UNDP AND INDIA

A PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
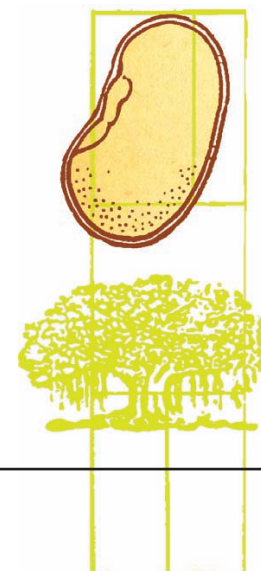
UNDP

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

Contents

Fifty year partnership and beyond: Key milestones

51 nations came together to ratify the birth of the United Nations, the collective peacekeeping organization of the world.

{1945}

The Expanded Programme for Technical Assistance was created to provide technical assistance to developing nations – connecting their needs to knowledge and expertise useful for development.

{1949}

Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur - supported by newly formed EPTA.

{1950}

EPTA started supporting Government of India with the signing of the Agreement on the appointment of a Resident Technical Assistance Representative.

{1952}

Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai – set up with support from EPTA and UNESCO. The General Assembly created the Special Fund to assist poor countries' in identifying large, economically feasible development projects - connecting potential to capital.

{1958}

The Special Fund created by the General Assembly began operations in India.

{1960}

The United Nations Development Programme was formed by merging the United Nations Special Fund (to assist developing countries in identifying large economically feasible development projects) and the EPTA (that provided technical assistance to developing nations).

{1966}

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation
- UNDP provided research and training assistance to ONGC's Institute of Petroleum Exploration. Sixteen oil fields were discovered by ONGC during the course of this project.

{1966}

Nuclear Research Laboratory at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute
- set up as part of a joint programme on the peaceful application of nuclear research in agriculture by UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency. NRL contributed to research on water use efficiency, post – harvest storage etc.

{1968}

Satellite Instructional Television Experiment - began with UNDP assistance. The nationwide experiment aimed to create capabilities for television broadcasting using satellite facilities. UNDP also began a series of initiatives in tax reform that included training in tax administration, double taxation, tax fraud etc.

{1975}

National Dairy Development Board - UNDP provided technical assistance to 'Operation Flood' – one of the largest of its kind, aimed at creating a nationwide milk grid.

{1970}

Experimental Satellite Communication Earth Station, Ahmedabad – with UNDP support to provide training and experience in design, development and operations of an earth station for communications and broadcasting. ESCES is now part of the Space Application Centre which played an important role in real time flood monitoring, drought assessment and mapping of landslide hazard zones.

{1967}

Film and Television Institute of India
- UNDP supported the large-scale advent of television technology in India by revamping the Film Institute of India to create FTII in Pune. Support also helped establish a division dedicated to television training.

{1971}

UNDP began the first of a series of initiatives through FAO to promote post-graduate agricultural research and education in India.

{1973}

National Informatics Centre - set up with UNDP funding purchased a mainframe computer, one of the first steps in India's vision of a technology-based future.
Central Electronics Engineering Research Institute - UNDP began an assistance programme with CEERI, Pilani to build its semi – conductor technology capabilities. The Institute has gone on to build high speed thyristors for Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) used to increase the efficiency of Indian Railways and develop prototypes for color TVs.

{1976}

Indian Packaging Institute - UNDP provided technical assistance to leverage the country's packing material resources and enhance the industry's capabilities.

{1977}

Civil Aviation Training Centre, Allahabad and Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademi - UNDP began a series of assistance initiatives in the civil aviation industry including modification of a civil aviation flight testing unit and incorporating international civil aviation standards in IGRUA.

Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay - UNDP helped evolve the two-year postgraduate programme in industrial design. The new Rupee symbol was designed by an IDC graduate.

{1978}

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – UNDP funded the set-up of the Transfer of Knowledge through the Expatriate Nationals Programme at CSIR to attract Indian scientists from abroad – a reverse brain drain strategy to attract talent back to India.

{1980}

Wildlife Institute of India - UNDP assisted the Institute in improving wild life management training courses and strengthening research capacities to conserve and manage India's vast wildlife resources.

{1983}

UNDP initiated a pilot in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra - where more than 50 percent forest cover had been affected by forest fires - to put in place systems to prevent, detect and suppress such fires. Eight years later, the pilot led to a scheme by the Ministry of Environment and Forests called the Modern Forest Fire Control Methods.

{1984}

Education and Research Network - UNDP supported a first-of-its-kind initiative with the Department of Electronics to create expert R & D in the area of networking and internet in the country. This led to the birth of ERNET, the largest nation-wide terrestrial and satellite network that supported the networking and information needs of educational and research institutions.

Survey of India - UNDP assisted in setting up Modern Cartographic Centres, equipped with state-of-the-art digital mapping technology, to process digital cartographic databases required for planning and developmental activities.

{1986}

New seed policy - As India introduced the new seed policy to facilitate seed imports to meet rising need, UNDP supported the development and strengthening of plant quarantine stations to combat the threat of pests and pathogens.

{1989}

Human Development Report – Globally, UNDP released its first-ever HDR reflecting the shifting emphasis of development from a focus on national incomes and growth, to building capabilities and expanding the choices people have.

{1990}

Khadi Village Industries Corporation – UNDP initiated efforts with KVIC to enhance the performance and competitiveness of the handmade paper industry in India.

{1991}

National Leather Development Programme – UNDP launched one of the largest assistance programmes globally with the Government of India to boost training in design and manufacture of leather goods such as the mojari, and to artisans and small clusters.
National Development Programme for the jute sector – UNDP launched a large scale effort to revive R & D and diversify the jute sector providing US$ 23 million in assistance.
Small Farmers Agri-Business Consortium – UNDP collaborated with the government to set up this consortium.

{1992}

Utilization of hydro resources in the Himalayan region –through a UNDP supported hilly hydro project that aimed to develop a national strategy and master plan for utilizing small hydro resources in the Himalayan region.
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts – UNDP assisted IGNCA in setting up the Cultural Informatics Unit to virtually recreate India's heritage and preserve manuscripts and books through digitization.
Spices Board – UNDP supported efforts to improve quality of spices and increase exports.
Reduction in greenhouse gases – through a UNDP initiated biomethanation project that explored waste-to-energy processes to reduce ghgs.

{1994}

Gender Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure – launched globally by UNDP through the HDR.

Trademark Registry - UNDP and the World Intellectual Property Organization helped modernize the Trademark Registry and create a searchable electronic database.

Public sector reform - through a series of UNDP-supported capacity building programmes for the civil service aimed at increasing efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.

South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme – UNDP supported a SAPAP pilot through the Andhra Pradesh's Society to Eliminate Rural Poverty to set up women's SHGs in 500-700 villages. The effort eventually reached out to more 12 million families.

{1995}

Janshala Programme - UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and UNFPA supported efforts to universalize elementary education through this Programme which was later to act as inspiration for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan.

Bureau of Police Research and Development - UNDP partnered with the Bureau in several states to foster a people – friendly image of the police.

{1997}

Technology Mission on Oil Seeds & Plants in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Orissa - UNDP supported a project to enable low income farmers to use wasteland. Extensive planting of Jojoba and Jatropha led to experiments by the Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute that discovered biodegradable plastic and biodiesel.

Department of Science and Technology and IIT Bombay – UNDP collaborated with partners to develop GRAM++, a software system for district level GIS mapping of local resources.

{1996}

Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies - UNDP instituted an annual inter – school debate competition in memory of Mahbub ul Haq, the founder of the HDRs. Since 2007, the Competition has been extended to other SAARC countries as well.

{1998}

Conservation of medicinal plants – through a UNDP project aimed at preserving endemic resources under threat and conserving globally important medicinal plants.
Response to Orissa cyclone - In the aftermath of the cyclone, a large-scale Government of India – UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme set up, later emerged as one of the largest community-based disaster management programmes in the world.
Sea turtle conservation - UNDP and the Ministry of Environment and Forests began a sea turtle conservation Project to locate the migratory route of Olive Ridley Turtles; devices are used in fish trawlers to curtail turtles dying in fishing nets.
Commercial feasibility of methane gas from coal mining to electrify homes - demonstrated by a UNDP pilot. Now widely accepted as an area with commercial potential, it is being scaled up nationally.
Human development Reports –Extensive collaboration between Planning Commission and UNDP on human development began. UNDP set up a Human Development Resource Centre to support preparation of HDRs and connect experts and practitioners.
Economic reforms - UNDP began the Economic Reforms Project to support research and policy reforms in law, healthcare, infrastructure and energy.

