

FAST FACTS

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Democratic Governance Programme in Myanmar (2013-2017) Results

UNDP promotes democratic governance, rule of law and human rights in Myanmar, a country in the midst of a profound democratic transition.

Credible elections in 2015 and the peaceful transfer of power to the former opposition National League for Democracy in 2016 are among the country's key achievements from several years of incremental reforms. However, challenges remain.

The history of the state in Myanmar has been characterised by isolation and authoritarian military rule. State institutions have had limited exposure to democratic and human rights principles, and face the challenge of reshaping institutional culture, and policies and procedures, in order to rebuild public trust and drive democratic reforms.

This challenge includes overturning a culture of top-down decision making, establishing procedures for consulting meaningfully with the public and ensuring that people's voices reach decision makers, and improving the ability and willingness of institutions to coordinate with each other.

Since 2013, the UNDP has worked in all three branches of government- the executive, the parliaments and the courts- at the Union and State/Region level, and with other stakeholders like civil society and universities, to overcome these challenges and promote more open and responsive governance, sustainable development, gender equality and human rights. Here are some of our highlights so far.

Improved capacity to design and implement reforms

As a result of our support, government institutions are in a better position to drive the ambitious and extensive reforms needed for democratic governance and rule of law.

Previously closed and limited reform processes have opened

Matters of Fact

- The 2008 Constitution provided for several key features of democratic governance, including separation of powers and the establishment of Parliaments at Union and State/Region level.
- The 2008 Constitution also reserved 25% of all parliamentary seats to the military and secured military control over several key Ministries. A 75% parliamentary majority is needed for constitutional change.
- Myanmar's Parliament is among the youngest in the world- it was established in its current form in 2011.
- In 2015, general elections largely considered to be credible returned a resounding victory for the opposition National League for Democracy, who took power peacefully in April 2016.
- The World Bank's Level of Government Effectiveness aggregate indicator scored Myanmar -1.17 out of 2.5 in 2014. Up from -1.34, this is still among the lowest in the world.
- The World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index scored Myanmar at 0.42 out of 1- in the bottom 11 countries in the index, it showed improvements in a number of areas including order and security.
- Myanmar scores are better in terms of policies for gender equality, with the World Bank rating it 3 out of 6.
- The UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, and others, continue to

up within and across institutions, and are fully owned and led by national partners- not by international stakeholders.

The **Parliament** is driving a successful institutional reform process which has seen the establishment and improvement of parliamentary services and improved capacity of staff and MPs.

UNDP supported the Parliament to establish a cross-chamber vision for capacity development, the Parliamentary Strategic Plan, through a consultative process run by MPs and the administrative leadership. With UNDP support they have developed departmental action plans to ensure it can be implemented.

As the Parliament's Strategic Plan and implementation plan is based on needs, and was developed by them, they have invested in its implementation, with the level of commitment carrying over into the new Parliament.



Myanmar's new and returning MPs attend the induction in the Parliamentary chamber, 2016 (Photo: UNDP/Pedro Ramirez)

In the **justice sector**, UNDP supported the Union Attorney General's Office to develop their own Strategic Plan through a consultative process- noted by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights as an important and positive step for the country. The Office of the Supreme Court of the Union also has a Strategic Plan.

This puts both institutions in a better position to discuss and develop an overall justice sector reform strategy. They both have experience in planning for reforms, and have committed to reform issues like ensuring fair trials, expanding legal assistance, and improving legislative development. Both had been initially reluctant to consider or discuss reforms.

Administrative reforms can affect how the state is organised and how effective it is in delivering services.

With UNDP support, the President set up cross-institution coordination structures with clear responsibilities for driving reforms. This helped overcome the tendency of government institutions to act as separate entities without coordinating efforts.

In 2015, UNDP supported partners from the President's Office, General Administration Department, and Union Civil Service Board to organise a consultation with 395 people, in the civil service and out. This helped the coordination structures draft a National Strategic Framework for Administrative Reform. This process has helped break down closed decision making, and ensure wide exposure to the principles and practices of administrative reform.

Greater openness to engaging with civil society

UNDP contributed to increased willingness by government to see civil society and private sector as equal partners in the future development of the country.

In 2013, civil society was not invited to participate in development cooperation meetings. By 2016, the government recognized the importance of their contribution to discussions, sitting together with civil society and the private sector to identify measures for improving public private dialogue and the civil society enabling environment.

UNDP contributed to changing attitudes towards consulting with the public and civil society in the **justice** sector. In addition to consulting wider stakeholders in the process of developing their Strategic Plan, justice actors have also held consultations on draft laws (legal aid, prevention of violence against women, and the child law in 2015)- a new practice- and started talking directly with communities through UNDP-facilitated roundtables in Mandalay and Taungyi- also a new practice.

In 2015 the police, law officers and General Administration Department officials participated for the first time in training on dialogue and mediation skills jointly with civil society. This training will help these actors better engage and communicate with each other in future.

Improved capacities for training and learning

As a result of UNDP support, the **Parliament** has better institutional capacity to sustainably provide training opportunities to staff and MPs, and coordinate development partner support to training.

The Parliament's Strategic Planning process was adopted as a model after the success of a focused strategic planning exercise around the development of a Learning Centre. The Learning Centre was launched in March 2015, and provides high quality facilities for in-house training and learning, and is now used regularly by the Parliament and by 12 other training providers. The Learning Centre supported the orientation and induction of the newly arrived MPs in 2016, including training staff to help them support new MPs.

UNDP improved training and facilitation skills in the parliament, **justice sector** and **civil service** training institutes by training trainers and developing curricula. Based on this, the Attorney General's Office carried out fair trials training for over 200 law officers in the states and regions; and a pool of volunteers from civil society, media

and government have delivered trainings on gender and women's empowerment to government, civil society, and communities.

Availability of data and evidence to inform decision making

UNDP has improved national capacity to collect missing data vital for the development of economic and social policies. In 2015 the Ministry of Planning conducted the first-ever comprehensive official survey of Myanmar's private sector using a methodology that follows international best practice. Having worked with UNDP on a business census in 2014, in 2015 the Ministry led the process and carried out all steps of the nationwide survey, with technical and financial support from UNDP. The survey, based on an improved questionnaire, sample and methodology, showcases how use of national systems strengthens capacity, and provides data critical to the calculation of important economic indicators.

UNDP conducted analysis of how Myanmar is collecting development data, and the government has taken forward recommendations for improving how data is collated and transmitted to international agencies- who use it to make decisions about international aid and investment in Myanmar. In 2015, UNDP focused on Least Developed Country status indicators, and in 2016 on the Sustainable Development Goals. This will also help ensure that data on results can help drive policy decisions and discussions with development partners.

In the civil service and justice sector, institutions have been willing to undertake research on sensitive topics pertaining to their own effectiveness, and consider findings as part of plans to improve. In 2015, the Union Civil Service Board led a perception survey of 2,010 civil servants on ethics, meritocracy and equal opportunities, with recommendations being considered in 2016. Justice actors participated in a mapping of justice service delivery in Rakhine and Kachin states.



Our Partners

Government partners: Ministry of Planning/Finance; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Health; Union Civil Service Board; Ministry of Home Affairs; Office of the Union Attorney General; Office of the Supreme Court of the Union; Constitutional Tribunal; and Parliaments (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, State and Region Hluttaws).

Other partners: Inter-Parliamentary Union, IDLO, BABSEA CLE, and Universities in Myanmar. UNDP's democratic governance programme is supported by the governments of Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Former donors include the governments of Australia, Denmark,

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