



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Empowering Lives, Building Resilience

Development Stories from
Europe and Central Asia

volume one

United Nations Development Programme

The cover photo shows Khayriniso Gulomova, a resident of Kulyab in Tajikistan, who received a number of micro-loans from a programme supported by UNDP. The story 'Tajikistan: Microfinance Targets the Rural Poor', on page 23, further describes the results achieved by this programme.

This publication was issued by the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC) in December 2011. It is the first volume in a series devoted to documenting transformational success stories in the region.

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Letter from the Administrator



UNDP works with people at all levels of society to help build resilient nations, which can drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone, and withstand crises such as climate change.

Developing countries expect first-class support from UNDP to help them respond to emerging development needs. Donors also count on UNDP to make the best use of the resources that they entrust to it. Both are looking for partners who can help them make a lasting and profound difference.

UNDP contributes to planning and implementing transformational change. At the heart of this sort of change, we build programmes that leave in place capacities and systems, thereby locking in and expanding the progress made, long after our involvement has ended.

I am happy to introduce this publication on transformational success stories from Europe and Central Asia. They show how UNDP has contributed successfully to sustainable development by responding holistically to the social, economic and environmental needs of people and communities.

Anchored in the transition process that has marked this region, the stories in this publication, and the lessons learned, are relevant to many other parts of the world, and are solid examples of what development cooperation can and does achieve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helen Clark
UNDP Administrator

Foreword



This publication is part of a wider UNDP effort to tell compelling stories of what it does, and improve both our partners' and the broader public's understanding of this work. It showcases stories from Europe and Central Asia.

UNDP is a solution-oriented, knowledge-based development organization, which helps countries achieve their own development objectives and internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. UNDP promotes lasting, environmentally sustainable change that improves the welfare of broad swathes of people, not just statistical averages. To accomplish this, UNDP focuses on helping a country's institutions, civil society and the individuals that comprise them to develop their capacities, so that they are able to deliver sustainable human development, themselves, long after UNDP's involvement has ended.

While recognizing that such change can only come about through concerted national efforts, this publication nevertheless highlights UNDP's role. It illustrates some of the ways in which UNDP can make a critical difference. A key principle for success is UNDP's reliance on, and intimate understanding of, national institutions and cultures. True and lasting transformation is accomplished by the national adaptation of knowledge derived from cumulative past experience, even when this comes from different development contexts and innovation. Other ingredients of success include the systematic scaling up of successful local models and national commitment and ownership.

Finally, none of these stories would have been possible without the faithful support and commitment of international donors and partners, including bilateral donors, the European Union, and multilateral funds such as the Global Environment Facility and the Global Fund for Tuberculosis, Aids, and Malaria, that chose to channel their resources through UNDP. We hereby take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for these partnerships.

I am confident that, by telling these stories, this publication will not only improve the understanding of UNDP's work in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, but also encourage the use of the valuable knowledge and experience generated by this region's transition, for more effective development support to other parts of the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kori Udovicki".

Kori Udovicki
*UNDP Assistant Administrator
and Director, Regional Bureau for
Europe and the Commonwealth of
Independent States*

Executive Summary

UNDP's Europe and Central Asia region includes the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. They have attained diverse levels of development—some are already members of the European Union, while others are characterized by low GDP and basic development challenges. Most share a common legacy of transition, and in a good many of them, the prospect of European Union accession continues to play an influential role.

UNDP assists countries across the region in achieving both national and international development priorities, towards the goal of improving people's lives through greater empowerment and resilience. It works in five areas: poverty, inequality and social inclusion; local development; good and effective governance; energy and environment; and crisis response and post-conflict recovery.

This publication features success stories from 16 countries where UNDP support has resulted in transformative changes, including by fostering the growth of institutional and human capacities. To qualify as a transformational success, a story needed to demonstrate tangible and sustainable achievements, substantiated by data and personal testimonies. Since these depend on significant changes in institutions, attitudes and behaviours, which require long-term efforts, each story chronicles a development intervention that generally spans a 5-to-10-year period.

The success stories in this publication show how UNDP has contributed to building the capabilities of government institutions, civil society and the private sector by providing seed funding, expertise and implementation support, and by bringing different parties together. Across the stories, several key factors emerge as critical to fostering long-term, transformational change. Foremost among these are: national ownership, capacity development, knowledge and innovation and partnerships.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP: It is impossible to achieve sustainable results without the full commitment and engagement of national authorities. However successful, a pilot project will remain as such unless national decision makers acknowledge the lessons learned and results achieved, and incorporate them into national policies, plans and budgets. Long-term success depends on the will and ability of national counterparts to assume ownership of the activities.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: Anchoring development cooperation from the outset in an institutional development objective, involving either establishing new capacities or strengthening existing ones, is an indispensable condition for transformational success. Developing the organizational abilities of government counterparts, as well as civil society and community groups, and engaging the private sector are critical achievements in this regard. Without institutions, policies, legislation and human resources to support them, programme activities will likely cease when the funding ends, however valuable and relevant the immediate results.

KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION: UNDP's ability to draw on a global knowledge network, and to bring in experience and



Workers in Azerbaijan now have one of the most modern pension systems in the world.



One of 15 restored wetlands in Belarus.

good practices, especially from other parts of the Europe and Central Asia region, may be one of its most unique contributions. There is a high demand for sharing knowledge and experience, to which UNDP responds effectively through its network of country, regional and global offices.

PARTNERSHIPS: Starting on the national level and extending to the multilateral arena, partnerships are critical to successful programmes. Bilateral donors, multilateral funds, other UN agencies and international and regional organizations including financial institutions, civil society groups and NGOs are key UNDP partners. Working together, they enable the mobilization of expertise, capacities and financial resources that is necessary to help bring about transformational change.

Given the many challenges of development, the lessons learned from successful initiatives are an invaluable resource. Projects that have started small and grown into nation-wide programmes, or that have leveraged policy changes with national implications, should be documented, as this publication has done. Highlighting success is also a means to acknowledge the value of development cooperation and encourage its many participants to carry on their efforts to help bring about lasting improvements in people's lives.



A farmer in Turkey piloting crops and irrigation practices adapted to the impacts of climate change.

Overview of Stories

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in 177 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

The stories featured in this report are grouped together according to five priority themes: poverty, inequality and social inclusion; local development; good and effective governance; energy and environment; and, crisis response and post-conflict recovery.

POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION—Growing inequalities and the marginalization of vulnerable groups—including people suffering long-term unemployment, people living with HIV and AIDS, women survivors of abuse, abandoned children and people with disabilities—call for targeted support to meet specific needs.

Bulgaria: Job Opportunities through Business Support

Through a partnership with the Government of Bulgaria and international donors, UNDP promoted employment generation, business training and microfinance in the least-developed areas of the country, reaching out to women in particular. A national network of 42 business centres is now in place to provide continued assistance to small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Kyrgyzstan: Reducing Harm from HIV

With UNDP assistance, the Government has brought together new services, laws and policies to control HIV, currently spreading in Kyrgyzstan at one of the fastest rates in the world. A new national AIDS Law, more readily available harm reduction services and widespread HIV testing are key results.

Moldova: Vulnerable Youth and Women Make a Fresh Start

Integrated, easy-to-access support services help women and youth who survive abuse, domestic violence or human trafficking. To model how this could be done, UNDP sponsored combined legal aid, social care and financial services, along with job training to open doors to employment.

Serbia: Opening Opportunities for People with Disabilities

New national laws and policies guarantee the rights of people with disabilities and offer a quota system to boost their employment. Much of the credit for advocating these advancements goes to organizations of people with disabilities, who have used UNDP support to build capacities as effective advocates for change.



A rural community in Uzbekistan has better access to potable water.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT—Flagship area-based development approaches provide greater choices and opportunities for people in disadvantaged, most often rural areas, and engage communities and local authorities to work together on development goals.

Tajikistan: Microfinance Targets the Rural Poor

A project that began by offering small loans to poor farmers has grown into a set of professional regional finance institutions serving local communities in the poorest regions across Tajikistan.

Microfinance funding has benefited 120,000 households, with more than half a million people, and the loan portfolio has doubled from \$3 million to \$6.5 million in five years.

Ukraine: Promoting Change at the Local Level

After an influx of people returned to the Crimean peninsula, UNDP helped people organize to convey their concerns to authorities and initiate development projects to improve local conditions. This participatory model worked so well that it spread to the entire country—2,000 communities have carried out 1,700 projects with local financing.

Uzbekistan: Enhancing Livelihoods by Fostering Participation

The Government, the European Union and UNDP have collaborated to help communities in the Fergana Valley identify and implement small-scale development projects, with support from local authorities. The focus is on activities that improve basic infrastructure and services. In areas covered by the programme, access to water has increased by 55 percent, and the incidence of water-borne diseases has dropped by 72 percent.

GOOD AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE—UNDP helps governments build public institutions that are democratic, and responsive and accountable to citizens, including in central and local administration and access to justice.

Azerbaijan: A Pension System for the 21st Century

Azerbaijan had an outdated pension system. UNDP supported institutional reforms by financing information technology systems, and providing expertise and training. The reforms resulted in greater efficiency, transparency and accountability.

Georgia: Justice for All

Judicial reform has included establishing a Legal Aid Service backed by UNDP that increases access to justice. Poor and marginalized groups turn to it for free assistance. From two offices in 2005, it now comprises 11 offices and 3 counseling centres that offer national coverage and handle thousands of cases a year.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Municipalities Cooperate to Deliver Better Services

A pilot project initiated with UNDP assistance helped several smaller municipalities with limited resources form joint administrative bodies to carry out municipal functions. The pilot is now a national programme, with three out of four municipalities participating in inter-municipal cooperation. More than 800,000 people have benefited from better public services.

A municipality in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is investing in infrastructure.



Empowering Lives, Building Resilience

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT—Countries in parts of Europe and Central Asia have some of the world's highest levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as estimated per unit of gross domestic product (GDP). There is considerable potential for reducing carbon emissions and mitigating climate change, along with restoring and maintaining rich natural habitats and biodiversity.

Belarus: Embarking on a New Approach to Managing Resources

Massive peat extraction in Belarus destroyed natural habitats and left land prone to fires that spewed carbon emissions into the air. By supporting efforts to restore peat lands, UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) have helped Belarus combat environmental degradation and move towards mitigating climate change.

Croatia: Energy-Efficiency Programme Generates Huge Savings

A UNDP-GEF supported initiative—now government funded and owned—improved energy efficiency in over half of public sector buildings in Croatia, cutting costs, fostering new investments, providing green jobs and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Russia: Better Conservation for the Environment and the Economy

Through a UNDP-GEF programme in the region of Kamchatka, more effective management of natural parks and protected areas, and new livelihood resources for local communities have helped spur economic development and the adoption of better conservation practices.

Turkey: Moving Towards Climate-Friendly Development

Turkey has utilized UNDP assistance to develop its first national policy and capacity to mitigate climate change and adapt to its consequences. It has piloted cost-effective irrigation and other adaptation measures in collaboration with local communities, embarked on renewable energy projects and prepared to participate in carbon markets.

CRISIS RESPONSE AND POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY—During the past 15 years, conflict has swept through a number of states in the Western Balkans, the Caucasus, and, more recently, Central Asia. Recovery efforts have focused on removing the remnants of war, and fostering a return to peace, security and development.

After a decade of mine clearance, Albania is free of mine threats.



Albania: A Mine-Free Road to Development

In Albania's Kukes region, UNDP helped clear mines remaining from the Kosovo conflict, freeing 16 million square metres of agricultural land for economic development. To solidify the foundation for peace, it collaborated with the European Union on a regional development programme to rebuild water systems, roads, health centres and schools.

Montenegro: Defence Reform Ushers in Greater Security

After peace came to Montenegro, UNDP partnered with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to help the national defence forces decommission outdated weaponry and develop safe management of ammunition stockpiles. More than 1,000 heavy weapons and 480 tons of ammunition were recycled. Modernized storage facilities have been constructed.

Poverty, Inequality and Social Inclusion



Maria Batachka, a former nurse, established her sweet shop 'Mariam' after taking a course on how to start a business that was offered by the JOBS programme.

Bulgaria: Job Opportunities Through Business Support

When Sevdalina Pavlova told people she planned to set up a pastry shop in the basement of a local bus station, many in the Bulgarian town of Devin thought she was joking. In 2000, people saw launching a business as a risky proposition. Few dared to start from scratch in a small, remote community suffering from 35 percent unemployment.

Pavlova's first decision was her best. This former weaver sought assistance from a business centre supported by the Government and UNDP. As part of an effort to support women entrepreneurs, the business centre helped Pavlova plan every step of her pastry enterprise. It also gave her a loan guarantee of \$2,500.

Pavlova, 56, has never looked back. She is now the owner of a stable small enterprise. In 2007, she earned a government food safety certification—a critical mark of recognition. In



Through the "JOBS in Herbs" component of the JOBS Programme, 100 unemployed people from the villages of Medeni Polyani and Pobit Kamuk, including 16 Roma, have been trained in collecting wild berries and herbs, and given seedlings and land for cultivation.

2009, Pavlova employed nine people and was preparing to expand the size of her shop.

This story is not unique. The business centre that gave Pavlova her start is one of 42 centres that have helped to create over 37,700 jobs across the country. It is part of the 'Job Opportunities Through Business Support' (JOBS) programme that ran from 2000 to 2009, spearheaded by the Government and UNDP. The \$29.7 million programme introduced a mixture of employment training, business support and microfinance. It helped 60,900 persons learn new skills. The programme was funded largely by the Bulgarian Government, and by an array of international donors and local municipalities.

