

AFRICA

PARTNERSHIPS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

For Africa, the last decade has been a time of hope in the midst of steadily accelerating political and economic progress. Most Africans now live under democratic governments, economic growth rates continue to edge upward and more African countries are making development a tangible reality for their citizens. Eritrea has reduced child mortality by 20 percent; Malawi is sending 30 percent more of its children to school; Tanzania has achieved GDP growth rates touching eight percent. A number of longstanding conflicts in the region have finally come to a close—the list includes Angola, Liberia, Mozambique and Sierra Leone.

These glimmers of good news don't obscure the fact that Africa's development challenges remain complex and large, from environmental degradation to the devastation of HIV/AIDS. If the current situation remains unchanged, the region as a whole will not make any of the MDGs, and the poverty goal alone will not be attained until 2147. Still, UNDP, which is present in 45 sub-Saharan African countries, and has worked in many since their independence, can predict an alternative vision. We know firsthand the enormous possibilities of Africa's energy and talent. If this can be combined with the right mixture of leadership and partnership, resources and meaningful democratic participation, nearly every African nation could fulfill the MDGs by 2015.

Currently, 50 percent of UNDP's core resources fund our programmes in Africa. We focus specifically on four areas that draw on our practice areas: democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, and HIV/AIDS.

A NEW SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

Two of the most optimistic events in Africa in recent years have reflected an increasing understanding that African countries can achieve more together than alone: the landmark formation of the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). These serve as regional forums to support good governance and peace, and to cooperate on economic opportunities in a growing global marketplace. UNDP has backed both initiatives from the outset by leveraging financial and technical resources. In 2003, a comprehensive package of support for NEPAD helped launch the African Peer Review Mechanism, which evaluates democratic performance, and assisted efforts to boost the private sector.

Within many countries across the continent, constraints on the capacity of public institutions remain. UNDP carries out many initiatives to help countries function more efficiently and respond more effectively to national needs. In 2003, we supported efforts to strengthen justice systems, decentralize financial planning and improve agricultural output. We worked with Mali to prepare for local elections, and with Mozambique on a national plan to care for its environment. Cameroon turned to UNDP's expertise to help increase the efficiency of its civil service oversight.

Countries with the highest rates of HIV/AIDS are facing the relatively new issue of maintaining essential public services in the face of the erosion of human resources. The Southern Africa Capacity Initiative, launched in March 2004, will assist nine countries through a range of measures, from cultivating leadership skills to filling gaps with innovative technology.

In Lesotho, where chronic poverty, food shortages and a 30 percent HIV infection rate mingle and entrench each other, UNDP is help-

Since law and order is critical for peace, Rwanda turned to UNDP for assistance with its police force after its genocide. Support has covered training for individual officers, new police stations and training facilities, and a human rights programme. Today, officers like these bring a new sense of security to 145 districts across the country.





UNDP PRACTICES AT WORK

Regional: Partnered with the Southern African Development Community on integrated water management.

Regional: Built HIV/AIDS leadership skills in civil society groups from 40 countries.

Angola: Assisted in demobilizing and reintegrating 85,000 ex-combatants. (1)

Burkina Faso: Co-sponsored a donor roundtable attracting \$2 billion for poverty reduction. (2)

Burundi: Joined NGOs to provide core services to a million people. (3)

Central African Republic: Backed creation of the Provisional Coalition Government. (4)

Ethiopia: Brought computers and the Internet to high schools. (5)

São Tomé and Príncipe: Helped strengthen financial oversight. (6)

Swaziland: Supported revision of major laws on women's property and marital rights. (7)

Tanzania: Convened businesses to determine ways to increase investment and assist the poor. (8)

ing the government in mapping out a comprehensive response through its poverty reduction strategy paper.

For Africa, rapid economic growth will be key to achieving the MDGs, and it will be determined in part by the ability to access global markets. Under our regional African Financial Markets Initiative, we began working with a series of countries to strengthen their financial institutions. A partnership with the New York Stock Exchange and the African Stock Exchanges Association led to the organization of the first African Capital Markets Development Forum, which gathered more than 500 participants in New York to learn more

about the potential of African capital markets and to exchange best practices. We have brought the rating agency Standard & Poor's on board in several countries to assist them in obtaining their first sovereign credit ratings, a proven entry point to global markets. Four countries—Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Ghana—have now been rated.

These are just some of the many signs that Africa is on the verge of a brighter future. UNDP is helping connect the continent to the knowledge, experience and resources so they can make it happen—by 2015.

UNCDF: THE MDGS IN THE LDCS

Through local governance and micro-finance programmes, the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) works in partnership with UNDP to bring the promise of the MDGs to some of the poorest communities in the least developed countries (LDCs). Despite the continued challenges it faces in meeting requests for assistance, and in reaching its Executive Board target of \$30 million a year in core contributions, UNCDF is having an impact that extends far beyond its individual programmes.

The fund's 2003 results-oriented annual report determined that,

between 2000 and 2003, more than 6.5 million people benefited from several thousand small-scale infrastructure projects delivered through UNCDF-supported local governance programmes. These projects have achieved significant impact in translating experiences on the ground into an impact on national policies. In 15 countries, they influenced national decentralization policies for the financing and provision of infrastructure and services to poor rural populations.

During the past four years, micro-finance institutions directly supported

by UNCDF offered services to more than half a million people. Furthermore, the fund assisted 17 countries in creating policies to encourage microfinance to flourish. In 2003, the UN General Assembly designated UNCDF and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs as coordinators for the International Year of Microcredit in 2005. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the year would underscore the importance of microfinance as an integral part of the efforts to achieve the MDGs.