{1999}

Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore - UNDP supported the creation of the Centre for Public Policy at IIM (B) to fill the lacunae in quality management training in policy making.
National Coir Board - UNDP assisted in upgrading technology, modernization and skill development in the sector in light of emerging international competition.
National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan - UNDP supported the preparation of the Plan which contributed significantly to the development of the National Biodiversity Action Plan.

{2000}

Reponse to Bhuj earthquake – UNDP assisted victims of the earthquake in transitioning from relief to recovery and developing innovative approaches to involve communities in managing disasters and achieving self-reliance.

{2001}

Strengthening panchayati raj institutions - UNDP launched a project to build capacities of elected women representatives and functionaries of PRIs.

CFC phase-out - UNDP began a series of initiatives to phase out CFCs in various manufacturing sectors, a target that was achieved 17 months ahead of schedule.

Endogenous Ecotourism - a project launched by the Ministry of Tourism and UNDP created tourism hotspots that have helped generate sustainable incomes for rural families.

Sexual and reproductive rights of young women – supported by UNDP as part of a joint UN project to increase awareness and reduce risk amongst women of sexually transmitted infections and HIV by empowering women SHGs.

{2003}

Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve - UNDP partnered with the Government of Tamil Nadu in conservation efforts by involving local communities in conservation and building alternative livelihood options.

TATA Council for Community Initiatives - UNDP supported the nodal agency comprising heads of over 50 TATA companies, resulting in the creation of the TATA Index for Sustainable Human Development.

{2002}

Post-Tsunami Recovery Centre – opened in Chennai with UN support. The UN was invited by the Government to join efforts to assess the recovery requirements in tsunami affected areas. UNDP was requested to take the lead in mobilizing funds to support state governments in reconstruction efforts.

Community Radio Policy - UNDP & UNESCO supported the Information and Broadcasting Ministry by organizing stakeholder consultations which led to a revised Community Radio Policy in India, a milestone in the journey of the citizen's right to information and expression.

{2004}

Right to Information Campaign - UNDP launched efforts to enhance the awareness and capacities of government officials as information providers to information-seeking citizens as part of the under the Right to Information campaign.
Smoke-free biogas plants - UNDP partnered with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy to explore renewable energy for rural electrification in villages in Rajasthan, Uttarakhand. Biogas plants now provide smoke-free environments and children can study after dark.
Solution Exchange – The UN Country Team established Solution Exchange, an online space for communities of development practitioners to share solutions to day-to-day obstacles faced by them. UNDP continues to supports four (of the 13) thematic communities of practice and house the secretariat.

{2005}

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act – UNDP began a partnership with the Ministry of Rural Development to support the operationalization of the landmark legislation.
Access to justice for marginalized - UNDP began support to the Department of Justice (as its only international partner), Ministry of Law and Justice to strengthen access to justice for the marginalized.
Socio-economic impact of HIV - UNDP conducted one of the first large-scale studies on the socio – economic impact of HIV on households in India.
Engendering the 11ᵗʰ Five-Year Plan - UNDP collaborated with UN Women, Ministry of Women and Child Development and the National Alliance of Women.

{2006}

Mainstreaming HIV in social protection - UNDP supported the National AIDS Control Organisation to mainstream HIV concerns – 34 social protection schemes have been amended across India's states to be more HIV sensitive.
Gender Budgeting - UNDP collaborated with the Ministry of Women and Child Development to develop a Gender Budgeting Handbook & Training Manual and set up a Gender Budgeting Cell.

{2007}

Sexual minorities - The first national consultation for transgenders organized by UNDP was followed by six regional workshops in 2009 to draw attention to the issues faced by the community.
Response to Kosi floods - In the aftermath of massive floods in Bihar, UNDP mobilized community volunteers to intensify relief efforts.
National Capacity Building Framework - UNDP focused on implementation of NCBF and supported State Institutes of Rural Development as part of an initiative on capacity development for local governance.
Increase in training of elected representatives – enabled through a UNDP and Ministry of Panchayati Raj project to support training of local elected representatives.

{2008}

Owner-drive reconstruction scaled-up - UNDP supported a civil society collaborative with the Bihar government to promote owner driven reconstruction using locally available materials and disaster resistant techniques to rebuild houses destroyed by the Kosi floods in Bihar. The pilot has since been up-scaled by the Government of Bihar to rebuild 100,000 houses destroyed by the floods.
National Biodiversity Authority - UNDP partnered with NBA to strengthen institutional structures to implement the Biological Diversity Act.
Urban poverty - With UNDP support, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation released the Urban Poverty Report and India's first municipal level HDR focused on the specific dynamics of human poverty in Mumbai.
Integrated women's empowerment model – piloted by UNDP with support from the IKEA Foundation in Eastern Uttar Pradesh to empower women in all spheres - social, political, economic and legal, in 500 villages.

{2009}

State Action Plans on Climate Change - UNDP began support to Ministry of Environment and Forests in preparing SAPCCs. Six states have developed action plans, a strategic step towards helping India meet national and international commitments and for states to meet development objectives that factor in adaptation and mitigation measures.
Advocacy for transgender rights – supported by UNDP enabled their inclusion in the 2011 Census of India as "other" category. The National Legal Services Authority broadened inclusion criteria to enable the community to access free legal aid from the government.
People's mid-term appraisal - UNDP supported first-ever people's mid-term appraisal of the 11th Five-Year Plan captured a range of recommendations stemming from people's experiences with the Plan.

{2010}

Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration - UNDP supported the setting up of the Centre for Climate Change and Environment at the National Institute of Administrative Research which is working closely with the premier Indian administrative services training institute LBSNAA to build a better understanding of climate change policy.
Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 2011 – informed by UNDP efforts in the Gulf of Mannar region.

{2011}

Partnership Agreement – signed by the Government of India and UNDP aimed to leverage India's vast development experience to accelerate progress towards the MDGs and increase its role in south south cooperation.
First-ever India Human Development Awards Manav Vikas – Instituted by the Planning Commission and UNDP, the Awards encourage excellence in data, analysis and ideas; and advocacy for human development
International Centre for Human Development – was established to offer high quality training and research opportunities to government officials, policy makers, academicians and development practitioners; and aims to encourage south-south dialogue and understanding on key human development issues.

{2012}

Improved energy efficiency measures in small scale secondary steel units - UNDP's support to India in adapting energy efficient technologies in the production sector has been recognized as a best practice by the government in India and talks are underway to upscale it across the country to another 1000 units. Globally, the technical support is being considered for adaption in other countries such as Bangladesh and Canada.

Indian Railways – UNDP supported the Ministry of Railways in improving energy efficiency including capacity development of the railway personnel.

{2013}

Learning from India experience - Under South-South Cooperation, UNDP facilitated learning and exchange on election management practices between the Election Commission of India and 12 other Asian and African election management bodies to impact elections covering more than 341 million people in these countries; strengthened voters education and awareness among the youth through knowledge products and social media channels.

Action plans for Climate Change – UNDP supports the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in coordinating the preparation of State Action Plans for Climate Change. UNDP directly supports nine states and is now supporting the implementation of plans in five states.

Models of biodiversity governance – UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change collates 300 models of biodiversity governance of which 50 outstanding models are awarded by the Ministry. UNDP also supports strengthening capacities of statutory bodies; preparation of People's Biodiversity Registers and Bio-cultural Community Protocols.

UNDP pioneers landscape and sea-scape based conservation approach and prepares biodiversity management plans cutting across multiple production sectors.

Transgender rights – UNDP advocates for a 'third gender' status for transgender persons that led to a landmark Supreme Court judgement to support transgender rights.