The business case for JOBS

By the 1990s much of Bulgaria's industry had been in steep decline, and one out of every four persons had migrated abroad. More than a million people had lost their jobs. Economic development had been highly unequal. While the capital of Sofia and the Black Sea Coast had been acclimating to the new market forces, a rural, small-town and agricultural hinterland had been falling rapidly behind. Unemployment rates of 18 percent to 40 percent had been common, especially in remote areas. Many unemployed rural dwellers, especially the elderly, had survived by growing small crops. What is more, people had been reluctant to engage in private enterprise.

Recognizing that local entrepreneurship would be critical for improving Bulgaria's economic situation, the Government, UNDP and the International Labour Organization (ILO)—backed by funding from the Dutch Government—established a pilot business centre in Razlog in 1995. Situated in the remote southern part of the capital, the business centre provided support to people who aspired to make a business in this economically depressed area, largely characterized by forests and tobacco fields.

National ownership

The project gained momentum when it earned the support of then Minister of Labour and Social Policy Ivan Neikov, who quickly saw the potential of fostering private enterprise among disadvantaged groups and rural entrepreneurs. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy provided an initial \$6.7 million to build up a network of 24 business centres from 2000 to 2002, together with UNDP. The business centres were located in some of the least developed rural communities. The programme later attracted an additional \$23 million in funding from the Government and a number of international donors and municipalities.

By December 2002, a remarkable 'brand' had emerged, based on the business centres' creative mix of services and highly professional staff. Increasing numbers of municipalities wanted to have a business centre of their own. The Government devoted more money to business-support infrastructure, emphasizing the vital role of employment and entrepreneurship in reducing poverty.

Intending to expand the programme, the Ministry provided additional funding in 2003 to grow the network

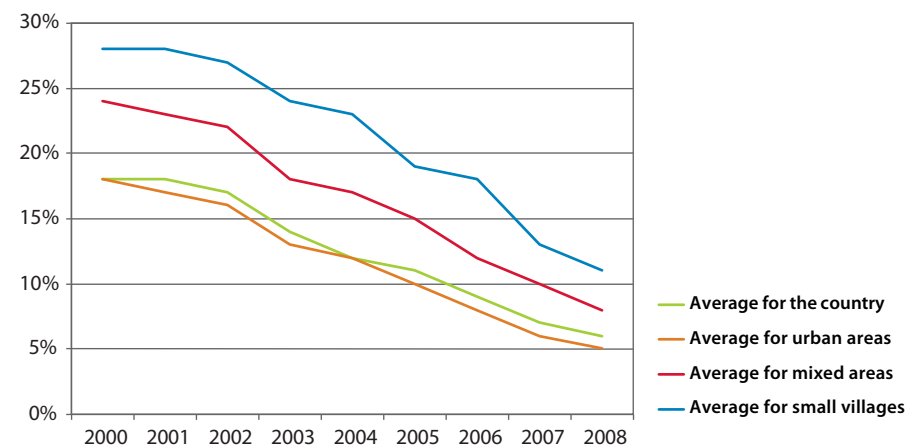


Nino Parpulov and his daughter Nadia in their carpet factory "Hemus", which has become the leading employer in the village Kostandovo, engaging 80 women in three different workshops.

to 37 business centres. Upon the request of local authorities and the Ministry, the network later ‘adopted’ three business incubators created under the EU-funded Phare programme. Other donors wanted to also take advantage of the JOBS approach for specific areas. Sweden funded two minority-support centres in 2004, and a year later the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism invested in two business centres specializing in EU-related advice. By 2007, the JOBS network had achieved national coverage, with 42 business centres in 60 communities.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was satisfied with the results. “The JOBS programme has been a successful long-term investment at the local level,” Totyu Mladenov, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, stated in 2009. “It has supported entrepreneurial growth and services for business and individual clients. We see the JOBS network as having established a solid pool of assistance for the regions and for bridging local development gaps. The business centres are an experienced and cooperative partner to the municipalities for unleashing local ideas, attracting EU funding, and boosting social and economic development.”

FIGURE 1: The Unemployment Rate



A measurable impact

The business centres have measurably reduced unemployment. Between 2000 and 2008, the national unemployment rate fell by almost 15 percentage points, from close to 20 percent in 2000 to about 5 percent in 2008. Significantly, those localities with JOBS business centres enjoyed an even steeper rate of decline. In small villages, for example, the unemployment rate fell by almost 20 percentage points, from about 30 percent to just over 10 percent (see Figure 1). Furthermore, cities with JOBS business centres saw their unemployment rates dip below the national average by 2008.

As part of this process, business centres have given minorities and vulnerable groups a critical lifeline. They have provided vulnerable groups with tailor-made services and programmes—notably in tourism, herb growing and crafts. A rich menu of vocational courses, start-up grants and leasing opportunities, as well as successful business centres in Roma communities, are some of the key achievements.

While the JOBS programme formally ended in 2009, the business centres continue, providing services to local communities with funding from the Government and the European Union. The JOBS brand stands for trust and commitment by its well-trained and pro-active staff. JOBS has given an entire generation of professionals a strong grounding in civil-sector service and local economic activities. Such people are ready for new roles in social enterprises, workforce development, cross-border projects, and government policy on employment, competitiveness and entrepreneurship. The ability to develop, manage and operate innovative projects and schemes will give the people of JOBS a major role in Bulgaria’s future prosperity.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 37,700 jobs created.
- 42 business support centres established.
- 60,900 people learned new skills.



Young people working for a social enterprise created with UNDP support.

Moldova: Vulnerable Youth and Women Make a Fresh Start

When Nicolae was two years old, his parents divorced and his grandmother took over caring for him in their small village in Moldova. Three years later she died, and Nicolae was forced to beg for money on the street. At the age of eight, Nicolae quit school and turned to petty theft. Soon afterwards, he was sentenced to four years in prison for stealing electronic equipment.

Once out of jail, Nicolae vowed to turn his life around, but he couldn't do it alone. A social reintegration centre—supported by the Government of Moldova, the US Agency for International Development, the Soros Foundation, and UNDP—gave him the chance he needed to become a productive member of society.

“I found here the home I had been looking for for my entire life,” Nicolae recalls. “I learned how to eat properly, take care of myself, communicate with people, earn money, and find a purpose for my life.”

Moldova suffers from high levels of poverty and unemployment. In recent years youth and women have become increasingly vulnerable. In 2009, a quarter of the population was living in poverty. While the unemployment rate had fallen to 3 percent during the second quarter of 2008, by the first quarter of 2011 it had more than tripled, to 9.4 percent. Youth unemployment currently stands at 25 percent, while some 36 percent of unemployed people are women. Many youth and women leave the country in the hope of a better future, only to become exploited by human traffickers.

In 2005, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, together with UNDP, took the lead to create opportunities for people most at risk: youth, single mothers, pregnant women, and the abused. It helped to establish a network of centres to provide people with psychological support, life skills development, social assistance, vocational training, and employment.

In six years, the programme has established 10 social reintegration centres and 9 social enterprises. The reintegration centres, which serve about a third of Moldova's regions, provide safe, affordable living and learning environments for youth and women. The social enterprises provide job training, employment, and funding for the reintegration centres.

Nicolae is now a carpenter, employed by a private company. The support he received from the programme was critical for him to realize this goal. After receiving vocational training at a reintegration centre, he entered a civil engineering college. Members of the community say he is an excellent tradesman and a highly appreciated citizen.

Thousands of people have seen their lives lifted through the programme. The reintegration centres and social enterprises assisted over 7,200 persons from 2005 to 2010. Over 1,200 women have received vocational training, and 1,020 have been employed.

The programme has had an impact on social indicators. Communities with social reintegration centres have seen their number of abandoned children fall by 80 percent. The proportion of other marginalized people—such as women with children who are not eligible for state support—has fallen by 15 percent. And from 2008 to 2009, youth unemployment in areas that host the centres declined by 20 percent.

Building self-confidence

As a first step, the programme has focused on providing people with the support they need to deal with abuse and feelings of shame. The social reintegration centres are staffed with psychologists and social workers, who can help people regain their emotional bearings.

One abused woman recounts how she came to a centre after her husband had banged her head against a wall. "In the Centre, I was given moral support," she says. "They showed me which way to go." With the help of a psychologist, she came to realize that she needed to start legal proceedings against her husband. A court later barred him from contacting her.

"I have also changed a bit," she says. "I can now argue for myself. Before I used to get blocked and remain silent."

In the reintegration centres, people can recover their emotional balance. "A woman can become self-confident again," says Ana Schiopu, a service coordinator at a reintegration centre. "Here she gets psychological, social and legal assistance. She can also receive financial support, which is very important if she has a baby and depends financially on the abuser."

Developing job skills

After providing social and psychological support, the programme helps people get the skills they need to become productive members of society. It does so by helping people find employment in social enterprises, which pursue profit-making activities while fulfilling socially beneficial goals, such as the employment of vulnerable people.



Young people are trained to be employed in various areas

“This project has contributed most significantly to the development of the social enterprise idea in Moldova,” says Ion Babici, director of Artddedal, a social enterprise founded in 2007 that employs 14 people processing metal and wood. The project provided the social enterprise with technical support and start-up money. Enterprise managers were trained in how to run the business.

“The salaries that our employees earn are quite attractive and competitive on the labour market,” says Babici. From 2008 to 2011, the social enterprise earned revenues of over \$42,726 and a profit of \$16,750. The profit of the social enterprise is channelled to supporting the reintegration centres.

Sustainable results

From the start, UNDP has endeavoured to ensure that the project could continue after UNDP support ends in December 2011. “The most difficult part was not creating the 10 social reintegration centres, but making them sustainable,” says Viorel Albu, UNDP project manager. “Sustainability does not mean simply self-financing, but developing institutional capacity.”

To ensure that the reintegration centres, which are managed by NGOs, continue to operate beyond December 2011, UNDP has been teaching these NGOs how to establish their own income-generating activities, how to manage their finances and how to fundraise. UNDP signed partnership contracts with NGOs that clearly stipulated the commitments of each side, in order to strengthen the capabilities of community actors.

Fostering national ownership is critical for ensuring sustainability. The Government has committed to ensuring that by 2011, “Vulnerable groups enjoy improved access to quality social protection services, including systems to prevent and protect people from violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination.”

Backing its pledge with action, the Government has provided increasing levels of support for the reintegration centres—rising from 4 percent of the project budget in 2006 to 44 percent in 2010. These funds are replacing the grants from UNDP, which has made up the chief funding source for the project in its early days.

The Government has also moved to improve the legal environment, enabling NGOs to take a greater financial role in the delivery of social services. The Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family has worked to ensure that social service providers are accredited. This will allow NGOs providing social services to obtain state funding, which is critical for ensuring that vulnerable youth and women get what they need to reclaim and rebuild their lives.

Over 1,200 women have received vocational training, and 1,020 have been employed.



HIGHLIGHTS

- 10 social rehabilitation centres established.
- 80 percent fall in the number of abandoned children.
- 20 percent decline in youth unemployment.
- 15 percent drop in the number of marginalized people.



Momcilo Stanojevic conducting a survey on the application of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities and related quota system.

© Photo by the Centre for Independent Living of Persons with Disabilities, Serbia.

Serbia: Opening Opportunities for People with Disabilities

Living with a disability in Serbia has often meant being poor and unemployed. Over 70 percent of people with disabilities live in poverty; only 13 percent have access to employment. Limited social support systems and stigma, among other factors, have entrenched their marginalization.

But that second-class status has begun to shift. With assistance from UNDP, the Government of Serbia has adopted new laws to better protect people with disabilities. Organizations of people with disabilities have gained skills as effective advocates and service providers. Employment opportunities have opened.

Jelena Petrovic once faced steep obstacles to finding a job, including the prejudice of prospective employers against hiring someone with a hearing impairment. Now she works as an administrative assistant, and her employer is training her in accounting. A joint UN programme, the Youth Employment Fund, provided her with training and placement services to start her new life.

“I’m really happy to be working,” she says with a smile. “Other employees have confidence in me. That is really motivating and inspiring.”

New rights and protections

In 2003, Serbia’s national poverty strategy for the first time recognized that people with disabilities—comprising about 10 percent of the entire population—were a vulnerable group

requiring extra assistance. At the time, UNDP was already involved in assisting national efforts to combat poverty and improve social inclusion. It drew on support from the European Union and the governments of Norway and Spain to provide expert advice on disability-related policies and legislation, and to encourage the participation of organizations of people with disabilities in a Government-led national reform process.

The Government subsequently adopted national laws to define and uphold the rights of people with disabilities, and extended new systems of support, including for health, education and employment. In 2006, it established the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Persons with Disabilities along with an action plan to implement it. The same year, Serbia became the first country in South-East Europe with a law to prevent discrimination—fewer than 50 countries in the world have a similar statute specific to disabilities.

Soon, reforms were underway to assist children with disabilities in attending school, to dismantle some of the large institutions that tend to warehouse people with disabilities away from mainstream society, and to provide more readily accessible social services in smaller communities.

Promotion of craftworks created by persons with disabilities in central Serbia.

© Photo by the Centre for Independent Living of Persons with Disabilities, Serbia.



Jelena Betulic and Milena Stojanovic enjoy the city of Kragujevac with a personal assistant.

© Photo by the Centre for Independent Living of Persons with Disabilities, Serbia.

‘Nothing about us without us’

Much of the credit for advocating the passage of Serbia’s forward-looking legislation in a relatively short time belongs to organizations of people with disabilities. UNDP helped them develop skills in research, monitoring, administration and advocacy, and supported a national umbrella group that has raised awareness of people with disabilities. The group has participated in policy processes such as the formulation of the National Strategy, and in public hearings with Parliament, adopting the slogan ‘nothing about us without us.’

Some individual groups have shifted to a new emphasis on representing all people with disabilities, instead of only those with a particular disability. Other organizations have conducted research and issued influential reports. The national Ombudsman’s Office used findings on women and disabilities, for example, to begin collecting information on how requests for assistance may vary between men and women, and require different responses.

