

Key considerations and challenges for political party support

Considerations for Political Party Support

Some initial considerations when contemplating political party support are noted below¹.

- If support is provided by UNDP to political parties, it should aspire to the principles of impartiality of the UN. While it may not always be possible or practical to provide equal support to all political parties, particularly when there are large numbers of parties and only several that have national representation or viability, the criteria for supporting political parties should be very clearly defined and should be conveyed to all stakeholders in a public and transparent manner.
- Activities that would clearly be seen as a direct endorsement of a specific party must be avoided.
- Funding should never be provided directly to political parties. All assistance should be capacity-building, technical or advisory in nature. In some places, UNDP has put resources (in the form of libraries, vouchers for print shops, transportation expenses, etc.) at the disposal of political parties on an equal or equitable basis and based on strict eligibility criteria.
- Indirect and/or issue-based support — such as regarding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), poverty reduction and gender equality —should be emphasized in situations that are sensitive or otherwise difficult to call.
- Information on any support provided to political parties should be disseminated through the media and other established means.
- Once party support initiatives are in place, they should be continually and closely reviewed, with close attention paid to potential political sensitivities and other risk factors.
- Activities may include the establishment of a political party resource center to provide technical assistance to parties and provide them with access to information and networking resources.
- Support may be provided to strengthening political party liaison in initiatives designed to build the capacity of national EMBs.

Challenges to Political Party Support

¹ For more information on the topic see: UNDP, A Handbook on Working with Political Parties, <http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/policy-pub-polpartieshandbook.pdf>

- Care needs to be taken to avoid activities that could be seen as a direct endorsement of a political party. Examples might include allowing UNDP's name to be used in a political campaign, or singling out certain parties for support without a transparent and well-reasoned rationale.
- Working with political parties may require special resources and staff skills. These are necessary for high-level political analysis, negotiation and training.
- Partnerships with donors around activities involving political party assistance need to be considered carefully. National and international donors may have political links to some groups or may not be perceived as impartial in the national context.