

## THE ROAD TO PEACE

Crisis came in many forms, to many people throughout 2003—the war in Iraq, internal conflict in Liberia, the devastating earthquake in Iran, and the long and deadly hostilities in Colombia and Sudan. Sadly, these are just a few examples. By some estimates, a quarter of the world's population lives in the midst of some form of upheaval. Development cannot take root when people are fleeing to a refugee camp, or fearing that a trip to the market might mean death from a landmine or the blast of a car bomb.

And yet these are precisely the situations where development is needed most, and where there is an undeniable incentive to move forward on the MDGs. Stable, equitable societies where people have a real voice in the decisions that shape their lives are less likely to collapse into chaos. In the case of natural disasters, they are more likely to recover rapidly and suffer far fewer losses of life. When not enough has been done to ease vast social, economic and political disparities, and a conflict or disaster does erupt, it saps the strength of whatever development has taken place, setting back countries, in some cases, by decades.

In recent years, UNDP has seen more than half our programme countries request support related to preventing or dealing with crisis. Providing this assistance has become one of our most demanded services, whether in the form of mobilizing international resources and partnerships, or working with national governments to carry out on-the-ground development initiatives that connect people to the prospect of a better life.

Across South Eastern Europe, UNDP helps fight the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Their proliferation fuels crime and conflict, while undermining peace-building. A regional project, the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, supports the 1999 Stability Pact in assisting such countries as Serbia and Montenegro to collect and destroy thousands of deadly weapons.

Within the UN system for coordinating development and disaster assistance, we play a pivotal role in the transition between relief and development, both under our own organizational mandate, and as head of the UNDG and coordinator of UN Country Teams. Particularly in the case of countries emerging from conflict, transition is a fragile time, and a relapse into fighting can happen in a flash. Starting as soon as conditions permit, we draw upon our experience and relationships with a broad spectrum of partners to put in place viable, concrete alternatives to renewed warfare. In many countries, we already have a long-established presence, and are ideally positioned for the task of integrating development within the earliest stages of recovery and beyond.

We place special emphasis on supporting national capacities to manage crisis situations, while helping governments and civil society address factors that could fuel future incidents. Our country offices take the lead, backed by our Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. The bureau also oversees our crisis prevention and recovery practice area, which facilitates a global exchange of knowledge on strategies with a proven track record. There are strong connections as well to our other practices, especially democratic governance and poverty reduction, and integral links to the broader agenda of the MDGs.



## LIBERIA: A JOURNEY TOWARDS RECOVERY

The promise of peace came in 2003 to Liberia, a land of shell-marked towns and an 85 percent unemployment rate, where people live in shipping containers that line the shattered roads. For war-weary Liberians, until recently, the MDGs were impossible to plan for, or even imagine.

Hope began to dawn with the August signing of the Comprehensive Accra Peace Accords and the subsequent installation of a transitional government. As the UN peacekeeping troops began to arrive, UNDP, backed by a nearly four-decade presence in Liberia and extensive expertise in crisis countries, quickly stepped in to help marshal international support. With over 800,000 displaced people and refugees, and its infrastructure in shambles, the country requires assistance to conclusively end 14 years of war. It has been a conflict that not only brutalized Liberia, but shook the entire West African region.

In February 2004, UNDP, as head of the UNDG, coordinated an international donors meeting, along with the World Bank and the United States Government. The Liberia Reconstruction Conference raised over \$500 million. These funds will go towards priorities identified by an assessment carried out by the UN and the bank, which worked closely with the transitional government and international donors. Government and civil society representatives presented a convincing case for Liberia's most pressing needs, and forged partnerships to manage the injection of new resources.

All through this process, UNDP has also continued working on the ground in Liberia, taking new development initiatives and building on those already in place. We are helping to disarm and reintegrate combatants, restore basic services, and build the capacity for governance reform and economic management. To help

heal some of the wounds of the past, we are supporting human rights initiatives, including those aiming for the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Other projects are addressing environmental degradation and the rapid rise in HIV infection rates, the latter in close partnership with the Global Fund to Combat AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

With our growing experience in post-conflict countries around the world, UNDP knows that peace may begin when soldiers agree to put down their guns. But it only remains when people are able to revitalize their communities, depend on functioning services and participate in shaping their society. These pieces are now coming together for Liberia. In the lead-up to the elections scheduled for 2005, UNDP will be there as a development advisor and partner, helping Liberians make sure they form the picture for the future.

### FOUNDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT THAT LASTS

UNDP concentrates on several aspects of crisis prevention and recovery, while retaining the flexibility to respond to individual situations. During the post-conflict period, a major area of our expertise, we look for ways to help not only defuse tensions by filling immediate gaps, but also to help countries rebuild functioning institutions that can ensure stability. Our Afghanistan programme has assisted the Afghan Ministry of Interior in training a civilian police service, and we have been integrally involved in supporting Afghanistan's slow but judiciously constructed approach to national elections. Now we are working closely with the government and the UN Country Team on a platform for development over the longer term. Tailored around the MDGs, and drawing upon Afghanistan's first MDG Report, *Opening Doors to Opportunity*, it will extend Afghanistan's ability to serve its citizens on every level, from the rehabilita-

tion of courtrooms to the care of the disabled.

In Iraq, we were prepared for a full-scale reconstruction operation. Despite the interruption caused by the attack on the UN's Baghdad offices, we have continued with major projects such as supporting the emergency rehabilitation of electrical systems, dredging the access channels to the Umm Qasr port, and running a programme to employ poor residents of Baghdad and Basra in removing rubble from the streets. In early 2004, 19 countries committed over \$1 billion to the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, which is jointly administered by UNDP (on behalf of the UNDG) and the World Bank.

Another UNDP priority is conflict prevention and peace-building, where we help bolster institutions that can prevent conflicts and address underlying causes. Kyrgyzstan's three provinces in the Ferghana Valley, among its poorest and most remote, struggled with the disruption of traditional economic and political

patterns after the Soviet Union collapsed. When ethnic tensions began to escalate, the government consulted UNDP about a programme for preventive development. Beyond strengthening the foundation of participatory local government, a pilot project included an early warning information system. Community organizations, many with multi-ethnic members, were trained to work with local government on managing conflict. Micro capital grants brought communities together around development planning, with tensions defusing as people collectively constructed irrigation systems and schools. The programme as a whole has now expanded across all three provinces, and involves cross-border activities with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

In its approach to peace-building, UNDP also emphasizes the reduction of small arms—a staple of modern warfare—along with overall disarmament and demobilization. Soon after the signing of the Marcoussis Peace Agreement in Côte d’Ivoire, we began working with the Government of National Reconciliation on a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategy, a process that fostered negotiations between belligerent forces. Our quick intervention and initial seed funding of \$500,000 later attracted support from bilateral donors, who have since contributed nearly \$10 million towards a series of major demobilization projects. Globally in 2003, through our Thematic

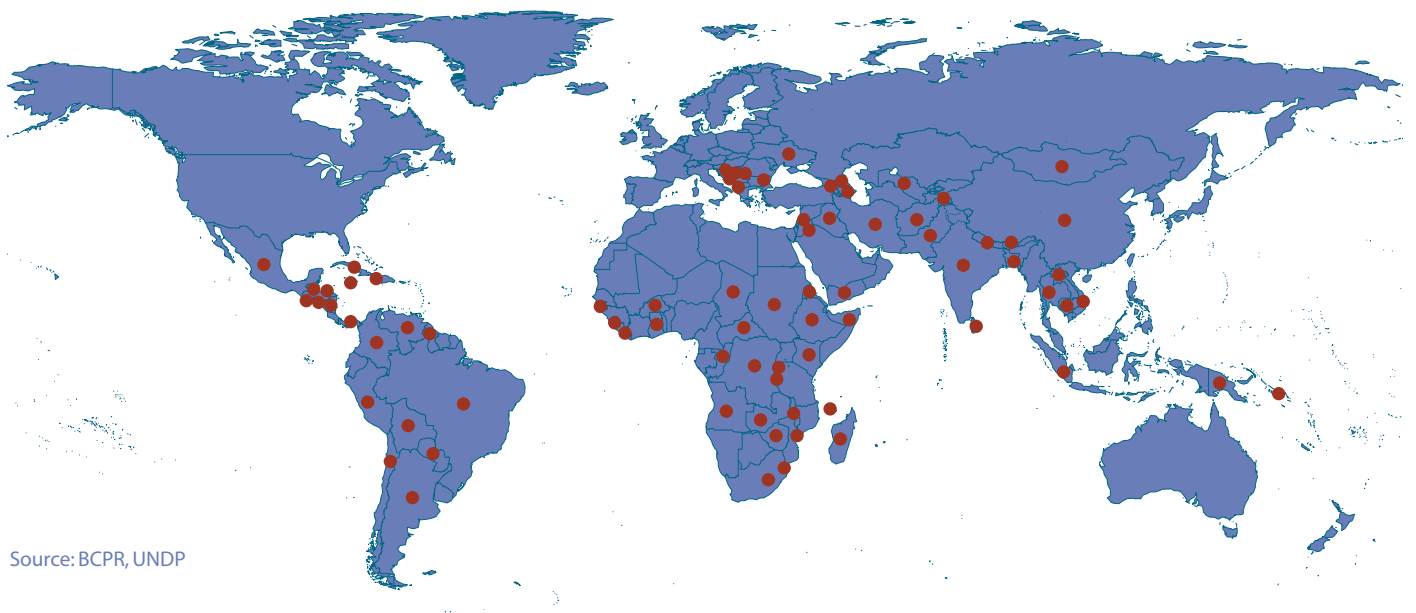
Trust Fund for Crisis Prevention and Recovery alone, UNDP aided the collection and destruction of 123,730 weapons and 170 tons of ammunition, including one million small arms cartridges.

