

Inside UNDP: Living up to Internal Commitments

IN 2008, UNDP had a number of internal challenges to address, from responding to the General Assembly-directed UN reform mandate to strengthening its partnerships with multilateral and bilateral institutions at a time when commitments are becoming increasingly strategic and results-oriented. In order to succeed, UNDP must continue to improve its efforts at bringing a high level of coherence, focus, accountability and transparency to all of its processes, while also keeping in mind that it is people, and not institutions, who bring about human development.

UNDP Strategic Plan 2008–2011

Throughout 2008, UNDP worked with its many

global partners to address some of the most immediate challenges presented by the food, fuel and financial crises, and will continue to play a lead role in developing strategic options for addressing the longer term implications of these crises. The Strategic Plan is playing a vital part in this, providing a clear and coherent blueprint for UNDP's development action. The Plan will continue to set UNDP's overall strategic vision and development, management and resource priorities and will include, for the first time, specific indicators and targets for development, UN coordination and management results, an innovation that will help keep the organization on track and focused in the challenging times ahead. Specifically, the Plan defines UNDP's operational activities



A credit officer from a UNCDF-supported microfinance institution collects loan repayments and advises women entrepreneurs in northern Togo on better business practices.

UNV VOLUNTEERS: PROMOTING INCLUSION THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteerism enables people to find a voice, express their needs and become active participants in development. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme contributes to peace and development through volunteerism. More than 7,700 UNV volunteers from over 150 countries were deployed worldwide in 2008. Thousands more directly contributed to development programmes through a UNV online volunteering service and UNV community volunteerism projects.

In the face of economic and other challenges, volunteerism can harness the ideas, energies and expertise of people and enable them to actively participate in the development of their own and other communities. With UNV support, the Asia Youth Volunteer Programme is sharing agricultural knowledge and entrepreneurial skills across Asia and Africa, and Liberia's Youth Corps volunteers are serving in rural schools and medical clinics to contribute to national recovery while enhancing their own employability.

UNV is helping governments and partners across the UN system to engage with poor and marginalized people and improve their access to services and opportunities. In **Lao PDR**, volunteers are supporting participatory planning and community access to government services. In **Honduras**, volunteers provide skills training and business coaching, and develop cultural and sporting events to engage youth and enhance social inclusion in order to curb the spread of violence.

Volunteerism is contributing to combating climate change on a global and a local scale. A UNV

youth volunteerism project in **Ethiopia** is helping to combat desertification, while volunteers are helping communities in fragile areas of **Cambodia** to develop sustainable livelihoods and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Volunteerism also remains an important asset for building peace. In 2008, an average of 2,400 UNV volunteers contributed to UN peacekeeping and special political missions, supporting elections in **Nepal** and working with displaced people and refugees in **Somalia**, the **DRC** and **Sudan**, and demobilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants in **Uganda**.

In **Kenya**, an emergency volunteer scheme engaged 21 UNV volunteers and almost 500 neighbourhood volunteers to address post-election violence by building confidence and trust in communities, providing counseling and supporting basic service delivery. In the **occupied Palestinian territory**, UNV volunteers engage youth and foster social cohesion, thus sustaining a youth empowerment project begun by UNDP more than a decade earlier. UNV volunteers also responded to cyclones in **Haiti** and flooding in **Myanmar** and worked with UN partners in **Ecuador**, **Mozambique** and **Yemen** in order to tackle hunger, malnutrition and food security.

Through these activities and in partnership with UNDP and other UN organizations, UNV is expanding the reach of development programmes and engaging people to ensure their inclusion and participation in development.

around its four development focus areas – poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery and environment and sustainable development – and clearly differentiates between a strengthened role for UNDP in supporting UN coordination and its role in operations activities in areas where UNDP has been assigned a leading role. Most importantly, the Plan renews UNDP's commitment to ensuring that all policy advice, technical support, advocacy and cooperation with other stakeholders be aimed at one end result: concrete improvements in people's lives and in the choices and opportunities open to them.

The UNDP Accountability System

Guided by UNDP's Strategic Plan, the Accountability System, composed of an Accountability Framework and an Oversight Policy, underscores the commitment of UNDP to results and risk-based performance management, as well as the shared values and culture of accountability and transparency. As UNDP works in increasingly risky, complex and challenging environments, the need for continuous strengthening of oversight and accountability has become even more important. The Framework underscores the importance of clear elements of stakeholder and managerial accountability in every area from

SURGE: IMMEDIATE CRISIS RESPONSE

As a way to make UNDP's organizational response to crises swifter and more comprehensive, it established SURGE, an immediate crisis response plan that supports UNDP's work in early recovery and reconstruction. UNDP has assembled a team of trained and certified UNDP staff who can be deployed to support UNDP Country Offices at a moment's notice in emergency situations.

Kamakshi Yakthumba, who does procurement for UNDP Nepal, was deployed to Myanmar as a member of the SURGE Team in May 2008, following Cyclone Nargis, which left more than 80,000 dead, officially, in its wake. Another 54,000 remain missing and are presumed dead.



In 2008, I was selected to become a SURGE Adviser after being nominated by the Procurement Support Office in New York based on my experiences in the field. First I had to attend a training workshop for seven days in Amman, Jordan, with nearly 30 other UNDP staff, where I was briefed on not just the SURGE programme and how it works but also the importance of stress management in a post-crisis situation. We also received security training on hostage survival and how to deal with a convoy ambush. Most importantly, I quickly learned that when we are sent to support a Country Office in a crisis, we should never forget that we are there to be “worker bees.” Country Offices are already stretched to their limits in a crisis situation, and they need us to hit the ground running. This message helped me the most during my mission in Myanmar.