UNDPs Development Support Services – UNDP's Country Programme Action Plan signed with the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance enables UNDP to support administrative efficiency and effectiveness of government operations and schemes at the central and state level by providing demand-based development support services, with requisite professional skills, personnel and technical resources.

{2014}

Support to national and flagship schemes – UNDP supports the Ministry of Rural Development to improve efficiency, accountability and inclusiveness of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) and National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) at national and state levels through policy advice and technical assistance. UNDP is also instrumental in incremental green results for programmes such as MGNREGP, NRLM and Indira Avas Yojana.

Alternative building material and technology for rural housing – UNDP demonstrates use of alternative and affordable building material and technology under the aegis of Indira Avas Yojana. The central and the state governments commit to scale up and promote locally appropriate technologies in rural housing.

Capacity building for strengthened local governance and improved service delivery - UNDP supports state governments in capacity building of district frontline officials for citizen-centric service delivery. UNDP also provides guidance to state governments on developing participatory integrated planning processes for local governments, towards effective fund utilization and improved rural basic service delivery.

Inclusion of disaster risk reduction in the guidelines of centrally sponsored schemes and programmes – UNDP advocates for the inclusion of safety norms in Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana guidelines issued in 2015, specifying the designs and construction of houses to meet the requirements of structural safety against earthquake, flood, cyclone, landslides etc. UNDP successfully advocates for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in state development plans and schemes.

Promoting sustainable and inclusive development through international trade – UNDP and Exim Bank, India's premier financial institution work together to promote international trade, cooperate on skill and product development for medium and small enterprises particularly based in rural areas; enhance value chain and develop capacity to enhance south-south cooperation on trade promotion.

{2015}

Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Women – UNDP in partnership with the IKEA Foundation, Xyntéo, and the India Development Foundation aims to impact the lives of one million women in India through training, entrepreneurial skill development and employment.

Strengthening routine immunization systems by improving efficiencies in vaccine and cold chain logistics and - in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, UNDP with the support of Global Alliance for Vaccine Initiatives rolls out eVIN (electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network) with more than 4000 cold-chain points in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and aims to up-scale it to 11,000 points in eight states by the end of 2016 and to cover the entire country by 2020.

Partnership with NITI Aayog – Some of UNDP's highest impact projects have been with the Planning Commission which will now continue under the leadership of NITI Aayog. UNDP continues to support the central and the state governments towards bridging inequalities and strengthening capacities for decentralized planning. UNDP supports SDG roll-out to states and continues to provide catalytic support in achieving the SDGs.

Ganga rejuvenation - UNDP supports the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and the state governments' initiatives undertaken through the National Mission for Clean Ganga by providing technical assistance on improved sanitation, sustainable solid and liquid waste management through enhanced local capacities and linked livelihoods.

{2016-}

Support to SDGs 2016 – 2030

The concept of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universally applicable goals that balances the three dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, social, and economic. At the Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. It is a plan of action for the people, planet and prosperity.

UNDP is supporting India, both at the federal and provincial levels, in achieving the new Goals in three different ways, through the MAPS approach: mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support. Thus UNDP will support Indian government to reflect the new global agenda in national development plans and policies, to accelerate progress on SDG targets, and provide expertise on sustainable development and governance available to the central and state governments at all stages of implementation.
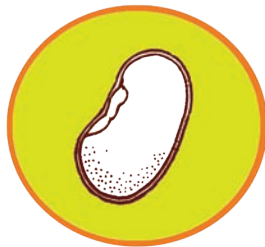
Five decades of collaboration:
Nurturing the seeds of development in India

Five decades of collaboration: Nurturing the seeds of development in India

The story of the past five decades of rapid, unprecedented growth in India is a proud one. It is a story of a country and a people challenging great odds to nurture the seeds of development. And it is a story in which many Indians, of different ethnicities, class, gender and walks of life have seized the reins of development and made it their own – not just changing the face of development in this country, but showing through leadership and example, how development can be made more effective all over the globe.

The face of development in India today is unique in its diversity. High-tech, sky-scraper-lined Bangalore, now called the 'Silicon Valley' of India, is just one example of how the country's business sector has boldly stretched the boundaries of economic growth.

At the other end of the spectrum, millions of poor, low-caste, uneducated village women are also effecting great change. Historically the least advantaged of all people in an India that still struggles with great disparity, these women are now lifting not just their own families, but whole villages out of poverty. About a million women as members of elected local bodies are providing leadership and emerging as role models. Meanwhile, the old ways meet the modern as traditional healers all over India – in answer to the crushing need to preserve their country's biodiversity and knowledge – share and document their knowledge of medicinal plants to treat everything from diabetes to the common cold. And HIV widows are now using statistics that turned the 'old rules' about development on their head, to push for change.
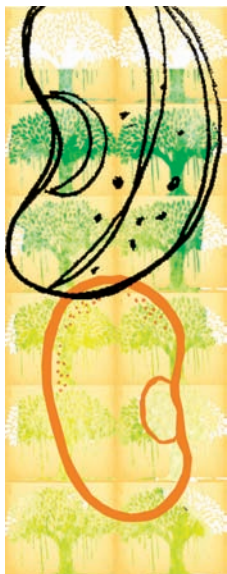
All of these are examples of how development impacts, and is impacted by, real people in India. But the "human face" of development could not exist without the essential infrastructure and other support structures that India has put into place in these past decades. The country's achievements since 1951 when it first partnered with the UN Special Fund and the Extended Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA) have been massive. A complex administrative and financial system; dramatically increased food production by more than five times since 1951 to feed a growing population; and the establishment of large industries and banks, as well as roads, railways, airports and ports, have all been crucial to the country's growth. High-quality institutions of primary and higher education have grown and developed talent; an exemplary electoral system has taken on the mantle of delivering free and fair elections; and a free press and strong civil society movement have strengthened democratic spaces.

While India's GDP quadrupled (increased four-fold) between 1992 and 2016, due to a steady annual growth rate of 7 percent or higher, large numbers of Indians are still left behind. The need for more inclusive, faster and more sustainable development in India – and especially the need for development that lifts up all people, not just a lucky few – is patently clear.

Still, if there's one thing that the world has learned about development, it's that the development ideas that work are those that plant a seed. And that each of these small seeds, over years of diligent care and attention from the people it affects, can grow into something much greater.

The partnership between India and UNDP over the past five decades have shown that, in the hands of the Indian people, such seeds can grow not just into something larger, but into something that might have been nearly impossible to foresee.

Few people know, for example, that the first mainframe computer to come to India was provided by UNDP, upon request from an Indian government that was already saying, back in the 1970s, that "computers are the future of India." But the computer itself was just a tiny seed. It was the hard work and dedication of the Indians themselves that has nurtured that seed into the "tech mecca" that India has become today.
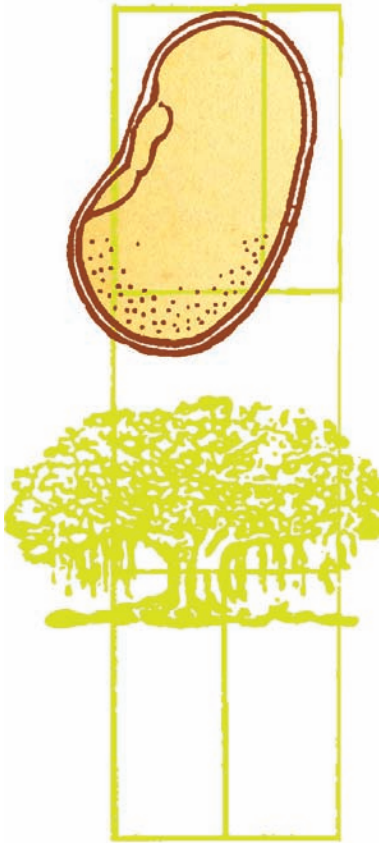
The past decades have marked a period of massive change, both for India and for global thinking about development. At India's Independence in 1947, the idea of promoting development had just begun to take a place on the global stage, with the success of the Marshall Plan that helped reconstruct Europe in the aftermath of World War II.

In a sense, India, global thinking about development, and UNDP have all grown together, with each deeply influencing the others.