We work on mine action as well, both as an international advocate for including it in development programming, and within individual countries. In Angola, we have helped the government build its capacity to cope with the deadly devices that litter its countryside. New national and provincial mine action authorities allow the government to clearly identify priorities and link mine action programmes to development. It is also pressing forward on such issues as the need to return farmers to their fields.

The devastating 2003 earthquake in the historic city of Bam, Iran was only one in a series of natural disasters in recent years that has taken a tremendous toll on human life and development. UNDP came forward immediately to coordinate an inter-agency assessment of relief and recovery needs, and then organized an international appeal for over \$30 million to provide shelter and jobs. More generally, UNDP works to ensure that development programmes factor in potential disaster risks, and assess ways to contend with them. A major contribution was the 2004 launch of the global report *Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge*

#### COUNTRIES FACING CRISIS

In 2003, 78 nations requested UNDP expertise to help them prevent or recover from conflicts or natural disasters.



Source: BCPR, UNDP



When an earthquake devastated the Iranian city of Bam, UNDP immediately helped conduct an assessment of what was needed to repair the damage, and coordinated a joint UN appeal for emergency funds. Reconstruction efforts are now reaching out to people like Mauma Polash, surrounded by items she salvaged from her home.

*for Development*. It chronicles how many natural disasters stem from poorly planned development. The pioneering Disaster Risk Index measures different vulnerabilities, identifies development factors that contribute to risk, and quantifies the relationship between disaster and policy choices.

#### **INTERVENTION THAT TURNS THE TIDE**

UNDP is now pursuing more regional strategies on crisis, given that turmoil in one country so often spills over into its neighbours. We are also beginning to lead, through the UNDG, the integration of conflict preven-

tion across country-level UN development programmes.

For post-conflict interventions to really turn the tide of hostilities, they must be rapid, strategic and big enough to make an impact. A lack of international resources often stands in the way, while much more could be done to share analysis and examples of what works. UNDP is advocating for the global community as a whole to put the systems and funds in place to intervene effectively. We can no longer sit on the sidelines of despair. It is time to move forward.

### **ARGENTINA: EASING THE IMPACTS OF INSTABILITY**

In 2001, Argentina's economy collapsed. With the largest national default on foreign debt ever recorded, poverty swept into the lives of 55 percent of Argentines. Millions of people lost their jobs. A quarter of the population—many of them children and adolescents—could not afford enough food to eat. The humanitarian emergency only started to ease in 2003, when the economy began a slow climb to recovery.

UNDP once again has a full spectrum of development programmes in place in Argentina, many geared to the MDGs. However, recognizing that when people openly debate their nation's problems they are far more likely to buy into collective solutions, we also introduced our Democratic

Dialogue Project. A regional initiative based in Guatemala, it provides innovative tools for managing civic dialogue and conflict resolution in some of the most troubled states.

With the Argentinean Episcopate and the national government, UNDP has helped organize a series of high-profile conversations between politicians, business leaders, trade unions, religious leaders, journalists, civil society—even the Scouts de Argentina. Over the past two years, the participants have sat down at regular intervals to consider what can be done to soften some of the worst hardships, especially through state policies.

Their voices have been heard. Based on the dialogues, the government has already set up an unem-

ployment programme that has reached over two million of the most impoverished households with a monthly subsidy, and has developed a plan for giving free generic drugs and basic medicines to nearly 15 million people. The newest round of the dialogue has now taken up a sensitive but crucial concern, calling upon civil society, the Ministry of the Interior and the Head Office of the Cabinet of Ministers to discuss political reform.

Today, Argentines know that there is a viable alternative to the violence spawned by similar situations of crisis. When democracy has room for a myriad of perspectives, it offers the best way out.