

# UNDP Results

## Civil Society and Civic Engagement in the Arab States Region



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.

### Approach

The peoples' movement that spread across North Africa and other parts of the Arab world in 2011 expressed a growing demand for government accountability, especially by the younger generation. It resulted in political transitions or reforms in half a dozen countries, affecting the lives of over 100 million people. In spite of significant gains, many countries still face pressing problems—civil unrest, rising unemployment, weak institutional capacities and challenges in ensuring fair elections and constitutional processes. All these underline the important need for cooperative and transparent state-citizen relations to achieve a viable and peaceful transition.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched a new strategy for working in these countries, one that is geared towards engaging a diversity of stakeholders, from the Government to community-based organizations. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are crucial partners for UNDP in the Arab States region in bringing about concrete, sustainable and nationally-owned change at all levels of society.

### R E S U L T S

#### Supporting civil society engagement during democratic transition

The call for transformational change in the Arab States came from citizens who collectively demanded participation, transparency and accountability from their governments. In all its work<sup>1</sup>, UNDP promotes civic engagement and an enabling environment for civil society. It does this by supporting work that brings together the State and its citizens, in areas such as human rights legislation, anti-corruption initiatives and efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As a result:

- Electoral commissions and their staff in six Arab States countries received critical training, technical expertise and knowledge from exchanges with other countries, including **Indonesia, South Africa** and countries in Latin America.
- In **Egypt**, UNDP supported an inclusive national dialogue process, helping the National Council for Human Rights to train 849 election observers representing civil society, and to issue identity cards to newly registered voters. As a result, Egypt's first post-transition Parliamentary elections saw an increase in the number of voters, including women.
- Following the revolution in **Tunisia**, UNDP helped members of the National Constituent Assembly—23 percent of them women—in their efforts to design and implement an inclusive process of transition. UNDP helped to develop the capacities of newly formed political parties and provided expert advice in the drafting of a new law guaranteeing civil society rights to political participation. UNDP also supported the establishment of an anti-corruption coalition (*Alliance Tunisienne pour l'Intégrité et la Transparence*) and its work in developing a national anti-corruption partnership strategy with the Ministry of Administrative Reform.
- Working primarily with ministries of justice and the interior,

<sup>1</sup> UNDP's thematic areas are 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 assisted countries and territories including **Egypt, Somalia, Tunisia, Yemen** and the occupied Palestinian territory in helping institutions, formal and informal, to provide individuals and communities with access to justice and the rule of law. In conflict-affected settings, UNDP worked to strengthen criminal investigation techniques, legal assistance for local populations and logistical support to police investigators. For example, in **Somalia**, mobile courts in Somaliland increased the registration of formal cases by 64 percent; in Puntland the courts extended their coverage to 50 villages, including two camps for internally displaced persons.

- In 2012, UNDP supported a range of innovative projects in the region aimed at piloting approaches to increase civic and political participation of young people. This included support for establishing a public oversight organization in **Yemen** tasked with monitoring the rights of youth, developing an interactive computer game on local governance in **Jordan**, promoting the participation of youth in local councils in **Somalia** and setting up youth-led public oversight initiatives at the local level in the occupied Palestinian territory.

### Supporting civil engagement in poverty alleviation and human development

UNDP is working to scale up the contribution of civil society organizations to social cohesion and community-driven development. With young people accounting for more than one-third of the total inhabitants of the Arab region, UNDP has made youth an integral part of its regional programmes since 2004. UNDP is also working with countries to link environmental protection and poverty reduction, making them a critical part of their development agendas. Key results include:

- UNDP, in partnership with CSOs and national authorities, implemented a jobs programme for people living with HIV in seven Arab States countries. The initiative included vocational and microcredit management training for 24 local and national youth CSOs in **Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon** and **Tunisia**.

- In several countries in the region such as **Djibouti**, UNDP helped partners to integrate environmental considerations into development plans, establish effective partnerships, secure resources, and implement programmes to support sustainable, low-carbon, climate-resilient development pathways. In **Lebanon**, more than 3,000 small farmers of North Lebanon, South Lebanon and the Bekaa region are benefiting from a UNDP partnership initiative that supports honey farmers, from production to marketing.

- UNDP delivered rapid and timely assistance at a crucial time of transition in the region. For instance, to address water shortages in **Iraq**, UNDP quickly funded an Iraqi NGO, al-Rafidain Feministic Organization, to improve water supply in Al-Bou Rishaa village in the Khudir District of Muthanna. This connected more than 1,500 people and about 60 to 65 internally displaced families to the main water grid.

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