In 1951, just four years after Independence, the Indian Government began to work with the two organizations that would later be joined into a single UNDP: the UN Special Fund and the Extended Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA). That partnership led, among other things, to support for the establishment and design of the curriculum of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), which was modeled on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The IIT is now made up of nineteen campuses and is considered a major engine of India's technology boom.

In January of 1966, UNDP was formally created by joining the Special Fund together with the EPTA, and it began working in partnership with the Indian government that same year.

This book aims to show how a number of transformative shifts in development thinking have evolved over the past four decades of development projects undertaken between the Government of India and UNDP – and how the Indian people have taken the seeds of development and nurtured them into something much greater than each initial seed.

A complete description of each partnership and project, many of which have been of seminal value to the growth trajectory of the country, would require many hundreds, if not thousands, of pages of text. For a brief overview, instead, of the variety and number of projects that have been carried out in the past decades, please refer to the timeline.

Seeds of change:
Shifting our approach to development

Shifting our approach to development

We've come a long way in over five decades. The world has begun to understand the immense potential of poor and marginalized people, including women, to act as "agents of change" in their own development, rather than seeing them as passive "recipients of assistance." We've come to realize that true development is about increasing the choices that people are free to exercise in life, rather than simply increasing income. We've learned to test innovative ideas about development through small pilot projects before scaling them up, rather than investing precious time and resources in large development projects that can fail due to seemingly small oversights. And we've learned that when it comes to the environment, people should be seen as the solution, not the problem.

These shifts in the way we approach development, however, are still just seeds. While there is latent potential within each seed, they would shrivel and die without the care and hard work of the Indian people. In other words, it's not so much the seed that's planted, but how you tend it that counts.

If there are heroes in the story of development in India, they are the Indian people – from struggling low-caste village mothers to tech specialists to everyone in between – who've toiled, watered, and patiently tended the seeds. Job titles, degrees, the usual trappings don't matter here. What matters is that each of these heroes, in a nation of over a billion people, has seen a seed of hope – hope to better the lives of their children, their neighbours, their communities and by extension the world – and have tended that seed with diligence and care.

Yet none of them would ever consider themselves heroes. Ask them, again and again, how they did it, and their replies are remarkably similar, and remarkably down-to-earth.

"I just saw a chance and got on with it," they say. And then, question answered, they get back to the work at hand – whether it's teaching children, growing mangoes, or improving advanced fingerprint technology that can help ensure the fair distribution of life-saving services to all Indians.

This book takes a look at the important shifts – the seeds of change – in the way we've come to approach development in India over the past four decades. But it is most of all a celebration of the greatest potential of all.

Seeds of change:
Poor and marginalized people as change agents

Poor and marginalized people as change agents

To speak to the poor, marginalized women who are lifting whole villages out of poverty in the state of Andhra Pradesh is to wonder how anyone could have overlooked the remarkable will that they bring to the fight – or the exponential effect that their courage, innovativeness and desire to contribute to their communities would have, when joined together with that of other women in Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

Take 35-year-old Kajabi, who lost the use of her legs to polio but now holds not just one, but three jobs. She contributes to the disabled community as an accountant and to India's next generation as a nursery school attendant. And she also runs her own village general store, which she started with a micro-loan from her SHG. Or take Ramaka, a member of a stigmatized caste who lost 4 of her 5 children before they reached adulthood and whose lifelong experience of discrimination was challenged when she first joined her SHG, where every member of the group was required to drink from the same vessel of water.

Before joining the SHG, that discrimination meant that no one would care for her when she was sick, says Ramaka, but joining the SHG has changed that. There's awe in her voice as she says that now "they will even cook for me." But Ramaka didn't just gain respect – she also went from making INR 2 (US$ 0.05) per day by watering someone else's mango orchard 30 years ago to buying an orchard of her own with a loan from her SHG.
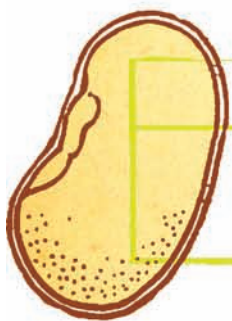
While Kajabi's and Ramaka's stories show how SHGs can bring about major changes for women and their families, they're just two small glimpses of the kind of shifts that now reach over 12 million households in India. It's a deceptively simple formula: bring a small group of women together, provide them with micro-loans and support, and allow them to be accountable to each other. But simple or not, this has arguably become India's largest and most successful poverty alleviation and empowerment programme.

It's hard to believe that a pilot project started in 1994, in conjunction with the state of Andhra Pradesh's Society to Eliminate Rural Poverty (SERP) under UNDP's South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP), now reaches more than 12 million families and is being scaled up to other states such as Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, with funding from the World Bank.

It's even harder to wrap ones head around the breadth and creativity of the initiatives started by SHGs and their members, based on small microcredit loans and the support and training they provide. These initiatives run the gamut from farmers joining together to get fairer prices for their crops, to bridge schools being created to get child labourers back into school. And, over and over, you hear the stories of women building whole businesses from tiny loans -- loans that allowed them to buy enough thread to weave a single sari; or to buy two oxen to rent out for agricultural labour; or to buy a small plot of land of their own on which to grow jasmine flowers.

Yet perhaps hardest of all is to grasp the magnitude of the social changes associated with the SHGs in the relatively short time since the programme began. For example, the new awareness that is developing in the SHG villages of a woman's value to her family – not just as a caregiver but as a breadwinner – has meant that many of these women are sharing family decision-making with their husbands for the first time. It has also led to a dramatic reduction in domestic violence:

"If you asked a group of 30 or so of these women, 10 years ago, how many of them had been beaten by their husbands in the past week, nearly all of them would have raised their hands. Now only one or two will raise their hands. That's how big the change has been."

says Jamuna Paruchuri, State Project Manager (Gender & Communications), SERP.

The development world has known for some time now that women are particularly diligent when it comes to re-investing their families' resources in the family, and their communities' resources back into the community. To sit with the members of an SHG on a mud floor and look at their loan records is to see this evidence, over and over. Inevitably, for each woman, amidst the loans to build their businesses, one water buffalo or sewing machine at a time, there are loans for children's schooling and to build a *pucca* house that will keep out the monsoon rains and expose children to fewer seasonal diseases.

That the poor and marginalized, especially women, have so much to contribute is no longer a surprise to anyone involved in development – and least of all to the SHG members themselves. What remains to be seen is the impact this seed of change will have far into the future, as millions of families all over India expand their possibilities and the exponential effects of the SHGs bear their fruits into the next generation.

K Raju, Former Secretary, Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, India reminisces about the beginning of SAPAP

"When we began efforts to better understand poverty in South Asia and what would work, it became clear that if we were really serious about poverty eradication, we needed to invest in organizations of the poor and the social mobilization that building these organizations requires. SAPAP revealed that there is tremendous potential in the poor, and that instead of objectifying them, we needed to see them as part of the solution and invest in people's organizations. In the early 90s, this was revolutionary, and seen as something that could be transformational, in terms of changing power equations. UNDP funded SAPAP pilots across the region. The pilot started in India in 1995 in 500-700 villages and ended in 2000. The pilot in India aimed to understand whether there was potential and willingness in the poor, and how these organizations should look and function. At the time, there was little wisdom and thinking in this area, unlike today when so much more has been written. We developed an institutional model of SHGs of women. Support was provided for a range of processes that could enable women to effectively participate, access bank loans and so on. Many lessons were learnt from this experiment. Almost every poor woman in the area was involved. We realized that women have the potential to be organized despite the many social and economic barriers that stand in their way. In my view, the self-realization and self-confidence that was instilled in women was transformative. A key feature of the pilot was the idea of federating SHGs, that is, organizing village women's organizations upwards. This helped in bringing together more and more women. The poor gained more visibility in the village, combating caste and village divides. For the very first time, many of these groups interfaced with the *gram panchayat* or village council and held large scale, meaningful interactions with local authorities. It was a vibrant model defined by the demonstration that women can bring about change in the state. Since the pilot ended, the World Bank upscaled the pilot in six districts and 7,000 villages. Today it's present in every district in Andhra Pradesh. It was a transformational effort that gave women confidence, improved asset base, livelihoods, increased investments in children, improvements in health and nutritional indicators and led to the emergence of solid risk management protection systems. Women are now a force to reckon with in the region."