Leading up to the 2009 parliamentary ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, organizations of people with disabilities reviewed Serbia’s legal framework and found it largely compliant, but were also able to pinpoint areas requiring revision. They worked with UNDP to organize a “mobile” session of Parliament, where members

visited an institution for people with disabilities to see conditions that were not in line with the convention. Since ratification, a process of additional reforms to improve employment options and social protection for people with disabilities has been underway.

The 2011 Law on Social Protection established formal guidelines and standards for licensing non-governmental groups, including disabled persons' organizations, to provide social welfare services. It draws on the experience of the Social Innovation Fund, an initiative backed by UNDP, the European Union and other donors that supported civil society groups, including organizations of people with disabilities, in piloting innovative models to extend high-quality services. One aim was to improve access; another to demonstrate that involving people with disabilities can better tailor services to the needs of this particular group.

In Belgrade, the Centre for Independent Living, for example, used a grant to show how personal assistants could bring services to people who might not otherwise be able to access them, for reasons including limited mobility. The approach proved so successful that the Law on Social Protection incorporated it as a priority service for financing by municipal governments.

Jobs to end isolation

For many people with disabilities, employment is a top imperative, offering an avenue out of poverty and social isolation. In 2010, Serbia brought an employment quota system into effect, requiring employers with between 20 and 50 employees to hire at least one person with disabilities, and one person for every 50 additional employees. That year, almost 3,700 people with disabilities found employment, up from only 600 in 2009.

Private companies can opt not to comply with the quotas, but they pay a tax that will eventually be used to fund services for people with disabilities. Companies are exempt from the quota during their first two years of operation, or if they have fewer than 20 employees.

UNDP has joined the UN Global Compact in holding forums for private sector employers on hiring people with disabilities. They have learned about compliance with hiring quotas, made what are often first contacts with organizations for people with disabilities, and found out how to increase workplace accessibility, whether that means installing ramps for wheelchairs or software for people with visual impairments.

For Serbia's longstanding system of 34 government-funded enterprises for employing people with disabilities, UNDP has supported reforms to help them maintain over 1,000 jobs. The enterprises manufacture items ranging from camper trailers to windows to clothing. Advice on work standards and marketing has fostered a move towards long-term sustainability, where they garner a growing portion of funding from the profits they earn, rather than from national subsidies.

Other efforts reach out to people with disabilities to help prepare them for employment. In 2010, the Government set up the Centre for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities. It provides work placements in public and private organizations, vocational training and business start-up grants.

Through the UN-backed Youth Employment Fund, which operates in 50 municipalities, additional training, placement and business start-up options are accessible for people under age 30, including those with disabilities. Employers can get funding for workplace adjustments, and secure exemptions from social security contributions during training periods for new hires. The



Newly trained personal assistants in central Serbia have learned to provide improved services to support the right of people with disabilities to work and live independently.

© Photo by the Centre for Independent Living of Persons with Disabilities, Serbia.

initiative draws on resources from Spain's MDG Achievement Fund and matching financing from the Government.

"There are 25 people with disabilities working in our company, most of whom were employed through the Youth Employment Fund," says Marko Cvetkovic, the supervisor of recruitment at Delta Sport, a sportswear company. "The key value that we want to instil in our current and future employees is that everyone has potential."

Serbia is still early in the process of reforms to achieve a society that fully includes people with disabilities in all aspects of life. The fact that some policy-makers and business have begun to understand and uphold the rights of people with disabilities is encouraging, as is the growing strength of the disability movement as an advocate for change.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Under an employment quota, almost **3,700** people with disabilities found jobs in 2010, up from 600 in 2009.
- Organizations for people with disabilities have become **effective advocates**.
- Piloted use of **personal assistants** to bring services to people with disabilities incorporated in the new Law on Social Protection.



UNDP assisted the Kyrgyz Government in developing the National HIV Programme (2006-2010), which conforms with international standards and focuses on reaching groups at higher risk.

Kyrgyzstan: Reducing Harm from HIV

When he learned that he had acquired HIV from injecting drugs, 35-year-old Mirlan (not his real name) sought help from the Regional AIDS Prevention Centre in Jalalabad, Kyrgyzstan. One day in 2005, television reporters showed up with a request to film the centre's work.

Hoping to attract attention in the press, the chief physician asked Mirlan to do an interview with the reporters. He refused, but still ended up on TV, clearly identified as a person with HIV. While Mirlan wasn't looking, the doctor had held open some curtains so the reporters could film him without his knowledge.

After the broadcast, Mirlan's life took a dramatic turn for the worse, deepening the downward spiral that began when he started taking drugs and lost a successful business. People jeered at him on the streets of his small provincial hometown, and refused to serve him in stores. Classmates at school called his children "AIDS carriers." Mirlan, despite his rapidly declining health, filed a case in court, helped by a UNDP-supported legal aid clinic.

He would not live to see the end, but he would leave a legacy: a landmark judgment against the doctor. For the first time in Kyrgyzstan, a court legally upheld the human rights of a person living with HIV. This was possible because the Government, advised by UNDP, had adopted a new national AIDS Law to protect people like Mirlan.

Putting the pieces together

A small country with a limited economic base, Kyrgyzstan has faced a challenging transition from the days of Soviet dependence. Budgetary resources have been short, and health care spending has declined sharply, even as a new threat from HIV has emerged.

Kyrgyzstan still has a relatively low prevalence of HIV, but the virus is spreading at one of the fastest rates in the world. The country's location, at the crossroads of drug trafficking through Central Asia, has helped drive the number of injecting drug users up by 50 times in the last two decades, for a current total of around 25,000. Mostly men, they account for about two-thirds of HIV cases. Recent increases in the number of women and children with HIV indicate the epidemic is slowly but surely spreading into the general population.

Stopping HIV requires coordinated actions on many levels: new laws and state programmes, prevention and care services, resources, partnerships and changes in behaviour. Kyrgyzstan started with few of these pieces in place. But with assistance from international partners such as UNDP, it has begun to draw them together.

Protection under the law

Early HIV initiatives focused on directly reaching communities most vulnerable to infection—especially injecting drug users. In 2000, UNDP helped Kyrgyzstan become one of the first countries in Central Asia to pilot needle and syringe exchange programmes. In 2002, it became the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to offer methadone substitution treatment to heroin and opium addicts.

Important momentum came in 2005 from a new national AIDS Law. It grants people with HIV priority access to primary care facilities and medication, and stipulates punishments for cases of stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS. For the first time, informed written consent is required for HIV testing, except in cases mandated by court order.

Subsequent policies and regulations bolstered the new law. The Criminal and Administrative Code partially decriminalized some activities involving drugs without an intention to sell, such as the collection of needles at syringe exchanges. In 2007, a new regulation encouraged referrals of drug addicts to syringe exchange and methadone therapy programmes, rather than simply carting them off to jail. This measure has helped reduce the overall number of prisoners by almost half, from 17,000 in 2007 to 9,500 in 2009.

To support these changes, UNDP has helped government officials develop training on HIV for law enforcement agencies. An order from the Ministry of Internal Affairs now requires all police officers working with high-risk populations to learn about issues such as the vital importance of needle exchange programmes in protecting key populations at higher risk, and the rights of people with HIV under the Constitution and other laws.

The difference can be seen on the streets. Police officers who once harassed and arrested injecting drug users now send them to programmes that can save their lives.

Improving plans and services

A year after enacting the AIDS Law, the Government adopted a comprehensive national AIDS programme conforming with the latest international standards in health, justice, law



A 2005 AIDS law grants people with HIV priority access to medical care, stipulates punishment for discrimination and requires written consent for HIV testing in nearly all cases.

enforcement, education, social protection and information. It prioritized key populations at higher risk, such as injecting drug users and prisoners.

The programme has subsequently helped ensure that HIV support services now reach 60 percent of injecting drug users. By 2011, the Ministry of Health was operating 30 methadone treatment centres. Three additional programmes were running in prisons. In Bishkek, which has had some of the longest-running needle exchange and methadone treatment services, HIV infection rates among users are half the national average.

Consultations on testing have been introduced in healthcare organizations across Kyrgyzstan, and public advocacy has conveyed the message on billboards, radio and television that testing is an important routine medical procedure. Around 350,000 people now undergo it each year.

The national programme has strongly emphasized civil society participation. Under the protections of the AIDS Law, more groups of people living with HIV have formed, and civil society leaders, for the first time in Central Asia, have publicly emerged from marginalized communities, including former injecting drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men.

Other essential civil society contributions have come from religious leaders. Since Kyrgyzstan is a majority Muslim country, UNDP has engaged the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan and the State Commission on Religious Affairs to train imams to help break through the silence, fear and lack of knowledge associated with HIV. In worship services and other religious activities, they preach about healthy lifestyles and the need to respect one another, regardless of HIV status.

“Everything I do in order to stop HIV is done in the name of God. I am helping people to avoid misfortune and sorrow,” says Maksutov Jusupjanajy, the Chief Imam-Hatib of the Alai District in Osh Province.

Aiming for universal access

Kyrgyzstan today has a foundation in place for stopping the spread of HIV. But it faces formidable barriers to its next challenge: rapidly expanding the coverage and quality of HIV care and prevention services so that everyone has access to them.

The obstacles include ongoing political and economic instability, and the cross-border flow of narcotics, which continues unabated. The fact that HIV infections appear increasingly in small rural communities with limited medical care may prove to be an extra burden on an already over-stretched healthcare system. Kyrgyzstan pays a high cost for life-saving anti-retroviral medications and is heavily dependent on declining external financing for HIV programmes.

Hope comes from the growing cadre of officials and civil society advocates who have gained experience in working on HIV programmes sponsored by UNDP and other international partners. A strong legal framework is in place to scale up services—the AIDS Law calls for all people living with HIV to receive qualified



Islamic leaders participate in a training session on HIV that will help them bring messages of prevention and non-discrimination back to their congregations.



A health worker in Osh checks blood for the HIV virus causing AIDS.

medical assistance and free medicine. The latest National Programme, being drafted in 2011, aims for a full menu of protection and prevention services in all healthcare locations, and its targets include ensuring that over 80 percent of children and adults with AIDS can receive anti-retroviral treatment, up from the current 23 percent.

In 2011, the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria agreed to continue supporting Kyrgyzstan's efforts to stop the spread of HIV, offering \$31 million towards the goal of universal access to services for people living with the virus. The goal will require more than that sum, but it is an important advance in the right direction for a country striving to stop a terrible disease.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **1st country** in the Commonwealth of Independent States to offer methadone substitution treatment.
- New **national AIDS Law** with strong protections of the rights of people living with HIV and AIDS.
- Harm reduction services reach **60 percent** of injecting drug users.
- **350,000 people** routinely undergo HIV testing.

Local Development



Guljahon Juraeva, the mother of eight children, has received a number of micro-loans enabling her to expand production on her 14-hectare farm.

© Photo by Iskandar Usmonov.

Tajikistan: Microfinance Targets the Rural Poor

In 2003, Zuhrobonu Nazarova opened a small snack bar in a market in rural Tajikistan. The income she and her husband earned barely supported their six children. Then her husband—a migrant worker—died. To prevent her children from going hungry, Nazarova needed money to expand her business.

A microloan provided the life-line she needed. The equivalent of \$200 at 1.5 percent interest per month, it allowed her to turn her snack bar into a larger canteen. Now she earns about \$130 per day, for a net profit of about \$970 per month. She not only supports her children, but also employs five people—including two women.

Nazarova's story demonstrates that people can find a way out of poverty—provided they have access to capital. The microfinance programme that helped her is supported by the Government

together with international donors and UNDP. People who previously had no access to banking services now have the opportunity to escape poverty and build a better life.

The legacy of independence

Millions of people have seen their standard of living fall severely since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991—particularly women. Many Tajikistani men have been forced to migrate abroad because of a lack of job possibilities at home—leaving their wives to maintain the household. A fall in income can cause a deep spiral into poverty, as people can no longer rely on unemployment assistance. The vast Soviet system of state benefits has disintegrated.

As a result of the UNDP-implemented microfinance programme, some 120,000 vulnerable people have received microloans. Forty percent of them have been women. Loan periods average between 6 and 12 months, with interest rates between 1.5 percent and 3.0 percent per month.

Families who benefited from microfinance have invested in their businesses and created jobs. People reported that loans have boosted their food security, and enabled them to better clothe and educate their children. Some loan recipients have been able to buy land and build a home.

Prior to the programme, commercial banks had made some forays into microfinance, but they foundered. People distrusted the schemes, which many felt were too burdensome. Banks required a business plan and collateral. Loan recipients could not repay the loans under the conditions offered. The banks could not build a business model that focused on meeting the needs of the poorest segments of the population.



Umarova Maryam, once an employee, was able to open her own shop thanks to a series of micro-loans.

© Photo by Iskandar Usmonov.

UNDP's niche: poor, remote clients

UNDP is well placed to pursue microfinance initiatives in Tajikistan. Its involvement in the 'Communities Programme', designed to raise the living standards of marginalized communities in nearly a third of all Jamoats (rural administrative units), has provided ample experience. It has helped UNDP to see how to make microfinance work for the most vulnerable in the more remote areas of the country.

Accordingly, the UNDP-implemented microfinance programme works differently than traditional commercial schemes. Loan application procedures are kept simple. Paperwork is limited to two documents—a short income statement and a credit agreement, ensuring lower overhead for loan administrators. Portfolios are managed by community members, who are in the best position to monitor borrowers' ability to repay. Money is disbursed in local branch offices, which are located in each Jamoat. Loans can often be disbursed within a few days after loan approval. Because of the relatively low administration costs and close loan supervision, defaults are minimized. Currently they hover at less than 1 percent of loans disbursed.

Smaller initiatives scaled up

UNDP began with smaller efforts. It established a number of ‘revolving funds’ in 2000 that aimed to provide vulnerable groups and farmers with short-term loans. It started by distributing \$30,000 to each Jamoat Regional Centre—\$3 million in total. But these funds were small and scattered across the country, limiting their effectiveness.