Within one week of the workshop, I was deployed to support the Myanmar Country Office in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, which hit the country on 2 May, 2008. Winds of up to 200 kph swept through Yangon and the Irrawaddy Delta region causing severe damage and a substantial loss to livelihoods and infrastructure for millions of people.

When I arrived at the Country Office, I was very surprised at the calm atmosphere despite the fact that the Office had just been hit by a major crisis that had affected all its staff. It took me about a

week to get to know my colleagues and to understand their procurement needs, which ranged from securing basic goods and services such as IT equipment, life jackets and tarpaulins to recruiting data collectors to conduct a survey of the massive damages. I also began training project staff on procurement policies and procedures.

Because of the devastation wrought by the cyclone, there was a serious scarcity of goods like seeds, power tillers and boats while the currency rate fluctuated so wildly that vendor quotes were valid only for one day. It was also difficult to import goods into the country due to the various restrictions imposed by the Government, and I had difficulty communicating with vendors since I didn't speak the local language. And of course, all of the goods were needed “yesterday,” so I had my work cut out for me. However, thanks to my past experience doing procurement in Nepal combined with the help I received from the Myanmar procurement team, I was able to help solve a lot of problems. One of the team's major achievements was the procurement in three days of 250 power tillers for affected farmers, an order of nearly half a million dollars.

During my two month deployment there, the project staff took us to three villages where UNDP was providing assistance. The devastation and the desperation that I witnessed there further strengthened my resolve to work harder. It made all the long hours back at the office more than worth it. I was glad that through SURGE I could assist in UNDP's early recovery work in Myanmar.

Although my stay in Myanmar was for a short time only, my goal was to share my procurement knowledge to make life easier for the Country Office in the long months ahead. I worked with the procurement team to develop a pre-qualified supplier list, reworked procurement processes to make them more user-friendly and conducted a procurement workshop for all the Country Office and project staff. At the end of my deployment, I was happy to go home to my two children but I was going to miss all the people who had helped make my assignment a success. I left with great admiration for the people of Myanmar and their resilience in the face of all difficulties.

planning and strategic direction to risk management to partnership management. For example, as part of the revamped Information Disclosure Policy key documents are posted on UNDP's public websites.

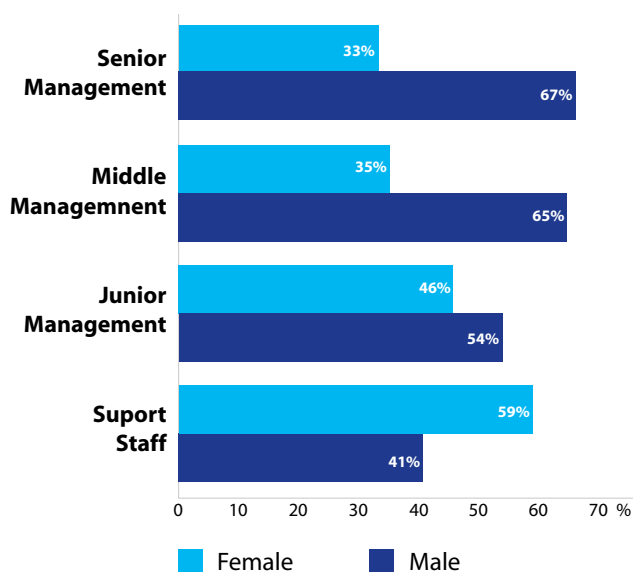
Human Resources in UNDP: A People-Centred Strategy 2008–2011

UNDP's human resource strategy takes as its point of departure a simple conviction: that human resources is about people and people are the core asset of UNDP. It directly responds to internal and external changes that impact the work environment and it addresses the human resources priorities of the Strategic Plan. In order for UNDP to clarify expectations for staff and set clear standards for performance it developed and put into practice a Competency Framework in 2008. In developing a gender action plan, renewed focus has been given to the development and retention of women. The human resources strategy also responds to issues flagged by UNDP's Global Staff Surveys and other staff consultations. The Surveys have reflected high scores in terms of staff pride for where they work and what they do although work/life balance and workplace pressure remain a key staff concern. Improvements during the Strategy period will build on advancing flexible working arrangements as well as on staff well-being initiatives like improving work/life balance and UN



UNDP's Learning Resources Centre conducted dozens of training sessions for staff in 2008.

GENDER PARITY VARIES WITH MANAGEMENT LEVEL UNDP global workforce, 2008



Source: Office of Human Resources/UNDP

Cares (the UN system-wide workplace programme on HIV and AIDS). Finally, partnerships between the Ombudsman, the Ethics Office and the staff counsellors' network are being forged, and will be aligned with the impending changes in the Administration of Justice system.

A newly-implemented Atlas Human Resources Module will increase the transparency of corporate processes and events in terms of selection, promotion and performance management as well as streamlining human resources functions like payroll, disbursement and data transactions. Additionally, in 2005, the UN High-Level Committee on Management endorsed the adoption of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), which are set to be adopted by UNDP. This past year has seen a budget, programme team and programme board set up and an organization impact study completed. IPSAS will improve transparency and accountability, and standardize accounting and financial reporting, permitting easier comparisons between UN organizations.