Seeds of change

Development means
the freedom to choose

Banana farmers on a truck outside of Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh, are now able to get their crop to market on time, due to new roads throughout the State. Burhanpur reports an increase in selling price of INR 253 from 2006 – 07 to 2008 – 09. But perhaps the most important effect is that described by local farmer M.S. Patil: "All around you, you will see the signs of a better life. Ten years ago our village sent only two or three children to study in the high school a few kilometres away. Now a hundred children go."

Development means the freedom to choose

Today every student of development, anywhere on earth, learns about the Human Development Index (HDI). It's hard to believe we ever linked development only to income, in the form of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

But there was such a time, and it was not as long ago as you'd think. UNDP's first Human Development Report (HDR) was published in 1990, with the aim of measuring – and improving – all the ways in which development affects peoples' lives. This means not just GDP, but everything from health to literacy to clean water for all.

India quickly made the HDR its own, and the world's first sub-national HDR was published in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh in 1995. Since that time, State-level HDRs have emerged all over India, and HDRs are increasingly being carried out at the district level as well, with everyone from agricultural labourers in remote villages to the urban poor in massive cities like Mumbai having the chance to weigh in on what development means to them – and how to best measure that development.

In this country of over a billion people, many of whom are in danger of having their needs overlooked, State- and District-level HDRs mean an unprecedented chance to measure and improve access to crucial services for all.

In Madhya Pradesh (MP), the 2007 State HDR pinpointed the need for better roads and other infrastructure. MP is one of India's poorest states and one in which large numbers of people live in remote, hard-to-reach areas. The effects of its rough and often non-existent rural roads ranged from fragile crops being lost before they could reach market, to teachers and students alike being unable to reach schools that can offer a stepping-stone out of poverty for the next generation. The State Government paid attention, and nearly 4,000 new rural roads have been built in Madhya Pradesh since 2007, affecting the lives of many hundreds of thousands of people.

Still, the newly-constructed roads in Madhya Pradesh do more than help take crops to market. Rides to school that were previously too far for students have now become possible for some, due to the road improvement. And a crucial resource – teachers – is now more able to make the daily trip to school as well.

"In the past, the roads were so bad that the teachers themselves often couldn't make it to school" says Mrs. Renu Pant, District Collector, Burhanpur. "This was especially challenging for women teachers, who often had to travel long distances after dark to reach home."

The example of a woman teacher can go a long way toward inspiring a girl like fifth-grader Rupali, whose parents are farm labourers, to continue her studies. And this is no small matter, not just for Rupali but for the country as a whole. Women who are educated have been proven to have healthier and better-educated children themselves, a contribution to India's future that should not be underestimated.

In 1995 when Madhya Pradesh published the first global sub-national HDR, Dr. Rajan Katoch was the Director, Institutional Finance in the Government of Madhya Pradesh. He said –

"One looks back on the Madhya Pradesh Human Development Report (MP HDR) with a sense of satisfaction, not just because it received wide acclaim within and outside the country, but also primarily because it became, as indeed it was intended to, an instrument of state policy. It advocated a "new kind of politics", which instead of being shrouded in secrecy and forever promising a rosier future, took people into confidence, shared information on the realities, and sought to be held accountable against defined benchmarks. MP HDR remains unique in that it embodied a grand vision, an open commitment to a philosophy of action. This commitment sought to improve the lives of the poor in the state by carrying people along in a determined effort to step up progress in human development. Preparing HDRs has consequently caught on in a big way in a number of states [with the involvement of the Planning Commission and UNDP]."

But Madhya Pradesh is only one example. All over India, the HDR and other UNDP-supported reports that measure the impact of services on the lives of human beings are helping plant seeds of change. In Mumbai, for example, the HDR is now being used to determine the distribution of the city's budget, with greater funds going to areas with high mortality and low education rates, rather than being distributed equally whether an area has slums and other major human development challenges or not.

India has pioneered the practice of preparing independent sub-national Human Development Reports (HDRs) that translate the human development approach to practical and actionable strategies in the planning process at the state and district levels. As a result of the efforts of the Planning Commission and UNDP, India has the largest body of work on HDRs with 2 national, 30 state, 89 districts including 1 city HDR. Currently all distirct HDRs under preparation are being financed by the state governments. An important feature of these reports is that they are owned by the governments thereby making the governments responsible to act on the recommendations. The importance of HDR as a tool for planning is highlighted by the fact that the Ministry of Home Affairs had advised all districts to prepare HDRs to be used as District Gazetteers. Further, the 11th Plan (2007-12) mandated preparation of District HDRs for all districts in conjunction with district planning.This work in India has been recognized by UNDP globally as a practice leading to transformational change. HDRs of West Bengal and Chhattisgarh have also won global awards and are widely recognized for analytical quality and significant local participation in their preparation.

According to Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Former Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission,

"Many Indian states and districts have human development reports which point to the fact that we have come a long way in defining agreed parameters against which people measure progress."

Dr. R.V. Singh, former Special Secretary to Government of Odisha, Planning & Co-ordination Department

"UNDP has vigorously promoted the concept of human development as a multi-dimensional measure of the people's over-all well-being based on several socio-economic indicators including income, literacy, health, reproductive child health, access to safe drinking water and gender issues. Human development must be seen as an evolving process aimed at increasing the people's skills and capacities, and widening their choices to live long, healthy and fulfilled lives. UNDP has promoted decentralized planning and has created a Legislators' Forum in Odisha with a view to sensitising law-makers on human development issues. With support from UNDP, Odisha published its first Human Development Report 2004 and has recently prepared four District Human Development Reports. Odisha is also in the process of bringing out the first state-wide report based on a People's Audit of Health, Education and Livelihoods (PAHELI) survey. These and other initiatives, supported by UNDP, have re-oriented the focus of the state on the centrality of human issues in the development dialogue. This has also helped to undertake disaggregated analysis at district and sub-district levels, and at social levels with a view to addressing regional, unsocial and gender disparities. Odisha is poised to take many more initiatives to promote human development with active support from UNDP."

Govinda Rao, Director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy

"UNDP has been key in putting the human development issue on the table. They played a role in the preparation of most state HDRs. In Karnataka, while the Secretary of Planning initiated the State HDR on her own, UNDP aided her in convening a group of experts to support the process. Successive State Human Development reports have been funded by UNDP, which has further helped to focus attention on critical issues. UNDP's support has had both direct and indirect impacts. A high level Planning Committee meeting is examine universal healthcare – a direct result of new found attention on human development, triggered by UNDP's efforts. This committee is discussing an increase in healthcare spending from 1.2 percent to 2.5 to 3 percent - a direct result of the new focus on these issues. This comes at a time of fiscal austerity, when human development expenditure becomes the soft target. But the Government has been able to maintain these levels of spending despite austerity (though in real terms spending might have gone down because of increased healthcare wages and costs). Preliminary National Institute of Public Finance and Policy studies reveal that despite huge increases in central government spending on social sector schemes, such as the National Rural Health Mission and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, there is no substitution for state spending. Thus, UNDP's great indirect contribution has been in safeguarding national and state spending on human development, despite an austerity crunch. Interestingly, the IMF is now also looking at the impact of healthcare reforms, also probably an indirect effect of UNDP's work."

Like many of the women who work for and with UNDP partners the Save Foundation, Vasanti Shinde, age 26, only found out that she was HIV positive after her husband became seriously ill with an AIDS-related illness five years ago. Vasanti's husband subsequently died. Vasanti now lives with her two younger daughters Shrudha, age 10, and Vrinda, 8, in the one-room home of her brother in Sangli city. Vasanti's elder daughter, eleven year old Shubhada is being brought up by her paternal grandmother and sees her mother during holidays. Vasanti knows that Shubhada is HIV negative and Shruda is positive but anxiety over the result means that she refuses to have Vrinda tested for HIV. For a monthly income of Rs.3500, Vasanti works as a field officer and counselor for the Save Foundation. She works in the positive-people's pharmacy for no pay. Her work with the Save Foundation entitles her access to a credit union which provides low interest loans covering medical expenses. Though first-line drugs and homeopathic medicine keep Vasanti healthy, she is prone to infection and recently suffered a bout of influenza. Vasanti is completely open about her HIV status and most of her neighbours know that she is HIV positive. Vasanti says that "I used to feel like I was going to die. Now, because of the Save Foundation, I feel like I'm going to live."