The programme took a major leap in 2005 when the more than 100 revolving funds were agglomerated into seven large regional microfinance institutions. The agglomeration served to expand the reach, scope and professionalism of microfinance institutions. Since then, they have doubled their portfolio—from \$3 million in 2006 to \$6.5 million today—and they reach about half a million people.

In cooperation with the National Bank of Tajikistan and other international organizations, UNDP has supported improvements in microfinance legislation, culminating in a critical new national law on microfinance in 2005. While the legislation was still being drafted, UNDP worked to ensure that the experience and ideas of remote microfinance organizations influenced national legislation.

UNDP has also worked closely with the Association of Microfinance Organizations of Tajikistan (AMFOT), a lobby group established in 2004 to represent the sector, which currently comprises more than 40 microfinance institutions nationwide. UNDP has cooperated with AMFOT to help partner microfinance institutions develop new financial products, increase transparency, and link up with ‘apex’ institutions—wholesale credit providers. Since 2010, it has supported Bovari va Hamkori—the first apex institution in Tajikistan—to help local microfinance institutions learn how to take advantage of commercial credit sources.



After surviving the mudslides of 2010, Khayriniso Gulomova, a resident of Kulyab in southern Tajikistan, received a number of micro-loans allowing her to open her own bakery.

© Photo by Iskandar Usmonov.



This beauty salon, which was established in 2010 with small business support and micro-loans, provides services for about 100 women and girls in nearby Dushanbe.

© Photo by Iskandar Usmonov.

UNDP has attracted support from donors and investment funds and helped to spread successful knowledge and best practices. UNDP has also helped to establish a microfinance institution in the Soughd region with the participation of the British and German development agencies. UNDP has attracted highly qualified staff, many of whom had experience with the revolving funds, to manage the regional microfinance institutions.

A strong balance sheet

Rushdi Vodii Zarafshan—one of the most advanced of the seven regional microfinance institutions—is located in one of the poorest regions of the country: the Zarafshan Valley. It has built up a loan portfolio of over \$1.5 million, thanks to UNDP assistance in raising capital.

Rushdi Vodii Zarafshan has benefitted the community. Thanks in part to the microfinance programme, the total average monthly income of families in the Valley has increased from \$120 to \$200. Some 943 new jobs have been created, over a quarter of which have gone to women.

The loan facility has also produced a strong balance sheet. At-risk loans make up less than 7 percent of its total portfolio, and the default rate is currently zero. Its revenues exceed its operational costs by over 50 percent. The savings go to increasing the loan portfolio.

Local government representatives are pleased. “Rushdi Vodii Zarafshan is a key partner in poverty reduction for our Jamoat,” says Kholova Hamida, Head of the Khalifa Hasan Jamoat, Panjakent District. “It is reaching the needy—especially women—in a number of critical sectors.”

HIGHLIGHTS

- 120,000 people have received loans.
- \$6.5 million—current loan portfolio (up from \$3 million).



Community organizations with UNDP have supported the re-opening of kindergartens in Chernobyl-affected areas.

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Ukraine: Promoting Change at the Local Level

Before 2008, the inhabitants of Pavlovka had access to piped water for only three hours a day—sometimes not at all. The people of this Crimean community carried buckets to a canal to retrieve water, as had previous generations. But then something changed.

Citizens joined together. They met publicly, discussed the water problem, and developed a plan to pipe in clean water. They mustered \$15,410 in community funds. Upon hearing about the initiative, the district council showed its support by contributing \$31,880.

The water tower and piping system took eight months to build, but dramatically improved people's lives. "Now we feel like human beings," proclaimed one inhabitant the day the water tower was inaugurated. "I don't understand how we lived before."

Until recently, such local initiatives were rare in Ukraine. In 1991, when the country gained independence, it inherited top-down governance that excluded citizens from decision-making processes. The economically and politically centralized system that had been put in place in Soviet times largely destroyed people's sense of personal initiative and self-confidence.

The return in the 1990s of almost 300,000 ethnic Crimean Tatars, who had been deported by Stalin during World War II, compounded these challenges. The Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea faced increasing ethnic tensions, undermining people's ability to work together.

UNDP's Crimea Integration and Development Programme—supported by a number of donor countries and implemented by UNDP—became a key mover for change. It recognized that people in Crimea could be empowered to solve common problems. Together with local

authorities, it helped to organize people into community organizations that gave them a voice and a platform. By involving local inhabitants, authorities could find the most cost-effective solutions. Gradually, people saw that by working together with local government, they could improve their lives.

Local development, national scale

The community-based development approach is now employed in all of Ukraine's 25 regions. The project was first conceived in 1995 in Crimea to provide basic services such as water and electricity to the returning Crimean Tatars, and to foster social cohesion. The approach was extended to all residents of Crimea in 2001, and it was subsequently expanded in 2002 to the disaster-struck Chernobyl area to help the affected population recover. In 2004, it was replicated in a number of Ukrainian cities. In 2007, the approach was extended to the entire country.

Local authorities and a number of donors (including Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Greece, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom) contributed \$62.5 million to these development efforts from 2001 to 2010. A further \$23 million will support community development projects between 2011 and 2014.

Through these efforts, UNDP has assisted 2,000 rural and urban communities across the country, benefitting over half a million Ukrainians. It has supported the implementation of 1,700 projects, training more than 10,000 local officials, teachers and health workers.

An average community initiative can require \$20,000. Typically, the first priority in rural areas is ensuring that the local school, kindergarten or health clinic is more energy efficient. The second priority is water supply. Other initiatives include the purchase of a school bus or equipment for local health clinics, or ensuring proper waste disposal. In urban settings, UNDP promotes the creation of associations of co-owners of apartment houses, and supports energy efficiency, water supply and sanitation projects.

These initiatives have developed national capacity. Local governments must compete with one another for the opportunity to implement projects with UNDP. To demonstrate commitment, they must put forth 45 percent of the project funding and appoint a person responsible for representing the local authority on a given project. Rather than applying for assistance to implement a specific project, the selected districts (*rayony*) must come together with citizens to first decide on priorities. This approach encourages local communities to identify problems and devise solutions jointly.

In the Chernobyl-affected areas, some 279 community organizations have been established, bringing together over 20,000 people. Inhabitants have created action plans to repair schools,



A water tower in Ukrainka, Kiev oblast. Water management is a critical issue in Ukraine.

© Kevin McLaughlin

refurbish water supply systems, and improve medical facilities. Funding for such projects has reached \$3.4 million, 30 percent of which was provided by UNDP.

The approach has been innovative. It has created an environment for joint decision-making; initiated bottom-up planning processes; cemented local development partnerships; and led to the gradual withdrawal of UNDP support. Government take-up of the approach on the national level is expected to continue.

The programmes have led to real improvements in people's lives. In Chernobyl-affected areas, for example, people have come together to rebuild medical facilities and youth centres—equipping them with computers and the Internet. The village of Hornostaipil constructed a vital marketplace with the support of local government bodies and UNDP.

The initiatives have led to measurable improvements in people's perceptions. Independent surveys conducted in 2010 found that satisfaction with local governments was 34 percent higher in communities employing local development strategies than in Ukraine as a whole. In these communities, some 41 percent of respondents reported more trust in local government. Some 32 percent of respondents in Chernobyl-affected communities noted improvements in local economic conditions, as well as significant growth in social cohesion.

Community-led initiatives have also extended to the courts. Chaika, a UNDP-supported human rights organization in the Luhansk oblast, is helping people contest unfair court rulings. For example, the state wanted Nadiya M., a former school teacher and concentration camp survivor, to pay \$140 for housing services that she claimed had never been provided. Nadiya M. took it upon herself to call a special hotline. Chaika provided legal representation, and her case was dismissed. Thanks to Chaika, 19 court rulings have been overturned, while nine are under review in a local court of appeal.

A new generation of local leaders

When people are empowered, many remain active long after the outside support ceases. Over two-thirds of community organizations continue to operate after the first project is completed. Furthermore, citizens continue to give a portion of their income to community organizations for future projects, indicating that they trust the leaders of these organizations with their money. In many cases, the first project is just the start. In Crimea, for instance, every third territorial community has gone on to implement one or more additional projects without UNDP support, demonstrating local commitment.

Community leaders now understand that they can influence local authorities and local politics. In Crimea, over 190 community leaders were elected village and district councillors in 2006. Local development efforts have helped to spawn a new generation of leaders. The people of Pavlovka—and many other communities in Ukraine—now grasp their ability to promote change.



The economically and politically centralized system that had been put in place in Soviet times largely destroyed people's sense of personal initiative and self-confidence. However, Ukrainian people have again started to come together. People in Lviv gather in the central square to discuss common issues.

© Swiatoslaw Wojtkowiak

HIGHLIGHTS

- 2,000 communities assisted.
- 1,700 projects implemented.
- 10,000 people trained.
- 190 community leaders elected to local government in 2006.



Community members contribute their labour to a local public works project.

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Uzbekistan: Strengthening Communities by Addressing Local Needs

The Government of Uzbekistan has been increasing the role of local authorities and communities in providing essential services and encouraging more funding to come from local resources. To be successful, the shift requires strengthening the capacity of local government and communities, particularly in the most remote and vulnerable areas of the country.

Since 2005, the Enhancing Living Standards (ELS) Programme, financed by the European Union and implemented by UNDP, has helped build capacity by mobilizing people to address local needs. Drawing on lessons learned from earlier local development efforts, the programme has brought communities together to discuss common challenges and take practical measures to improve living conditions. This initiative has also helped local authorities see the benefit of involving people in community development work.

The programme serves Uzbekistan's portion of the Fergana Valley. Some eight million people—nearly a third of Uzbekistan's population—live in the Andijan, Fergana, and Namanagan regions, which are covered by the programme. The Valley is fragile. Floods, landslides, avalanches and other natural disasters often damage agriculture and other economic activities in densely populated rural areas where, according to the latest available data, about 30 percent of people live in poverty.

Community development plans

The development of local communities (also known as *maballas*) requires effective local governance and the adoption of more strategic, long-term, participatory planning frameworks. The programme has supported the design and implementation of community development plans. Under this framework, local communities prioritize their needs and problems and implement small-scale projects to address them, together with local authorities that support them financially.

With support from UNDP, local authorities and communities have prepared more than 200 community development plans. The plans include descriptions of activities to be undertaken, cost estimates and prospects for sustainability. After approval by the communities, these plans are brought before the *khokimiat* (the local authority) for consideration and possible inclusion in government development programming. In 2010, 75 priority projects identified by *maballas* have been included in the annual district and regional development plans.

This participatory process has strengthened the relationship between local administrations and communities. In the Besharik district of the Fergana region, a local community group reported that: “We learned how to communicate with government authorities. We liked that the programme taught us how to collaborate with the communal services departments.” Local communities are now better informed and have gained the confidence to speak out, express their hopes and concerns, and participate in decisions that affect their well-being.

In order to ensure local commitment, communities are expected to contribute to the realization of projects. These contributions can be in the form of labour or materials. Since 2009, almost \$5 million have been spent on social infrastructure projects. Local authorities and *maballas* contributed more than 60 percent of the funds, totalling \$3 million.

Enhancing participations through information centres

To enhance participation, accountability, and sustain development efforts, UNDP, together with the Mahalla Fund (established by the Government in 1992 to support community development) has established 13 Information and Resource Centres in the Fergana Valley. These centres are tasked with preparing community development plans. They bring together mid-level local government officials, community-based practitioners, rural women and youth to organize and exchange information on HIV/AIDS, family education, water and sanitation and other matters. They can replicate ideas, propose to co-finance community infrastructure projects, or test new microcredit schemes for women, and benefit from UNDP's global experience in rural development.

Addressing basic needs

Community development projects have led to concrete improvements in people's lives. For example, in the Markazy *maballa* of Andijan, the programme helped people to install a new artesian well, benefitting about 8,000 inhabitants. Now households have access to clean, piped drinking water, which is less expensive than relying on old wells that require electrical pumps.

Over \$400,000 in small loans and grants have been disbursed through the EU-UNDP 'Enhancing Living Standards' programme. Over 70 percent of loan recipients have been women (below). Community members draw up plans for a project (bottom).

© UNDP Uzbekistan





Projects especially benefit women. Wells built close to home ensure that women don't have to spend most of the day fetching water.

© UNDP Uzbekistan

After seeing the project, the local mayor secured funding from the state budget to install four more artesian wells to supply two neighbouring communities. By contributing just 40 percent of the costs for the first installation of a new well for the Markazy *maballa*, the programme has mobilized a much bigger investment, tripling the number of beneficiaries in adjoining low-income villages.

Water supply improvement projects have also attracted volunteerism and community contributions. In the Khujaarik community, in the Andijan region, 3,000 people volunteered their services and covered 60 percent of the project costs. To make the new water system work, the community installed water meters and set up a committee of trained volunteers to check the water quality and report problems. As a result, the incidence of water-borne diseases has dropped by 72 percent since June 2010, as registered by the primary health care facilities in the target districts. This decrease exceeds the project goal by 22 percentage points.

The ELS projects have benefitted 800,000 people by providing them with better access to potable and irrigation water, sanitation, electricity and natural gas. In 2011, as a result of these activities, access to water in the areas where UNDP works with local governments and *maballas* has increased by 55 percent; health services by 6 percent; and gas by 21 percent.

Government support

The Information and Resource Centres, which provide a forum for community participation, are expected to continue after the end of the programme, though in slightly different form. Local authorities have initiated a request to establish nationally owned Methodological-Resource Centres under the authority of the regional *khokimiats* of the Andijan and Namangan regions to carry on the work of the Information and Resource Centres. These Methodological-Resource Centres will develop the capacity of local authorities and other relevant institutions, as well as that of the mahalla populations. They will receive support from the *khokimiats* and the Academy of State and Social Construction (ASSC), while helping to sustain themselves through fee-based services.

