make their voices heard in **Palestine**. In **Iraq**, UNDP empowered 70 young leaders through skills-building in political participation and influencing decision-making in public policy processes.

Justice and the rule of law

- In a time of transformative change, UNDP is working with several countries to help institutions, formal and informal, to strengthen access to justice and the rule of law. In conflict-affected settings, UNDP helped strengthen criminal investigation techniques, legal assistance for local populations and logistical support to police investigators. In **Somalia**, through its [Access to Justice Project](#), UNDP has focused on improving the functioning of the judiciary, through judicial reform and by empowering Somali communities to secure their rights. Mobile courts in Somaliland increased registration of formal cases by 64 per cent; in Puntland the courts extended their coverage to 50 villages and two camps for internally displaced persons.

For more information:

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