Still, as exciting as its present and future possibilities look in the hands of the Indian people, the HDR is only part of the story. The HDR has helped us to make the groundbreaking shift from the old thinking, which considered income to be the only important measure of development. But other studies, carried out by civil society and government actors with UNDP support, have also made a huge difference in Indians' lives.

In just one example of the impact these studies can have on real people's lives, a 2006 study that looked at the economic impact of HIV/AIDS in India found that 90% of HIV-positive widows were thrown out of their married homes when their husbands died. Government pensions were available to widows in India only after the age of 60, yet many of the HIV-positive widows were still in their twenties. And these widows needed help right away, not just to treat their own illnesses but to support their children.

Thanks to the awareness created by the study, three states have now changed their approach to pensions, in order to ensure that HIV-positive widows are able to collect the pensions that can save their lives, regardless of age. The problem has also been brought into a nation-wide debate.

If current thinking considers development to be a function of increased choices in life for all, then this requires that Indians be able to advocate on their own behalf, not just through the HDR but through other evidence that measures the state of their overall development.

For young, HIV-positive widows like Vidya Ghume and Vasanti Shinde – and for their young daughters – this "seed of change" can make all the difference.

Seeds of change:

Start small – Innovative pilots win out over 'big development'

Start small – Innovative pilots win out over 'big development'

Padmavati Rangappa may not know it, as she stirs a steaming pot of *sambar*, fragrant with tamarind and coriander, for her family, but the biogas stove she's cooking on doesn't just save her two hours of cooking time and 10 kilos of firewood every day. And at the Kabbigere biomass gasifier, close to Padmavati's village, workers monitoring electricity output may not know it either.

But this biomass project represents one of the most important shifts in development thinking over the past decades.

Bring any two development workers together in the same room, anywhere on earth, and they'll start to tell tales of huge development projects gone wrong. The dam that aimed to provide jobs and electricity but displaced thousands of families; the project that trained 50 tailors in one small town but failed to consider who was going to hire so many of them; the post-tsunami house reconstruction that built cookie-cutter houses that didn't suit the needs of the families they were built for and thus were never lived in... The list goes on and on. Whether it was due to unforeseen challenges around local availability of building materials; cultural differences; or projects that for a myriad of reasons weren't embraced wholeheartedly by the communities they aimed to serve, too many such stories exist.

But how, then, to tackle India's massive development challenges – challenges that affect huge numbers of people and must prove effective within a context of extreme diversity?

The answer may be in projects like BERI (Biomass for Rural India), a UNDP-supported pilot project that aims to reduce greenhouse gases emitted through fossil fuel while, at the same time, providing energy to some of the 60 percent of rural households in India that still lack access to electricity.

Projects like this one aim to test the viability of the system put into place, within the landscape and culture and community it's meant to serve, before investing large quantities of time, money and other resources. In the case of the BERI project, this system spans all the way from the tree seedlings planted to provide fuel; to the workers feeding agricultural residue and wood into the gasifier; all the way to mothers like Padmavati, who uses the two precious hours she saves on cooking each day to make money growing jasmine flowers. Once the system has been proven to work, then it may be scaled up to meet the needs of a larger percentage of the population.

Another project that began as a pilot and has immense potential to impact greenhouse gas emissions, now that the Indian Government has committed to scaling it up nationwide, is one that recovers deadly methane gas generated through coal mining and uses it to produce electricity. The project has proven that production of electricity from methane gas is not just good for the environment but can be profitable as well.

Initially supported by UNDP and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Coalbed Methane Recovery and Commercial Utilisation project began in two mines in central India's Dhanbad. The carbon emissions prevented due to the pilot project, in those two mines alone, are already equivalent to the discharge from 180,000 cars. The potential impact of the scaled-up project on greenhouse emissions in India is significant. India's rapidly-expanding industry already makes it the seventh-largest emitter of methane and the third-largest coal producer on earth. It is good news, then, that recoverable coal bed methane reserves are estimated to be enough to cover as much as 7 percent of the country's installed capacity for electrical generation in the future.

But some of the people most excited about the project are the coal miners themselves. In the homes of 400 miners in Dhanbad, the miners now come home – after working long, sweaty hours many kilometers below the earth's surface – not to homes nearly as dark as a coal mine, but to homes that have uninterrupted electricity for the first time. And as they look at their children's faces, in the light of the lamps, they remember perhaps the greatest benefit of all: To no longer work in fear of methane emitted from the mines, which can be lethal if inhaled and can also potentially explode.

Demonstrating the commercial viability, environmental benefits and safety of coalbed methane extraction has helped shape policy on methane exploration and ownership. Today extraction is governed by the Coalbed Methane policy, which means blocks are awarded for exploration through a competitive bidding process. Coal mining companies are now more aware of the need to consider methane extraction prior to mining.

Like the CBM project, most of the other development projects cited in this book began as smaller pilots and are now being scaled up to varying degrees by various partners. But the idea of using innovative pilots to test ideas before scaling them up to fit a broader segment of the population is also very relevant to disaster prevention and response efforts.

In India, one of the most natural-disaster-prone countries on earth, helping families recover from the effects of floods, cyclones, earthquakes and other emergencies that can leave them homeless and destitute is crucial to long-term development. Helping families to get back on their feet as soon after a disaster as possible is key. Yet, in global disaster prevention and recovery, as in other areas affecting development, large-scale relief projects have too often failed to deliver the results that were so urgently needed.

Building community resilience

The 11th Five-Year Plan highlighted the significance of the UNDP Disaster Risk Management programme which in partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India is the largest community-based programme in the world. Acknowledging the contribution of the programme in empowering millions in high-risk areas to understand and reduce vulnerability and to undertake disaster risk management at the community level, the Planning Commission articulated the need to replicate the programme in other areas. The initiatives taken by UNDP focused on strengthening capacities of local government and institutions in disaster management and promoted appropriate hazard resistant construction techniques for communities to re-build their habitats. Community-based preparedness and mitigation plans have been successfully integrated with the activities of the local self-governments. Over 300 million people have been empowered to deal with disaster risk.
UNDP efforts have demonstrated that a people-centered approach to disaster risk management through strengthening local capacities within existing institutional frameworks at all levels is required to sustain disaster risk reduction.

Six years ago, three million inhabitants of India's poorest state, Bihar, were affected when the Kosi river flooded vast tracts of land in the northern part of the state. Hundreds of thousands of people were left homeless, and it was important to ensure that the homes rebuilt to house them would resist any further natural disasters and would be adapted to the needs of the families that would live in them. UNDP supported a pilot project that provided technical inputs required to rebuild 130 model homes (with private sector funds). The houses were designed to be multiple-hazard-resistant and used locally available materials, including specially-treated bamboo to provide strong bracing. The rebuilding of the homes was owner-driven, meaning that the families that would live in the houses were directly involved in both their design and construction. This ensured that they would suit the families' needs and provided both a sense of ownership and a sense of dignity, as the destitute families' homes were rebuilt. After seeing the success of the pilot and making adjustments as needed, the government of Bihar is now applying the approach to rebuild 100,000 houses.

N.S. Sundaray former Chief of the Odisha State Disaster Management Agency.

"UNDP has been a valuable partner in community-based disaster management programmes and other initiatives. In addition to financial and technical support, it has facilitated transfer of knowledge and shared global practices. Without UNDP's support, it would not have been possible to launch the pilot community-based disaster preparedness pilot in 10 blocks which was subsequently up-scaled as part of the Government of India's-UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme implemented in 17 states across India. Over the last decade, UNDP has facilitated the transfer of technical know-how to usher in a disaster resilient urban Odisha through implementing the Urban Earthquake Vulnerability Reduction Porject (UEVRP). Under the DRM Programme and UEVRP, a series of programmes was initiated to build capacity of stakeholders including engineers/ architects/ planners, disaster managers, masons, school teachers and students. It facilitated preparation of disaster management plans from village to district level and strengthened cyclone shelters and district and state emergency operation centres. UNDP is an important, committed co-lateral partner for building a disaster resilient Odisha."

