

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



UNDP and Civil Society

The success of development and participatory governance depends on both a robust state and an active civil society with healthy levels of civic engagement. Empowered and active citizenship is an end in itself: essential for inclusive growth and national ownership. Promoting civic engagement is integral to the work of UNDP in all its priority areas of focus – poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), democratic governance, environment and energy, crisis prevention and recovery, combating HIV/AIDS and promoting women's empowerment. UNDP has a longstanding record in engaging with civil society at the country level. A 2008 global civil society inventory based on responses from 102 country offices found that UNDP has channeled more than \$100m through local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for programme delivery. In addition, given the growing role and influence of civil society actors in development debate and practice, from sub-national to national to global levels, UNDP emphasizes the need to draw on the strengths and capacities that exist in this sector to maximize the potential of civic engagement for development. To do so, UNDP aims to:

- Invest in civil society and civic engagement by facilitating an enabling environment for civil society, supporting and partnering with civil society and revitalizing UNDP capacity to engage with a fuller range of civil society actors.
- Promote citizen action for participatory democracy and development through collective citizen action for greater accountability.
- Engage with a range of non-state actors for an outward looking multilateralism that reinforces civic engagement and human development and advances the MDGs.

Making Development Work: Investing in Civil Society

UNDP takes a comprehensive approach to investing in a strong civil society that can supplement the development efforts of governments. In a number of countries UNDP advises governments on legal and regulatory frameworks to create an enabling environment for civil society participation. For example, in a joint venture in China with the European Union, UNDP launched a four-year, \$10.4m project

(2007-10) to strengthen rule of law and civil society participation. One component of the project aims at helping state actors recognize civil society contributions to development and to understand how civil society organizations (CSOs) operate and their role in development.

UNDP is also engaged in collaborative efforts in a number of countries to improve knowledge of the civil society sector through civil society-led assessments. For example, UNDP has supported the Civil Society Index (CSI) in 19 countries since 2004. With seed funding from UNDP in 1999, CIVICUS (World Alliance for Citizen Participation) launched the CSI as an independent assessment of, by and for civil society that can facilitate informed engagement with the sector at the country level. The CSI creates internal, rather than external, momentum for reform and catalyzes greater citizen engagement in democracy processes and responsive governance.

Civic Engagement and Accountability

A number of emerging trends in the development environment are driving the emphases on civic engagement and accountability. These include the rising influence of global civil society and the growing pressure on democratic institutions for better governance and aid and development effectiveness through concrete results, especially in the context of the current global crises.



Local consultations among village elders in Bangladesh
Photo: Munira Morshed Munni/UNDP Bangladesh

In Ethiopia, UNDP has facilitated financial and technical support for a citizen report card survey since 2004,

initiated by the Poverty Action Network of Civil Society in Ethiopia. Aimed at improving the poverty reduction strategy process, the report card was a simple but powerful tool in providing Government agencies with systematic citizen feedback on public services. This served to increase diagnostic capabilities, improve future policies and implementation, and raise awareness and capacity among stakeholders to improve the quality of their services. The programme relied extensively on a network of local civil society organizations, and also drew on advice and assistance from the Public Affairs Foundation in India on the citizen report card methodology. UNDP is committed to promoting more initiatives in civil society to strengthen South-South cooperation and capacity development.

In 2006, UNDP introduced a community-level Performance Budgeting Programme in Armenia that increased public involvement in government budgeting and led to greater transparency and more efficient expenditures. The programme grew from five pilot communities to thirteen in 2007. By focusing local budgets on services provided rather than money spent, the programme linked Government policies and priorities to specific targets and objectives. By better reflecting the needs of local communities, the simplified budgeting system has improved trust between the state and citizens.

The New Multilateralism and Human Development

Processes of globalization have given rise to new multi-layered networks of non-state actors increasingly active in development and have transformed the relationship between state and society. The participation of non-state actors — civil society, private sector, communities, local action networks, and social entrepreneurs — is fundamental to solving today's development challenges. The year 2010 marks a number of key milestones in international development. It is the 20th anniversary of the launch of the UNDP Human Development Report, the ten-year review of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, as well as "Beijing + 15." These reviews take place at a time of multiple global crises and turmoil that have profound implications for the world's poorest and the governance of its institutions. Together they present the United Nations with an important occasion to engage in strategic partnership with civil society to advance the development objectives of these initiatives.

Against this background, UNDP is mobilizing Platform HD2010 as a space and forum in which it can engage with civil society actors at multiple levels and areas to contribute to the emerging vision of a new multilateralism and to foster civic engagement in human development and the MDGs. UN (DP) and civil society will work together to pursue this vision of people-centred human development, through national, regional and global initiatives.

Civil Society and Crisis Recovery

Civic engagement is critical to crisis recovery and transition to development. In Sri Lanka, UNDP has sought ways to promote its engagement with local civil society organizations. Following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, UNDP made a concerted effort to strengthen the institutional capacities of its CSO partners and also forge relationships that are genuine partnerships founded on mutual respect. For example, the UNDP project STRONG PLACES (Sustaining Tsunami Recovery by Organizations Networking at the Grass-roots level through Promoting Local Accountability and Capacity Enhancement Systems) delivered small grants and trained more than 700 community-based organizations to strengthen their capacities to respond and attract greater funding. The programme improved organizational and governance practices of CSOs and their capacity to respond to local needs.

In West Africa, the proliferation of small arms is a serious threat to peace and security. In 2007, UNDP funded the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms to support civil society organizations in the region to advocate with governments and inter-governmental institutions on the need to ratify the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons. UNDP support helped civil society organizations to campaign effectively for the ratification of the convention, which is important to ensure that the control of small arms in West Africa has a legal basis.

Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples

UNDP believes that the engagement of indigenous peoples and their organizations is critical to preventing and resolving conflict, enhancing democratic governance, reducing poverty and sustainably managing the environment.

UNDP in Mexico collaborated with the Government in 2008 to establish 29 uninominal electoral districts where indigenous peoples made up 40 per cent or more of the population. Additionally, UNDP will initiate a capacity-development process to create better conditions for indigenous women to be politically active and effectively exercise their local authority duties.

In Indonesia, UNDP launched a programme in 2007 for indigenous peoples in Papua and West Papua, to help them to improve their entrepreneurial skills and gain better access to markets and economic returns from their resources.

For more information, visit:

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