Together with the ASSC, the programme also organized a train-the-trainer exercise for 15 local government officials and representatives of various public organizations, who were trained on results-based management and participatory development processes. The 15 officials then trained 120 government officials and representatives of local institutions, ensuring that the knowledge spreads.

Communities are also finding that as they achieve development results, they inspire others



By taking part in community-development projects, people gain the confidence to voice their needs in decision-making processes. © UNDP Uzbekistan

to act. For example, the Uttizambar *maballa* came together to equip its Kindergarten no. 42 with a solar heater to provide 45 children and 10 teachers with a continuous supply of hot water. In June 2011, 30 heads of neighbouring kindergartens in the district visited no. 42 to see the new solar heater, and to understand how the community had come together to support the project. Now the kindergarten heads are considering similar projects in their own communities. People have harnessed something more than the power of the sun.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Local communities and authorities together implement small-scale infrastructure projects.
- Community priority projects included in annual regional and district plans.
- Access to water increased by **55 percent** and natural gas by **21 percent** in areas served by the programme.
- **800,000 people** benefited from the programme.



A man painting a water tower. When people participate in local development projects, they start to believe in their ability to improve their lives.

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Uzbekistan

Good and Effective Governance



A branch office of the state pension fund.

Azerbaijan: A Pension System for the 21st Century

Ali Mammadov still remembers the long lines at the post office and waiting days—even weeks—to receive his modest pension. Today, the Government sends this 78-year-old retiree a text message to his mobile phone when his pension is ready to be withdrawn. Inserting his card into a nearby bank machine, Mammadov receives his money without a hitch.

Economic growth in Azerbaijan has been robust—as high as 34.5 percent in 2006—propelled by an oil and gas boom. But until recently the country's state pension system didn't benefit. Many retirees were required to fill out piles of paperwork, and some had to wait three to four months to receive their payment. Pensions were low—\$10-\$15 a month. What is more, many vulnerable people didn't even know that Azerbaijan *had* a social insurance system, and thus did not put money in the government programme whose purpose was to provide them

with an income once they retire.

Thanks to a Government initiative and UNDP assistance—today Azerbaijan's pension system is one of the most modern in the world. Payments are made to 99 percent of pensioners electronically via the banking system. Pension disbursements are made on time. Complaints have fallen dramatically. Between 2003 and 2010, pension contributions increased by over 408 percent. State-of-the-art IT systems have been installed, dramatically reducing the amount of paper used. By mid-2011 almost 1.9 million workers, representing almost 90 percent of the target, had received modern social insurance cards.

The basic pension guaranteed by the Government of Azerbaijan is among the highest in the Commonwealth of Independent States. On 1 September 2010 it amounted to \$106 monthly. The basic pension is augmented by a component that depends on one's individual pension contributions. At present the average pension comprising both the basic element and the additional component is about \$151.

Trailblazing support

UNDP was the first to support Azerbaijan's State Social Protection Fund in advancing its reforms. In 2003, UNDP agreed to finance the implementation of IT systems to improve the operation of the pension fund, with a view to bringing about greater efficiency, transparency and accountability.

The support provided to the Government by UNDP and other international organizations is considered to have been vitally important—particularly at the early stages of the reform project—not only in providing financial support and expertise, but also in giving legitimacy and credibility to the process and helping to convince pension staff of its importance.

The Government has contributed around 75 percent of the \$12.8 million project costs, and UNDP has contributed 25 percent. The financial contribution of the Government has been rising significantly throughout consecutive phases of the project, with the pension fund contributing 98 percent of the funding for the final fifth phase (2008-2011), thus creating confidence in the project's sustainability.

Recent research by the World Bank reveals that Azerbaijan's social protection programmes, which include pensions and all forms of social assistance—to which the Government allocated an estimated 4.8 percent of GDP in 2008—reached 63.2 percent of the population that year. Relative to fiscal outlays (expressed as a percentage of GDP), Azerbaijan's social assistance programmes perform well in terms of coverage of the poor compared to other programmes in the Europe and Central Asia region.

Regular training courses are being provided for pension fund staff to keep them up-to-date about the requirements of the new hardware and software, as well as the recently adopted registration and data processing procedures. As a result, the level of ICT awareness and the quality of the social insurance services provided has risen dramatically.

*Improved customer service
in a branch office of the
pension fund.*



The World Bank study concludes that without social transfers, the extent of poverty in Azerbaijan would be much higher. Namely, among the different types of social transfers, pensions account for the lion's share of poverty reduction: pension payments reduce poverty by about 6.8 percentage points, whereas social assistance programmes account for about a 4.6 percentage-point reduction.

The population of Azerbaijan is still relatively young, with only 6.6 percent of people aged over 65. But demographic trends indicate that the country has also embarked on a demographic transition with lower birth and death rates. A large number of pensioners will impose a considerable financial burden on Azerbaijan's social protection system. The number of pensioners in Azerbaijan, which stood at 1.3 million at the end of 2010, has increased by almost 20 percent since 2003. This has prompted the authorities to consider introducing private pension funds and other innovations to complement the current system.



A woman withdraws a pension from an ATM in Baku.

Leapfrogging technologies

The fact that Azerbaijan's pension system did not have an IT system prior to the reform meant that it was able to leapfrog to the newest solutions. Azerbaijan received international recognition for the use of ICT in its pension system in 2010, when its state pension fund won the 'European Competition of the International Social Security Association (ISSA) for Efficient Governance Through the Application of ICT.'

The main achievements of the project include: Design and development of the ICT system—this has led to a dramatic reduction in the use of paper, to higher productivity (in the words of one office manager 'what used to take weeks now takes hours') and at the same time to a major improvement in the quality of work carried out. In turn, this has led to improved client service (e.g., shorter processing times for contributors, timely payment of pensions, and greater transparency, as on-line records can be used to assist with customer service), and to improved satisfaction by pension fund employees.

Such innovations have made life dramatically easier for millions of pensioners. For example, when 58-year old Eleonora Khalilzade's husband retired eight years ago, he had to submit reams of documents proving his employment history. Eleonora and her husband had to sift through salary records of former employers—a real challenge—she recalls. But when Eleonora recently inquired how much her future pension would be, she only had to visit the website of the State Social Protection Fund. After entering her age and employment history into an online calculator, she immediately saw the amount. "It is so easy to get that information now," she says.

UNDP has helped Azerbaijan identify expertise relevant to its needs from other countries that undertook the same reforms. Whereas a few years ago, Azerbaijan looked up to the Baltic states in pension reform, today it has itself become an example for countries including Afghanistan, Iraq, and states in Africa and Latin America.

Azerbaijan's oil and gas boom presents a tremendous opportunity not only to put the country's economy on a solid growth path and reduce the aggregate poverty rate, but also to provide targeted care and support for the elderly, disabled, poor, and vulnerable. Reforming the pension system has proved to be a major step towards this goal.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **\$151** a month, average pension in Azerbaijan.
- **1.9 million** workers have received modern social insurance cards.



A public attorney (right) talking to her client.

© UNDP/David Khizanishvili.
May 2010. Gori, Georgia

Georgia: Justice for All

Kakha Kisishvili might have gone to jail for a theft he did not commit. Emma Esiava, who had fled from conflict in Abkhazia, might have lost her apartment and ended up on the street. Both escaped these injustices because they were able to seek free help from Georgia's Legal Aid Service.

The Georgian Government set up the service in 2007, and since then UNDP has backed national efforts to rapidly boost its quality and reach, especially among poor and marginalized communities. Today the service has achieved national coverage, so that all citizens, regardless of where they live or whether or not they can pay for legal council, have the right to access justice and seek protection under the laws of the land.

"I spent a year in jail falsely accused because I could not afford a lawyer," Kisishvili recounts. "If it weren't for free legal aid, I guess I would still be in jail, even though I did not commit the crime I had been accused of."

Ketevan Gagoeva, the Legal Aid Service lawyer who represented Kisishvili, uncovered flaws in the investigation of the alleged crime, and soon all charges against him were dismissed. In Esiava's case, the service helped her prove her legal rights to her home.

More than 20,000 applications for legal advice and assistance streamed into Legal Aid Service offices in 2010. The service conducted almost 12,000 consultations, more than double the figure of 4,700 in 2008, its first full year of operations. It helped clients investigate, prepare and litigate over 10,000 court cases.

A 2010 survey found that three-quarters of respondents rated the service "very satisfactory," while 71 percent said they achieved a favourable outcome in court. For many, the service was their best hope for justice.

Accountable courts

The Legal Aid Service is part of a sweeping package of judicial reforms that began in the wake of Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution. Until that point, the judicial system had been mired in long-festering popular mistrust. Many people saw the courts as corrupt and unaccountable, and as often as not rendering judgments based on biased interpretations of the law.

Today, reforms are putting an end to abuses and making the judicial system fairer and more readily accessible to all Georgians. A well-functioning judiciary is understood as a crucial support for overcoming the national legacy of conflict and post-Soviet transition, and developing democratic governance firmly rooted in principles of human rights.

The Government has consequently established the High School of Justice to train judicial professionals and a Speaker Judge to communicate information about the court system to the public. Parliament adopted the Law on Legal Aid in 2007, paving the way for establishing a state-financed Legal Aid Service. In 2010, a new Criminal Procedure Code introduced jury trials and an adversarial criminal law system based on a prosecution and a defense.

UNDP has been a longstanding supporter of many of these reforms, working closely with the Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance and the court system. As requested by national partners, it has brought international experience into initiatives such as training judges and lawyers on human rights standards, assisting with the set-up of effective systems of public outreach, and backing the rapid rollout and expansion of the Legal Aid Service.



Head of the Legal Aid Service
Irakli Kobidze (centre) at
a legal consultation for people
who have been displaced.

© UNDP/Daro Sulakauri. December
2010. Gori, Georgia

Equal under the law

The Legal Aid Service is a particularly important component of reform, because it holds the promise of universal access to justice, including for historically marginalized communities. People who are poor, located in remote areas, displaced by conflict and/or members of ethnic minorities have traditionally faced some of the steepest barriers to justice.

Operating under the Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance, the service has grown to 11 offices and 3 consultation centres situated to reach people in all parts of the country. The offices handle applications for legal consultations and court representation through staff lawyers. The centres serve a handful of areas without ready access to an office. They provide basic advice and help in drafting legal documents, and can tap a new network of private on-call lawyers paid by the state to provide legal representation.

For the Legal Aid Service as a whole, UNDP has helped equip staff lawyers to work effectively with the changes in the judicial system. Familiarizing them with the elements of jury trials, for example, has included special sessions on the introduction of evidence and the examination of witnesses. In seminars in 2010, lawyers studied the protection of minors, the European Convention on Human Rights, forensic psychiatry and the protection of property rights, among other core issues.

More targeted UNDP assistance has gone to two offices and a centre in the Shida Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions, as a large number of displaced people reside in the former, and the latter holds a concentration of the Armenian ethnic minority. In both regions, UNDP has helped not only in training lawyers, but also in opening and furnishing the offices and centres, and facilitating the adoption of management plans to systematically guide ongoing activities.

The city of Gori in the Shida Kartli region, for example, is home to 30,000 people displaced by the 2008 war in South Ossetia. After the conflict came to a close, UNDP moved quickly to help establish a Legal Aid office there as a way to ease the after-effects of the crisis. It soon became an essential resource as people struggled to reclaim stability in their lives by recovering lost legal documents, registering for state aid, or resolving property and other legal issues.

Today, the office has six public attorneys who from 2009 to 2010 provided 765 free consultations on all areas of civil and criminal law, as well as representation in 796 criminal cases.

Since traveling to Gori is not always easy for people in the poor villages and settlements for displaced people that surround it, the office organizes mobile legal teams to go to them, reaching even remote locations. The teams share information on the Legal Aid Service with residents and offer assistance with specific cases.

Communicating change

An important aspect of UNDP support to the Legal Aid Service entails transforming public attitudes to the judicial system. Well-run, universally accessible offices and public attorneys meeting high professional standards concretely demonstrate commitment to justice, building trust and confidence, especially for poor and vulnerable people.

Legal empowerment and knowledge are also essential so that people learn how to claim their rights—now and in the future. With legal literacy considered low in Georgia, UNDP’s training for Legal Aid Service lawyers has included a deliberate focus on public outreach skills and sensitivity to obstacles faced by marginalized groups.

To make as many people as possible aware of new avenues for justice, UNDP has also assisted Legal Aid Service staff with the wide distribution of information on legal rights and services, including through public roundtables, and radio and television broadcasts. In 2010, a TV clip with contact information for the service ran on a number of major channels, prompting an increase in the rate of applications for legal consultations, and a spike in website visits, from 6,000 in 2009 to 16,000 in 2010.

Irakli Kobidze, the head of the Legal Aid Service, reiterates that one objective is to help people out of trouble. Another is to increase legal education. “For years and years, people felt there was nobody to protect or advise them. And this caused ignorance about the laws and legal rights.”

Kobidze promises, “We are going to change this.”



The Legal Aid Service is reaching out to ethnic minorities in Georgia. An ethnic Greek woman in the city of Tsalka is looking through legal aid information leaflets.

© UNDP/David Khizanishvili. October 2011. Tsalka, Georgia

HIGHLIGHTS

- **11 Legal Aid Service offices** and 3 consultation centres established nationwide.
- Lawyers have gained **public outreach skills**, particularly for marginalized groups.
- **12,000 legal consultations** took place in 2010, along with 10,000 court cases.



New funds have gone into a refurbished marketplace in the centre of Krivogastani, where citizens can find an array of goods and services.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Municipalities Cooperate to Deliver Better Services

Accurate maps to guide fire fighters. Better water systems and newly paved roads. Training for teachers on children with special needs. Detailed planning and investment information that has attracted new businesses.