Dr. Aurobindo Behera former Principal Secretary, Forest and Environment Department in the Government of Odisha.

"The visibility of UNDP in Odisha almost coincided with the super cyclone which struck the state in 1999 and caused incalculable damage to life and property. Since then, it has been actively collaborating with the state government on a range of social development and disaster management initiatives. UNDP played a catalytic role in community based disaster management which has become an important component of the State's disaster management framework since. UNDP also played a catalytic role in formulating the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy for the State, and preparing district HDRs. More recently, efforts have focused on community-based wildlife management and protection initiatives across the State. Thus, UNDP's role in certain select but critical areas has been of great significance."

Seeds of change:
People are a solution for the environment, not a problem

People are a solution for the environment, not a problem

At first glance, they seem to have little in common. In the South Indian state of Karnataka, wearing a bright-colored sari, Rangamma brings the knowledge of medicinal plants that she learned from her grandfather, a traditional healer, into an unusual setting: a modern health clinic.

Far away, on the southeastern coast of the country, the sun begins to come up over the sea as a fisherman in a checked *dhoti* shakes fish from a net with a rhythmic movement so well-practiced that he barely seems to glance at net or fish or hands. It's the end of a long night of fishing, not far from a protected marine park in the Gulf of Mannar, Tamil Nadu, but he's happy to chat about the mesh on the nets he uses. This mesh is wider than what he used to use, and it can spare small fingerling fish and other unwanted catch, helping ensure more sustainable fishing in these waters. Just a few kilometers away, the son of another fisherman is studying to be an electrician.

But Rangamma, the fisherman and the fisherman's son all have more in common than you might think. Bringing medicinal plants into modern health clinics; using simple solutions to make fishermen's catch more sustainable; and providing vocational training to help the next generation become less reliant on the sea's rapidly-dwindling resources – these are all examples of what happens when you stop thinking of people as the problem, when it comes to the environment, and start to think of people as the solution instead.

It's become more and more clear over the past several decades that the only development that makes any real sense is that which ensures the sustained wellbeing of the environment. But what wasn't so quickly understood, in the first decades of trying to preserve the environment in India, was how inextricably intertwined are local peoples' lives and livelihoods with the surrounding environment.

UNDP supported the Wildlife Institute of India, starting in 1983 and important conservation work began. But it quickly became clear that it would be impossible to try to preserve tigers and tiger habitat, for example at Kanha National Park, without taking into account the need for just and dignified work for the people living in the surrounding areas. When people in local communities are concerned with daily survival and unable to clearly see how preserving the environment can help their families' long-term wellbeing, it can be hard for them to act on behalf of the environment.

For too many years, conservationists saw this as a conflict of interests. In other words, it saw "people as a problem for the environment."

Today, the thinking is very different. By taking a holistic approach and looking at entire ecosystems, including local communities and livelihoods, the people living nearby can truly be seen as a solution for the environment. For example, conservation efforts at the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve no longer focus only on preserving marine life in the Reserve. Instead, they engage the fishing communities around the Reserve, and also support alternative sources of income for these communities.

This is why, at the Gulf of Mannar, fishermen now learn that simple solutions like using nets with larger mesh can make an important difference. They now know that these nets can allow small fingerling fish that would have been caught in the narrower mesh of the old nets to survive and reproduce in the future. This is why 26-year-old Kirubkavan, the son of a fisherman, is being provided with training as an electrician, to help reduce the number of people in the next generation who rely on fishing for a living. This is why Maria Pradeepa is learning to be a health assistant at Sathya Hospital in nearby Ramnad, along with other children of fishermen who receive vocational training in various other fields.

And this is also why, all the way across the country in Karnataka, Rangamma is using her knowledge of medicinal plants to treat everything from diabetes to a series of pregnancy-related ailments. Bringing this knowledge back into the health arena by sending Health Friends into village health centres that usually provide access only to western medicine is just the latest pilot innovation being tried out, as part of a much broader programme that now spans nine states all over India.

Carried out by the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FLRHT) and supported by UNDP, the programme works to promote the preservation of both medicinal plants and traditional medical knowledge. It does so through a series of intensive and livelihood-focused projects that have put people firmly at the centre of efforts to find positive solutions for the environment.

Traditional healers supported by the FLRHT are not just sharing their knowledge of traditional medicinal plants with others and acting to preserve the plants' habitat within India. They're also sharing their knowledge with others in countries as far-off as Uganda and Brazil. In yet another example of how a little support – a "seed of development" – can be nurtured into something much greater, traditional healers who might otherwise never have left their villages are now not just helping preserve India's knowledge and biodiversity. They are helping to influence the preservation of biodiversity all over the world.

Recognizing that institutions are an important piece of the puzzle in strengthening links between people, the environment and poverty reduction, UNDP supported one of the very first efforts to help local communities benefit from forests through the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE). Village extension schemes helped rural scientists come face to face with rural subsistence and small farmer economics. The emphasis on building management and research skills provided impetus to the scientific development of ICFRE institutes that were later to be set up across the country. These institues were motivated to reach out to the most marginalized – women and landless communities.

Dr. V.K.Bahuguna, Director General, ICFRE notes –

"UNDP support to ICFRE had contributed significantly in generating ideas to improve the forestry research information system in the country for meeting the livelihood needs of forest dependent people. It has helped orient research efforts in the country".

Today's seeds,
tomorrow's India

"I believe firmly that the secret to dynamic development lies at the intersection of challenges. The key, it seems to me, is finding the connections. If you drive at these linkages, you get an instant multiplier effect — solutions in one sphere unlock solutions in others."

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Today's seeds, tomorrow's India

This story of the Indian people and their remarkable ability to nurture the seeds of development into something large and life-sustaining is anything but over. Seeds are being planted as we speak: Seeds that promise to change the face of India even more dramatically over the coming decade, than it has changed since 1966.

In recent years, important inroads were made by the Indian government with UNDP support and advocacy and achievements cover a vast range of areas crucial to India's development.

UNDP has played a major role in supporting the Ministry of Rural Development operationalize India's landmark Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) by financing a Technical Cell to help run the project, a national series of programme evaluations, and a variety of programme-related pilots. Similarly, UNDP is credited with being the first international development partner to recognize the importance of India's Right to Information movement. It "broke new ground" by underwriting cross-state exchanges and international workshops of activists, elected representatives, and government officials, as also widespread governmental training once the Act was passed.

Nikhil Dey, Mazdoor Kishan Shakti Sangthan and Convenor of the National Campaign for People's Right to Information says –

"UNDP's key contribution was in the run-up to the passage of the Right to Information (RTI) Act between 2000 and 2005. UNDP supported the participation of government officials from across India in public hearings in Rajasthan, a pioneer in providing a public platform for these discussions. State officials that had travelled to Rajasthan watched the public hearings during the day and in the evening, we were able to engage in follow up discussions with them. These officials then started adapting what they had witnessed in Rajasthan in their individual states. UNDP also helped commission a series of studies that examined public hearings across different states. As a result of these efforts, public hearings in states such as Odisha received a big boost. The National Institute of Rural Development built upon these processes and took the debate further. This same documentation process was undertaken in Bihar and Rajasthan and so it became an important platform for learning and action. UNDP also used its position as a UN agency to help organize a crucial meeting in Delhi before the Delhi RTI Act was passed with the Chief Minister of the state. UN agencies can make a difference in that they provide a platform for different people to talk and ideate together. Participants came from states such as Goa which had just passed the ACT, Rajasthan which was a pioneer and the Delhi government. Their inputs helped the Delhi government improve its draft RTI Act. UNDP provided small but crucial financial support, which ultimately made a lot of difference."

Exchanging solutions for the future

Launched in 2005, Solution Exchange (SE) is a unique initiative by the United Nations in India that provides an impartial platform for exchange of knowledge and ideas among 33,000 (and growing!) development practitioners across 13 thematic areas (Communities of Practice - COPs). UNDP hosts and financially supports the largest number of Solution Exchange communities of practice: four including COPs on Climate Change, Microfinance, Decentralization, and Disaster Risk Reduction. While not originally designed to facilitate policy impact, Solution Exchange has in fact had significant impact on policy debates and formulation. Many government officials keenly follow and participate in the communities of practices and round tables being organized under the Solution Exchange.

