

## Main Entry Points for UNDP Electoral Assistance

UNDP provides electoral assistance mainly in the following areas:

- **Electoral reform.** This kind of assistance involves the reform of laws, systems or political institutions to make them more broad-based, inclusive and representative.
- **Electoral administration.** Assistance in this sphere takes the form of strengthening institutions, offering professional development programmes to electoral administrators, building greater public information and outreach capacity, and helping countries with election-related resource management. It can also be more election-focused by taking the form of helping EMBs in planning, preparing and conducting elections and referenda.
- **Building sustainable electoral processes.** This often involves support for cost-effective yet credible elections, and can take many forms. Typically assistance focuses on fostering countries' election planning, monitoring and budgeting capacity. It can also include support for permanent voter registers that are updated periodically, or continuous voter registration processes and the creation or updating of a civil registry.
- **Civic and voter education.** Activities in this area aim to expand democratic participation, particularly among women and other under-represented segments of society. UNDP's efforts include awareness-raising to highlight the rights and responsibilities of citizens in an electoral process and, more broadly, in a functioning democratic society. Voter education may be embraced within support to the EMB; be done independently through CSOs; or be a mix of both.
- **Mobilization and coordination of resources for electoral support.** Because of the sensitivity and importance of electoral reforms and processes, they can attract wide international interest. UNDP can serve as a conduit for financial contributions, overall coordination and participation by third parties.
- **Helping ensure security during the electoral process.** Electoral periods are often characterized by societal conflicts. While UNDP should make every effort to minimize its involvement in these conflicts, it might consider technical support for institutions responsible for the securitization of polling stations. Such institutions might include national and local police.
- **Strengthening political parties.** UNDP's work with parties is varied and depends on the context. Examples include working with parties to ensure that they are involved in voter registration and education efforts, to improve party campaign and media strategies, to strengthen party caucuses within legislatures and to help make parties accountable for their commitments to address gender imbalances at the leadership level. This work is closely linked with institutional development because more effective, democratic and transparent parliamentary party caucuses allow legislatures to work more effectively. Support must be provided transparently and should bear in mind the responsibility of the UN to provide all support in an impartial manner. Support should also focus on parties' responsibilities to

'lose gracefully' and on the important and integral role played by the opposition not only in Parliament, but in the enhancement of the democratic process overall.

- **Reduction of election-related violence and electoral dispute resolution.** Electoral disputes comprise first and foremost legal proceedings established to redress electoral complaints and appeals. The legal and institutional frameworks for dealing with electoral disputes can be the subject of electoral assistance activities with a view to strengthening their transparency, fairness and credibility, while increasing the confidence of stakeholders. In addition, UNDP has increasingly engaged in working on alternative forms of conflict prevention and conflict resolution applied to the electoral process. This work is recent, and not one in which UNDP has heretofore played a major role, apart for the good offices of the Resident Coordinator in some countries. UNDP's impartiality, however, is one the main potential advantages of its involvement in this area. In some places this has involved working with the EMB to bring; in others it has focused on local-level non-governmental processes of conflict prevention around the electoral process. And in still other places, UNDP has technically prepared the body in charge of election dispute settlement (such as the Supreme Court and courts of appeal) while other organizations carried out ongoing legal assistance during the electoral process.
- **Media and elections.** Activities in this area might include supporting initiatives that provide access to the media to different political parties; training the media to provide more professional, balanced and comprehensive coverage of elections; strengthening the communication links between EMBs and the media; and helping improve qualitative and quantitative monitoring of media coverage, including compliance with relevant codes of conduct and regulations regarding access to media by political parties.
- **Support to international and domestic observers.** As noted previously, UNDP involvement in international observation is restricted to providing a facility for coordination to observers when requested and relevant. Support to domestic monitoring efforts or strengthening systems for improved domestic observation, however, is often included in larger projects of support that include civil society and political party elements.
- **Inclusive participation.** This area of support focuses on enhancing the participation of traditionally underrepresented or under-participating groups in political and electoral processes, including women, minorities, indigenous people, the physically disabled and the young. With particular respect to gender and elections, UNDP in partnership with UNIFEM works to build awareness and capacities for women to play a greater role in political life as candidates for office and political leaders, as voters and as electoral administrators.