These are among the many public services that smaller municipalities in the former Yugoslav Republic (FYR) of Macedonia are now able to offer their citizens, following a pilot project on inter-municipal cooperation initiated with UNDP support. Under it, municipalities with limited resources form joint administrative bodies to carry out particular municipal functions. Cooperation reduces costs and improves capacities to deliver services, including through more effective management of taxes to pay for them.

Involving only three small rural municipalities when it began in 2006, the pilot has now become a national programme, backed by new national laws and overseen by the national Committee on Inter-Municipal Cooperation. Three out of four municipalities have participated, benefiting more than 800,000 people.

Zaklina Zitosanska, a civil servant from a joint tax collection agency shared by the towns of Krivogastani and Dolneni, explains that new tax administration skills and an updated database

of taxpayers have helped drive a 30 percent increase in revenues. “We have much greater abilities now to raise the resources we need to work for our communities,” she says.

Cvetan Kushkovski, a citizen of Krivogastani, points to one way new funds have been invested—a refurbished marketplaces in the centre of town. “Now this looks like a proper marketplace!” he says with excitement, surveying a large, neatly organized selection of vendors offering fresh fruit and vegetables, locally made cheeses, flowers and furniture.

Towards local participation

After the 2001 Ohrid peace agreement ended a period of internal conflict in FYR of Macedonia, and with a view towards the requirements of accession to the European Union, the Government embarked on ambitious reforms to decentralize its state administration. Rather than concentrating government functions at the centre, it aimed to equip local governments with abilities to raise revenues and provide services most closely aligned with local priorities. They would engage closely with the people they serve, thus promoting democracy and political stability, and improving government responsiveness.

All 85 of the country’s municipalities were to provide services related to urban planning, environmental protection, local economic development, social protection, education and health care. The central government offered administrative, financial and human resources to ease the transition.

In larger cities, the shift moved forward relatively smoothly. But smaller towns and villages soon found themselves struggling against limited staff, funds and infrastructure. Twenty percent could not provide even basic municipal services. As disparities between municipalities began to grow, people living in those lagging behind grew restive, having been promised that local control would usher in greater benefits.

To reduce tension and move the process forward more equitably, UNDP proposed a solution: Municipalities could pool and make the most of scarce resources through inter-municipal cooperation.

Piloting new partnerships

To demonstrate how this might work, UNDP assisted a pilot project in Bosilovo, Vasilevo and Novo Selo, three small municipalities in the south of FYR of Macedonia. A first step was to form three joint administrative bodies, which the municipalities decided would manage taxation, urban planning, and public inspections of licensing and compliance with local regulations.

Each municipality hosted and staffed one of the joint bodies—taxation went to Vasilevo, urban planning to Novo Selo and inspection to Bosilovo. The bodies managed all aspects of a given function for all three municipalities. Costs were shared equally, and monthly reports were submitted to authorities in each.

UNDP supported the formation of these partnerships on multiple fronts, starting with general and specialized training for civil servants on administrative procedures, information technology, communications, urban planning and tax administration, among other issues. The training was geared towards improving the skills of staff both to efficiently deliver services and to respond to inquiries from citizens.

To open additional opportunities for public outreach, citizens’ service centres started operating in each municipality. Websites were set up for each town, with databases for people to easily



The owner of this recreation facility in the village of Ginovci received advice from the municipal inspection service to meet children’s safety and environmental health standards.

download and submit forms. The installation of a wide area network made communications among the joint bodies and each municipality faster and cheaper, while several new vehicles allowed civil servants to serve remote areas that had previously been neglected.

Within two years of the start of the project, two impacts were clear. Through better tax management, tax collection rates jumped by 60 percent. And expenditures in each municipal budget fell by 12 percent, partly through a halving of staff costs for the three joint bodies.

Soon, the 40,000 citizens of the three municipalities could testify to the gains. Novo Selo had improved telecommunications, water, electrical and transportation infrastructure to attract local and foreign private sector investment. Bosilovo had repaved roads and purchased new equipment for elementary schools. And Vasilevo had fixed longstanding problems in its water and sewer systems.

Success goes national

The success of the pilot attracted national attention. In 2008, seeking to encourage local innovations, the Association of Local Self Governments partnered with the European Agency for Reconstruction, the US Agency for International Development and the Ministry of Local Self Government on a series of awards for best practices in municipal governance. Bosilovo, Vasilevo and

Novo Selo won the prize for improved local services—a significant accomplishment for three towns that had once struggled on the margins of decentralization reforms.

The central Government opted to adopt the inter-municipal cooperation model for a national rollout and requested UNDP support in drafting the Law on Inter-Municipal Cooperation. It passed in 2009, and the national Committee on Inter-Municipal Cooperation was established the same year, financed under the national budget. Three additional by-laws standardized procedures for inter-municipal cooperation agreements.

By early 2011, 62 municipalities had signed on to 26 formally agreed partnerships covering a diverse array of municipal functions. UNDP continued to assist with training for more than 800 local officials, and helped set up a grant scheme, co-financed by municipal funds, to provide seed money for innovations in service delivery. On the outskirts of Skopje, for example, the towns of Petrovec and Zelenikovo have used a grant to draft a local development strategy and bring in experts to assist citizens in applying for European Union funds to build businesses and boost agricultural production.

Today, FYR of Macedonia is considered a leader on inter-municipal cooperation in its region—it is one of the few countries in Europe with inter-municipal cooperation laws. Lessons learned from the project have been shared through UNDP's Bratislava Regional Centre with governments in Kosovo,¹ Moldova, Montenegro and Ukraine.



A wide network was established, enabling faster and cheaper communications between municipalities.



The towns of Petrovec and Zelenikovo brought in experts to assist citizens in applying for EU funds to build businesses and boost agricultural production.

¹ Refers to UN-administered Kosovo as per UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

Among the cooperating municipalities themselves, an undeniable indicator of the value of the approach is that a growing number are agreeing to fully finance cooperation agreements. Officials openly express enthusiasm; citizens do too.

In the municipalities of Zajas and Oslemej, a municipal cooperation agreement has prioritized social protection for vulnerable groups. This pleases Lutfi Osmani, president of the village council of Zajas and a long-time social activist, because it will include the elderly, many of whom have no family to look after them. “Before the project, it seemed no one from the local authorities cared about these people,” he says. “Now with the municipalities visibly working together to map their needs, there is a lot more hope.”

Looking down a newly repaired street in the town of Kavadarci, which has an agreement with the municipality of Rosomon, Petar Gorcev, a local wine producer, expresses satisfaction. “This is an improvement that comes from us—for us.”



More than 800 municipal officials trained to ensure more efficiency, accountability and social inclusiveness in the delivery of services.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **800,000 people** have benefitted from better public services.
- **3 out of 4** municipalities participate in inter-municipal cooperation.
- Tax collection rates have increased by up to **60 percent**.
- Public **expenditures have fallen**, partly through staff reductions.

Energy and Environment



A bird's-eye view of the Grichino-Starobinskoye restored peatland in the Gomel region.

Photo by Alexander Kozulin

Belarus: Embarking on a New Approach to Managing Resources

Bare, dry soil. Scarce vegetation. A deafening silence, interrupted only by the howling of the wind. Devastated by poorly managed peat extraction practices, Belarus' Bartenikha fen mire had suffered an environmental collapse that might have taken decades to reverse.

Instead, UNDP began working with national and international partners to fast-track the reclamation of Bartenikha and 14 other damaged mires in Belarus. Impressive progress with rehabilitation led to agreement on a comprehensive set of new national environmental, forestry and land-use regulations for the sustainable long-term management of all mires.

Today, Bartenikha is once more a sanctuary for native plants and wildlife, with a green carpet of cypress and bottle sedge that stretches as far as the eye can see. The air is saturated with the songs of birds and the piping of frogs. Wild boars tread through dense reeds.

So far, in Bartenikha and elsewhere, Belarus has revived over 28,000 hectares of peatlands, about five percent of the national total. It has cut carbon dioxide emissions by 300,000 tons per year, since healthy peatlands are carbon “sinks” that absorb large quantities of emissions that would otherwise worsen climate change.

The initiative has been so successful that it has been adopted in Ukraine and shared as a model for wildlife protection at the 2010 Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Russia has requested assistance with a similar effort.

Ecological and economic tolls

There was a time when the Bartenikha mire and others flourished undisturbed. Belarus has twice the global average for the territorial coverage of peat mires, a precious national and regional resource given the mires’ carbon-absorbing properties.

But beginning in the 1950s, drainage canals began slashing through once pristine mires. For Belarus, peat was a relatively cheap and readily available source of fuel and energy. By the mid-1970s, it was extracting nearly 40 millions tons per year. Large-scale drainage projects facilitated extraction and transformed the mires into land suitable for agriculture or forestry. Little attention was paid to a more ecologically sound alternative: rewetting and restoring the mires after extraction.

By the 1990s, the number of peatlands had been cut in half. The dieback in plant and animal life included some globally endangered species such as the greater spotted eagle and grey heron. Instead of absorbing carbon dioxide, the mires began emitting it as fires raged over the dried-up land. Aerosols and toxic gases spewed into the air through smoke, sickening nearby people and animals. The Government was forced to spend millions of dollars combating the fires.

Local economies suffered as hunting and fishing dwindled, and communities could no longer rely on the mires as a source of berries and herbs to consume and sell for extra income. Prospects for exploring new economic opportunities were nonexistent.

Early steps to stem these ecological and economic tolls began in 1999, as UNDP joined forces with the UK’s Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species, the national NGO APB-Birdlife Belarus and the National Academy of Sciences. They focused on developing new national capacities to evaluate and better manage natural wetlands resources.

In three peat mires, an experiment began. Optimal water levels for biodiversity conservation and human economic activity were calculated, achieved through the installation of infrastructure such as dikes and sluices to regulate water flow, and then maintained

Peat fire at the depleted peatland Osinovskoye-1 in the Vitebsk region.

Photo by Alexander Kozulin



through regular monitoring. As the mires began to recover, the Government and other national partners could begin to see how sound ecological management of the mires might operate, and what the benefits might be, particularly as Belarus faced mounting costs from the peat fires and land degradation.

A simple but powerful solution

Scaled-up action was launched in 2006. UNDP, the Global Environment Facility and APB-Birdlife Belarus began managing a programme—with 65 percent of its financing coming from the Government—that would help create a national policy framework for sustainably managing the peatlands, and demonstrate innovative reclamation strategies.

A point of departure was to convene people with a stake in better peatlands management, including officials from the ministries of forestry and the environment, members of the peat extraction industry and environmental groups. Putting their heads together, they agreed on the need to balance economic and ecological priorities, and concluded that the laborious past practice of draining and converting mires into agricultural land or forests needed to be reduced.

The partners developed a simple, cost-effective alternative that would deliver immediate results: aim to “re-naturalize” the peatlands by rewetting them. Raising water levels would prevent the devastating fires, and help plants and animals reestablish themselves.

Fifteen peat mires in the regions of Minsk, Brest, Vitebsk, Grodno and Gomel were chosen for priority rewetting. Peat extraction operators carried out some of the first successful efforts,



A field seminar at the Bartenikha peatland in the Minsk region.

Photo from the UNDP/GEF “Peatlands” project archive

An interlocking dam at the Bartenikha peatland canal.

Photo by Alexander Kozulin



confirming the feasibility and benefits of the new approach. At the same time, UNDP reached out to local hydro-engineering companies to construct sluices and dams for the rewetting. This helped them reorient businesses that once drew most of their income from digging channels to drain the mires.

Practical actions on the ground fed into new national plans for peatland recovery. Standards were set for site selection and restoration, and for assessments of the impacts of peat extraction on biodiversity and hydrology. A model for managing re-naturalized mires was adopted. Tracking of the status and recovery of all degraded peatlands became possible through a national database, while the first methodology for measuring the peatlands' emission and absorption of greenhouse gases was developed. Training on peatlands restoration has become a basic part of the education of forestry specialists.

New regulations require that mires be returned to their former state after extraction, most often through rewetting. The prospects for carbon absorption have increased so significantly that Belarus may be in a position to benefit from trading carbon credits on the international market.

Benefits that last

In the course of the peatlands recovery programme, all 15 of the original mires were rewetted. Monitoring has found that between 58 percent and 96 percent of vegetation has been restored, along with 20 percent to 48 percent of birdlife. Visitors have started to arrive to see the wildlife, prompting discussions about establishing eco-trails and ecotourism.

Once again, people living near the restored peatlands can venture inside to hunt, fish or, in some areas, gather the generous crops of cranberries that add to household incomes in September and October. No big peat fires broke on the restored mires from 2008 to 2010, due in large part to the rewetting and better firefighting, which saved at least \$1 million annually in firefighting costs. Fires were once as common in Belarus as in Russia, which suffered massive devastation from them in 2010.

Despite these achievements, Belarus faces escalating pressures from domestic and export markets for peat as a source of fuel and fertilizer. Since 2010, extraction has started to edge upwards, although the National Academy of Sciences forecasts that limits on remaining supplies mean the practice will taper off again in less than a decade.

Recently, the Government announced that extraction may even resume in some protected areas. It has also restated its commitment to rewetting and restoring all peatlands subject to extraction. There is a move to extend strict protections for about 20 bogs that remain in their natural state, and to introduce land management plans for all administrative districts across the country by 2015. About 22 districts already have plans that specify peatlands rewetting.

These developments underline how competing priorities can complicate the adoption of a new approach to managing natural resources. At the same time, notions of balance and conservation have begun to take root.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **28,000 hectares** of exploited peat lands converted to wetlands.
- Up to **96 percent** of vegetation, and up to **48 percent** of wildlife restored in reclaimed areas.
- Carbon emissions slashed by **300,000 tons** per year.



A house in Osijek demonstrates the benefits of passive solar heating.