To fight poverty, UNDP has supported state governments in Rajasthan and Jharkhand to create institutions to promote livelihoods; more than 500,000 people have benefited from these activities to date. More than 60,000 homeless people were added to the population registry and took an important step toward receiving support, after UNDP supported the first-ever night survey of the homeless in the country's capital city.


The 2.24 million people living with HIV in India are now better-situated to receive support, thanks to UNDP's work to get HIV-related concerns incorporated into state and national level planning. Benefits for people living with HIV range from free road transport to subsidized food grain and grants for low-cost housing. The 2010 India national census counts transgenders in the 'other' category for the first time, a crucial step towards greater access to services and support for marginalized sexual minorities.

To help India achieve its aim of bringing nearly 400 million people on-grid, UNDP is supporting key biomass and solar energy projects, as well as enhancing energy-efficient technologies in energy-intensive sectors. Pilots in tea processing and steel re-rolling sectors are enabling many small and medium size enterprises to save between 15 to 40 percent in energy costs.
As part of its commitment to protect the ozone layer, India has phased out its production of CFSs, CTCs and halons with UNDP support; the phase-out was completed a full 13 months ahead of schedule as a result. The scope of environmentally protected areas is also being continually expanded, linking conservation with community development. Community-conserved areas in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha are two new recent examples of efforts to conserve biodiverse rich areas through greater community participation and sustainable livelihood activities.

Sixty percent of the Indian land mass is prone to earthquakes and seventy percent is vulnerable to floods – and disasters impact nearly every other facet of development, from health to education to livelihoods. UNDP's Disaster Risk Reduction Programme, carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs, is the largest community-based programme in the world. More than 300 million people have been empowered to deal with disaster risk. Taking this one step further, the next phase of cooperation has focused on institutionalizing disaster risk activities across India's states. Government disaster managements institutions are also being strengthened at the state, district and urban levels with UNDP support.
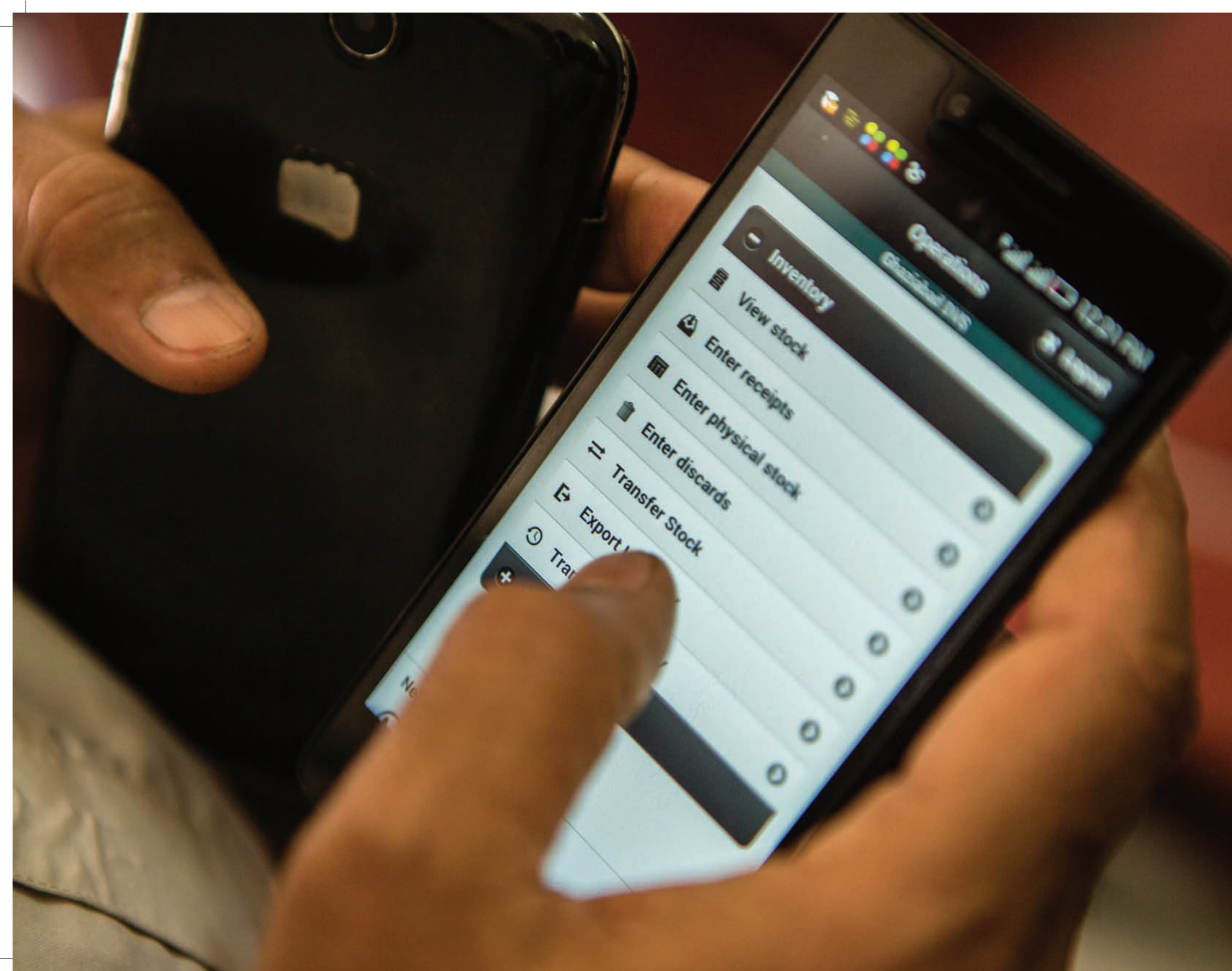
The future we want...

Everyone must get a fair share of the benefits of growth - with this aspiration and as partners in change, UNDP has supported India in taking advantage of opportunities which led to progress on human development on all fronts. However a lot is still to be achieved and we need to go the last mile on ending hunger, achieving full gender equality, improving health services and getting every child into school.

Last year, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – a universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world.

The 2030 Agenda – sets out targets to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years. The new development agenda will help us address these challenges and also build more peaceful and inclusive societies, create better jobs and tackles the environmental challenges of our time. The SDGs aim to do so with 2030 as the target date.

The guiding principles for SDGs are 'leave no one behind', universality and ambition. This means we need to think big and scale up development initiatives- implemented under government's leadership and budget to achieve the SDGs. There will be a need for capacity building, technical assistance and knowledge exchange through bilateral, multilateral and South-South cooperation mechanisms. It will also require developing integrated interventions and holistic reform solutions. SDG implementation will require emphasis on innovation, data collection, open participation and multi-stakeholder engagement. Government of India is committed to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and leave no one behind.

In this changing development landscape, UNDP will serve as a "facilitator" and "connector" that mashes up public and private, domestic and international sources of development finance and expertise into effective programmes that accelerate progress. UNDP is committed to support the Government of India by mainstreaming, accelerating and policy support to reflect the new global agenda in national, state and local level development plans, policies, budgets and monitoring frameworks and to accelerate progress on SDG targets. With decades of experience in providing development support UNDP is ready to provide strategic policy and project delivery support to the 2030 Agenda. We will continue to support the Government at all stages of implementation of sustainable development priorities and programmes. Working together, we can achieve the SDGs and ensure that no one is left behind.

The stories in the book are only a small fraction of the seeds of development that are being planted and nurtured. The partnership between the Indian Government and UNDP continues to engage everyone as change agents of their own development to help achieve the future we want...

UNDP works in more than 170 countries and territories, helping to achieve the eradication of poverty, and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion. We help countries to develop policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and build resilience in order to sustain development results. UNDP has worked in India since 1951 in almost all areas of human development, from democratic governance to poverty eradication, to sustainable energy and environmental management. UNDP's programmes are aligned with national priorities and are reviewed and adjusted annually.

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