Croatia: Energy-Efficiency Programme Generates Huge Savings

Early in 2011, the energy-efficiency team in the Croatian Ministry of Justice was alarmed at abnormally high rates of water use recorded at Lepoglava Prison, a penitentiary dating back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A probe of the underground pipes identified a huge leak that was fixed with a repair costing \$4,000. The resulting savings: \$225,000 per year. Without the vigilant monitoring and quick diagnosis provided by the energy-efficiency programme run by UNDP, this loss would have gone unnoticed.

The Lepoglava Prison story is just one example of the savings that the energy-efficiency programme is generating all across Croatia's public sector. After six years of operation, it has reduced annual public spending by an estimated \$18 million—savings that for a single year well exceed the total costs of the programme so far. At the same time, it has cut emissions of greenhouse gases—which contribute to climate change—by 12 percent in 5,900 public-sector buildings, thereby reducing Croatia's total CO₂ emissions by 63,000 tons, or 0.2 percent per year. Savings are set to grow as capital investments stimulated by the programme come on stream.

Launched in 2005 with \$4.4 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the programme set out to remove barriers to energy-efficient practices and technologies. As is the case in many countries emerging from state socialism, energy use remains wasteful: per unit of GDP, Croatia consumes 12 percent more energy than the European Union (EU) average.

In focus: public-sector buildings

The programme took aim at buildings because of their large share of energy use, and targeted the public sector because it was thought that the Government itself needed to set a good example. One project component covered buildings owned by central ministries and agencies, while a second focused on facilities owned by Croatia's 20 counties and 127 cities.

Winning political commitment to the project was a crucial first step. This required proving to sceptics that progress was possible, so the programme first conducted a pilot in Sisak, a typical Croatian city with a population of 50,000 and a legacy of polluting industries and war damage. Over two years, 24 demonstration projects cut energy consumption by 13 percent and saved the city \$220,000 per year. They also cut annual CO₂ emissions by 780 tons.

This initial success piqued the interest of other towns. The project transformed this interest into public commitments by encouraging city mayors and county prefects to sign an 'Energy Charter' in which they pledged to implement systematic energy management in all the facilities under their jurisdiction. Within eight months, all 127 mayors and all 20 county prefects had signed, and the charter is now on proud display in virtually every city hall in Croatia. At the central level, 15 of 16 ministries made the same commitment.

At the same time, the project conducted a comprehensive national media campaign to raise public awareness about energy efficiency. The main message was conveyed through a charismatic animated character: Gašpar Energetić, who helps his big-spending neighbour Trošimir implement various simple energy-efficient measures in his house. By the end of the campaign, Gašpar Energetić had 4,300 friends on Facebook. He also starred in a short film for children, *Think of Tomorrow*, which has been distributed in 500,000 copies and shown during educational 'school hours' led by the project team.

To complement these efforts, the programme created a network of six information centres to give citizens hands-on advice on making their homes more energy-efficient. These information centres reflect a unique partnership: counties and towns provide the space and staff, while private-sector producers of construction materials and appliances donate demonstration equipment. The newest of these facilities, in Zadar, also houses a Solar Education Centre, which provides training in solar technologies and graduated its first class of certified assemblers of solar water heaters in June 2011. The project has also erected scores of informational displays; in all, 98 'info-points' have been set up in 43 towns and 12 counties.

*Gašpar Energetić,
the animated
character from the
public-information
campaign.*



Nationwide energy monitoring

Building public support was just the beginning, however. The programme also worked to support the adoption of policies conducive to energy efficiency, building on the momentum created by Croatia's drive to meet the requirements for EU accession. UNDP expertise helped shape the Law on Efficient Use of Energy that was passed in 2008, the Croatian Energy Strategy that was adopted in 2009, the National Energy Efficiency Programme covering 2008-2016, and the First National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for 2008-2010. The programme also helped to draft legal regulations and textbooks governing 'energy audits' of buildings.

These energy audits were a vital tool as the programme set out to identify inefficiencies in public-sector buildings that could be addressed through modest capital investments. When the programme started, energy auditing was an infant industry. Between 2006 and 2010, UNDP conducted 1,069 energy audits covering 2.5 million square meters in 1,346 buildings. This stimulus helped build an industry that is now mature and thriving, numbering 17 companies and more than 150 energy-audit experts. In addition, the energy audits spurred

investment projects worth \$30 million, a figure that also underlines the potential for 'green job' creation in a country struggling with an unemployment rate of almost 20 percent.

But the real heart of the programme is the web-based Energy Management Information System (EMIS), which enables the real-time monitoring and management of energy consumption in public-sector buildings. Since large amounts of energy are used to pump water, with high levels of leakage, the system also measures water usage. EMIS is available to all Croatian public-sector institutions free of charge, giving all who want it an easy tool to compare energy usage and maintain transparency (which helps fight misuse as a side benefit).

To ensure sustainability, energy and water monitoring and management are vested in the hands of teams of civil servants,

within each organizational unit at every level, from individual buildings to ministerial headquarters. In six years, 10,000 Croatian civil servants have received specialized energy-efficiency training from the programme, and UNDP is now working to ensure that 'energy manager' is recognized as a standard public-sector position.

The reach of the system is impressive. More than 5,900 separate facilities (2,400 under ministries and 3,500 in cities and counties) have so far been hooked into EMIS, meaning that 52 percent of the total floor area of all public-sector buildings in Croatia is now covered by the energy-efficiency programme. The programme aims to expand to cover a total of 7,000 buildings by the end of 2011. The scope and systematic nature of energy and water monitoring make possible the sort of dramatic success seen at Lepoglava Prison.



The graduation ceremony for the first certified solar assemblers trained in Zadar in 2011.

The Mayor of Zagreb signs the Energy Charter, which has now been signed by all 127 towns and 20 counties in Croatia.



Government ownership

With cities, counties and ministries all reaping big savings that can be channelled to urgent needs in health, education and welfare, it's no surprise that the UNDP project now has the status of a national programme. Since 2008, the project has received government funding through the Fund for Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency and the Ministry for Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship. As of June 2011, the project relies exclusively on government funding. This funding has survived two years of gruelling recession and is now slated to continue until 2013, to ensure the smooth transfer of EMIS and other parts of the programme to national institutions. By this time, the initial \$4.4 million GEF grant will have generated total government contributions in excess of \$16 million.

Croatia's successes in 'putting its own house in order' (as one component of the programme is called) have set a course towards meeting the tighter energy-efficiency standards practiced

in the EU, which the country expects to join in 2013. They have also set an example that other countries are eager to emulate. The project has already been replicated, at the Government's request, in neighbouring Montenegro, and a similar programme is being prepared for Bosnia and Herzegovina and parts of Serbia. Expertise developed in the project has also been sought in countries as diverse as Belarus and Tajikistan. As UNDP undertakes to shift its activities in Croatia from traditional development assistance to the export of good practices to other countries, the energy-efficiency package will top the list of the knowledge it aims to share.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The programme has reduced public spending by an estimated **\$18 million** per year.
- Croatia's total CO₂ emissions have fallen by **63,000** tons, or 0.2 percent per year.
- **\$4.4 million** was provided by the GEF.
- Energy audits stimulated energy-efficiency investment projects worth **\$30 million**.
- **10,000** Croatian civil servants have benefited from specialized energy-efficiency training provided by the programme.
- **52 percent** of all public-sector buildings in Croatia are now covered by the energy-efficiency programme.



*Kamchatka brown bears
fetching wild salmon at
Kurilskoye Lake in South
Kamchatka State Sanctuary.*

Russia: Better Conservation for the Environment and the Economy

The Kamchatka peninsula juts from the far east of Russia, splitting the Okhotsk Sea from the Pacific Ocean. Wild and remote, it is recognized by UNESCO's World Heritage List, and ranked by the World Wildlife Fund as one of the world's most important ecological regions.

A place of steaming geysers and simmering volcanoes, snow-capped mountains and rocky beaches, Kamchatka is home to a wide variety of plants and animals—many unique to the area. The rare Steller's sea eagle soars through its skies, while the only population of sea otters in the Western Pacific shelters along its coast. One-third of all Pacific salmon spawn in Kamchatka's rivers.

The region is sparsely populated—only about 340,000 people live there. In the 1990s, hard economic times arrived. The collapse of the Soviet economic system stripped the region of subsidies and services. People left for the Russian mainland or turned to illegal poaching to scrape by. Soon, human pressures became an environmental threat as unprecedented numbers of brown bears, snow sheep, reindeer, marine mammals and salmon began disappearing.

The threat went mostly undeterred until national and regional government partners launched an international conservation programme in 2002, assisted by UNDP, with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Canadian Government and the Moore Foundation.

The programme had two goals: to better protect the environment, and to ensure that people could earn decent incomes so they no longer needed to harm the environment to survive.

Improving management capacities

A first priority was to improve conservation practices, orienting them around long-term, sustainable natural resource management. About 11 percent of Kamchatka's territory is considered protected under national law, through a network of nature reserves, parks and sanctuaries. An increase in poaching underscored limited capacities to manage them.

To demonstrate ways forward, the UNDP/GEF-assisted programme chose four protected areas to model more effective, professional management—the Kronotsky State Biosphere Reserve and the South Kamchatka State Sanctuary, run by the federal Government, and Bystrinsky Nature Park and Nalychevo Nature Park, run by the regional Government. Targeted investments were made in infrastructure, enforcement, equipment and staff.

Early on, the programme engaged managers and inspectors from the protected areas in slowing the pace of poaching. The inspectors teamed up with police to create anti-poaching brigades, while the programme helped bring in additional staff and vehicles to boost surveillance. In one area, the Kronotsky State Biosphere Reserve, the number of anti-poaching raids and citations increased threefold from 2007 to 2009. Citations leveled off after that, indicating that poaching was declining.

Tracking poaching violations became more effective once the protected areas set up their first geographic information systems. These helped identify patterns requiring the most urgent responses and allowed close monitoring of “indicator” species critical to environmental health. The mapping of threats to snow sheep, reindeer and brown bear populations led officials to ramp up protection measures, including hunting bans.

To sustain these successes, the programme worked with prominent conservation experts to train over 1,000 staff on issues from tourism development to environmental advocacy to management effectiveness. A specialized training centre was established to maintain and expand the pool of skilled staff. Long-term, strategic management plans were put in place. One major shift came from structuring new budgets based on conservation goals, rather than according to allocated government funds, as had been done previously. This has helped managers prioritize actions and create targets for fund-raising that support sound management of the areas.

In the course of the programme, the four protected areas experienced different achievements and rates of change. But by 2010, all had significantly higher scores on the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool, specifically designed by the World Wildlife Fund and the World Bank to measure the quality of natural resources management.

In 2010, the regional Government merged four nature parks in Kamchatka—including those in Bystrinsky and Nalychevo—into a single entity called the Volcanos of Kamchatka Nature Park. In the two parks that were not part of the UNDP/GEF-supported programme, there are now opportunities for extending new management practices with proven value.

Benefits for livelihoods

Better management of the protected areas linked directly to the programme's other major goal: to improve livelihoods for people while relieving environmental stresses. In the area near Bystrinsky Nature Park, the only one of the four protected areas that abuts a district with a concentrated number of residents, the UNDP/GEF programme became the largest investor in entrepreneurship and alternative livelihoods.

Since 2003, the local economy has more than doubled in size. The employment rate has doubled as well. Construction, retail sales, expenditures on consumer services, public revenues—all have substantially increased.



The Valley of Geysers at the Kronotsky State Nature Biosphere Reserve.



A village cafe in Milkovo is one of many small businesses supported by the Sodruzhestvo microcredit fund.

Tourism has been an obvious source of revenues for both conservation and jobs, and while it has suffered from the global economic downturn, much has been achieved in developing capacities to reap economic benefits over the longer term. The programme provided assistance for promoting tourism on a number of fronts. It partnered with the regional Government and the Kamchatka Ecotourism Society on a marketing campaign that established a brand for the region, “Wild and Wonderful.” Visitor surveys increased understanding of tourist flows, and led to more efficient targeting of regional and private investments in tourism development.

Training for local people included courses in business development and responsible tourism, equipping entrepreneurs with the skills to start businesses and generate jobs. One company providing guided fishing tours employs 10 fishing guides who once worked as poachers.

In Bystrinsky Nature Park, the programme helped the management and staff bolster hospitality skills, and begin developing new infrastructure that has since been scaled up with government and private funds. Today, tourists enjoy comfortable hotels and cafes, and guided tours through the park.

Another important new resource for local livelihoods has been the locally run Sodruzhestvo microcredit fund for small and medium enterprises. The fund has granted over 1,000 loans since 2004, totaling nearly \$12 million. It is capitalized with \$3.5 million, including funds from the Government of Canada and GEF.

An innovative aspect of the fund is that six percent of the revenues generated from loans go to the Kamchatka Protected Areas Association, set up under the conservation programme to help the protected areas finance their operations. The first instrument of its type in Russia, the fund is expected to be able to provide supplemental funding for at least 25 years.

Longer-term perspectives

Despite the achievements in Kamchatka since the conservation programme began, more resources and capacities will be required to comprehensively manage its natural resources. Development pressures from mineral exploration may accelerate, and industrial-scale salmon poaching continues despite the creation of Russia’s first salmonid protection zones, supported by the programme. Necessary amendments in federal and regional legislation have been hindered by contradictions and overlap among existing statutes.

There are indications that some of these issues will be addressed. The State Duma is considering a package of amendments to the Federal Law on Protected Areas to better regulate tourism and expand financing options; it was influenced by the progress in Kamchatka. The central Government committed \$16.5 million for three years for the further development of ecotourism there, and additional staffing costs have been absorbed in central and regional government budgets.

Kamchatka has an advantage for the present in its comparatively sound ecological condition. Local residents are discovering ways to balance their needs with those of their environment. Development pressures may come, especially from outside, but there is now a constituency within the region with the experience and know-how to make the case for sustainable management, and to stand against future exploitation.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Increase** in anti-poaching activities.
- **\$16.5 million** over three years committed by the central Government to develop ecotourism.
- **Doubling** of local employment rates and the size of the local economy.
- **25-year** commitment of funding for conservation from a microcredit service for local businesses.



Farmers are learning modern irrigation techniques to adapt to the changing climate.

© Deniz Şilliler Tapan

Turkey: Moving Towards Climate-Friendly Development

Turkey has come a long way in embracing the global agenda for achieving sustainable development and combating climate change. Ten years ago, across the Turkish Government, only a dozen officials worked on climate change issues. Today, there are over 300 professionals employed in the field. Turkey has put in place national policies on the mitigation of climate change and adaptation to its consequences. It has embarked on renewable energy projects and is now preparing to be a player in voluntary carbon markets.

Towards these ends, UNDP has offered ongoing expertise to increase awareness on climate change issues, and help build national capacities for mitigation and adaptation measures. “We cooperate with UNDP on many fronts,” says Muhammed Ecel, head of the Climate Change Department in the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. “To us, UNDP support is indispensable.”

Advancing the agenda

Turkey became a party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2004, and five years later signed the Kyoto Protocol, a global agreement with legally binding targets to control the carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to climate change. With emissions well below those of most industrialized states—its per capita emissions rate is half that of European Union (EU) member states—Turkey is not yet subject to the targets.

Nonetheless, the cumulative total of emissions is cause for concern. Turkey's emissions almost doubled from 1990 to 2006, and Turkish officials seem more aware of their vulnerable location along the Mediterranean. Coastal erosion, flooding, frequent droughts, land degradation—these could seriously impact water and food availability, and development overall.

After Turkey ratified the climate change convention, it was required to produce a National Communication, a document detailing emissions trends and steps to comply with the goals of the convention. With limited experience on climate change, the Turkish Government turned to UNDP and the Global Environment Facility for support on key issues, and to help bring together diverse national constituencies to agree on the communication.

To begin laying the groundwork, UNDP reached out to people in the government, non-governmental, business and academic worlds, offering briefing sessions on subjects such as measuring emissions, mitigation cycles and the scope of international climate change negotiations. Producing an effective first National Communication was critical, since future national climate change initiatives would build directly on it.

When the Government issued the communication in 2007, 20 institutions and 100 experts had contributed to it, coming from the fields of climate, energy, industry, ecology, forestry, agriculture, economy, waste and governance. This made the exercise broadly participatory, and deeply vested in national knowledge and priorities. The communication offered the first inventory of Turkey's emissions and presented initial mitigation measures.

Progress on climate change policy subsequently accelerated. Turkey completed a National Climate Change Strategy in 2009. A National Climate Change Action Plan to implement the strategy, backed by funding from the United Kingdom, is slated for completion in 2011.

The strategy sets ambitious goals, such as to increase the share of renewable energy in total electricity generation by up to 30 percent by 2023, up from about 9 percent at present. Incentives for industry will encourage clean production and “climate-friendly” technologies,” with a target of realizing maximum energy efficiency in the industrial sector by 2020.

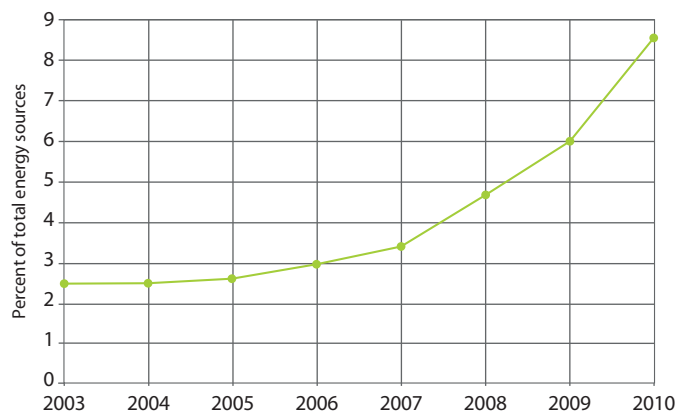
Engaging the private sector

Through the National Communication, private businesses became involved in considering the potential fallout from climate change. Engaging the private sector is critical, since globally an estimated 80 percent of investments in energy efficiency and emissions reductions will need to come from businesses and consumers.

UNDP has regularly helped convene private and public sector stakeholders to discuss how businesses can respond to climate change, including through opportunities that may emerge from voluntary carbon trading, where carbon ‘credits’ are bought and sold under agreed emissions caps. In 2010, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization drew on UNDP assistance for developing national legislation for a registration system for carbon projects—a first step towards participating in trading.

Nationally, a number of prominent companies have mobilized behind initiatives to promote renewable energy and the sustainable use of environmental resources. Arcelik A.S.,

A Rising Share of Renewable Energy



Note: The share of renewable energy increased after the new Law on Electricity Generation from Renewable Energy Resources came into force in 2005. The law granted a variety of incentives to spur private sector investments. A similar outcome is expected from recent regulation supporting solar power.

for example, has begun manufacturing more energy efficient refrigerators, and was a finalist in the 2010 European Business Awards for the Environment.

Prioritizing adaptation

Turkey is now preparing its second National Communication. It is also gearing up efforts to help people and the environment adapt to the impacts of climate change, including through the preparation of a national Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. Expected to be finished in 2011, it will provide a roadmap for future adaptation measures linked to water, food security, livelihoods, biodiversity, ecosystems, natural hazards and public health.

Together with other UN agencies and government partners, and with support from Spain's MDG Achievement Fund, UNDP has helped coordinate wide-ranging consultations to draft the adaptation strategy, and encouraged community-based adaptation initiatives on specific local climate change impacts. Through these exercises, local communities have begun to understand the vulnerabilities they face and the measures available to manage them. This information will inform both the national strategy and local plans for climate resilience.

Özhan Sönmez, the head of the Irrigation Union of the villages of Karaboğaz, Kılıçmehmet and Büyükpotuklu, is one participant who remembers how 20 years ago it was impossible to grow corn, beans, aubergines or tomatoes in his location 1,500 metres above sea level. Now, all these crops thrive there. "We are adapting—we have to adapt to the changes being brought by the new climate," he says.

In the Seyhan River Basin, the largest of its kind in Turkey, the UN Joint Programme funded by Spain has supported 18 pilot projects to demonstrate adaptation measures that communities, including those on the coast, can take related to water use, forestry, fisheries, animal husbandry, agricultural productivity, public health and livelihood diversification. For the first time in Turkey, climate change measures were integrated in a wetland management plan. Similarly, the forest management plan of the river basin was revised according to the projected changes in climatic conditions. Screening of local vegetable varieties for tolerance of salinity and drought stress was conducted, and sustainable agriculture practices were introduced. New irrigation systems proved not only more efficient and cost-effective, but also doubled crop yields in some areas.

Impressed with the work in the Seyhan River Basin, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization recently decided to scale it up through a series of feasibility studies and grants for all river basins in Turkey, with a pending allocation of \$3 million from the national budget.

Impressed with the work in the Seyhan River Basin, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization recently decided to scale it up through a series of feasibility studies and grants for all river basins in Turkey, with a pending allocation of \$3 million from the national budget.



The Seyhan River Basin is the largest of its kind in Turkey. Pilot projects have shown how it can be managed in line with a changing climate.

Photo: Koray Abaci



Marine life could be seriously affected by rising sea temperatures, with impacts on livelihoods and food supply given Turkey's location on the Mediterranean. Photo: Alper Acar



At the International Housing Convention organized by the Turkish Housing Development Agency, speakers stressed significant opportunities for introducing cost-effective energy and CO2 reduction measures in buildings and construction.

Photo: TOKI Archive

Growing influence

To coordinate its climate change efforts, the Turkish Government has set up institutions such as a Climate Change Coordination Board comprised of a variety of high-level representatives from national ministries and business associations. The Ministry of Environment and Urbanization now has a full-fledged Climate Change Department, and a number of other ministries have climate change focal points. A National Clean Production and Eco-efficiency Centre promotes sustainable methods for managing natural resources.

Mechanisms like these will help the Government sustain its efforts, with benefits extending in several directions. The new policy framework and pilot projects already favour the environmental aspects of Turkey's EU membership negotiations. Turkey has become a visible presence in international meetings to advance the UN climate change convention, and as an influential voice in its own region, is poised to share its positive experiences with other developing countries. Piece by piece, change is coming—and not just for the climate.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **300 professionals** in the Government working on climate change.
- **New national legislation** for registering carbon projects.
- **30 percent** target for renewable energy as a share of total electricity generation by 2023.
- Early adaptation projects piloting **cost-effective irrigation** and other conservation measures and practices.

Crisis Response and Post-Conflict Recovery



A deminer during clearance operations in north-east Albania.

Albania: On a Mine-Free Road to Development

Wherever they are laid, landmines kill and maim people who inadvertently stumble upon them. When people know that mines are present, they abandon fields and roads, even when those are vital to local livelihoods. Removing mines is therefore about safety, but it is also about a return to economic sustainability and hopes for renewed development.

All of these issues were at the forefront of mine action in north-east Albania, where UNDP encouraged strong links between operations to remove mines and programmes to foster local development. Today, after a decade of mine clearance, Albania is officially free from mine threats: 12,452 anti-personnel mines, 152 anti-tank mines and 4,965 pieces of unexploded ordnance have been found and destroyed.

As a result, people in a place heavily dependent on agriculture and forestry can reclaim their

land, 16 million square metres of which has been cleared and handed over to local communities for productive use.

“Now our children can play freely, and we can make use of our land and graze our sheep without fear that they will be injured,” says Rujmene Beqiraj, a resident of the village of Borja.

“This area is no longer a place of sorrow, but a place of peace and harmony,” exclaims Rama Basha, a local official from Shishtavec Commune. “The community is very hard working, and they are eager to cultivate the area. This is the community’s priority.”

A marked KB-1 mine found in north-east Albania.



A legacy of conflict

Mines in Albania were a legacy of the 1999 Kosovo conflict. They ended up scattered along the border running through the harsh mountainous terrain of north-east Albania, considered the country’s poorest and least accessible region. About three-quarters of the population scratches a subsistence livelihood from small plots of land. Over 40 percent of people live below the poverty line, with significantly higher-than-average rates of unemployment and illiteracy, more so for women.

In the districts of Kukes, Has and Tropoja, 39 villages were identified as affected by mines. Once the conflict ended, an immediate priority was to survey, mark and clear them, but after initial efforts were slowed by a lack of national expertise, the Albanian Government called on UNDP to

assist in developing stronger capacities to plan, coordinate, carry out and monitor mine action. Given the urgency of the situation, international teams were brought in for clearance tasks, but by 2006, Albanian operators had developed managerial and technical skills, and made up the bulk of six manual clearance teams. Hundreds of local people were employed in the mine clearance efforts.

UNDP simultaneously helped trigger action on two other pillars of mine action: mine risk education and victim assistance. Mine risk education, equally provided to men, women, boys and girls, reached 25,000 inhabitants in the 39 villages. Training for teachers and activists helped them spread accurate information about safety measures throughout affected communities, protecting people and property. By 2005, only two mine accidents were reported, down from 152 in 1999—the number has remained at zero ever since.

Programmes to assist mine victims offered help with medical care and rehabilitation, prostheses for people who had lost limbs, and support in accessing social services. Since children made up a third of the victims, special efforts were made to provide transport and private tutors to help them catch up with their peers. Vocational training and microcredit aided adult victims and their family members in developing new businesses or gaining employment with local companies—40 percent of the participants were women. After UNDP helped the Kukes regional hospital upgrade its physiotherapy unit and open a prosthetics workshop, the hospital extended services to mine accident survivors as well as other people with disabilities.

“I lost my leg in the autumn of 2005 while planting seeds in our field,” recounts Bukurie Hasa, a landmine survivor and mother of three. “Thanks to the prosthesis I was provided, I am able to work again and contribute to my family’s well-being. I am so happy I can walk my kids to school.”

Today, Albania is considered a model of international best practices on mine action, with regular requests to share its experiences at annual meetings of the States Parties to the

international mine ban convention. It has assumed a prominent international leadership role in advocating for mine action, including by serving as the President of the 10th meeting of States Parties.

At home, Albania is applying the skills and capacities developed for mine action to the destruction of extensive stockpiles of conventional ammunition, an unfortunate legacy of the Cold War that continues to threaten civilian populations.

The transition to a better future

By 2005, as the last threats from mines were receding in the Kukes region, affected communities expressed increasing concern about restarting economic development. Under the mine action programme, a network of local mine action committees had been established. Composed equally of men and women, they had invited broad-based community engagement in identifying security threats for the mine clearance teams, and prioritizing clearance actions most critical to local welfare. This experience with local participation was ready to be tapped for a new goal—to plan and implement a broad set of community development projects.

UNDP provided a detailed socioeconomic overview of the region, and on the basis of that, partnered with the European Commission in establishing the Kukes Regional Development Initiative. Since a clear priority was to restore and expand essential infrastructure, UNDP and the Commission helped inject over \$6 million in the region through projects to improve roads and water supply systems, and to build more health centres and schools.

Through targeted training, local governments developed capacities to identify and plan the projects that responded to priorities identified by men and women in their community, as well as to manage them over the longer term. Actions were guided in part by a regional plan for achieving the Millennium Development Goals that helped maintain attention to all basic elements of sound development, including poverty reduction, health, education and gender equality. As often as possible, local companies carried out the projects, boosting opportunities for employment in a region where many working-age people have migrated elsewhere in search of jobs.

To broaden participation by involving a cross-section of local people, UNDP also worked locality by locality to help set up 185 community-based organizations. Members learned leadership and project management skills, and started identifying and implementing smaller-scale development works, as well as engaging with local governments on larger efforts. Voting and open debates established a democratic process for selecting priorities. Volunteer labour and contributions such as land for projects instilled a sense of local pride and ownership. Financial contributions from local governments to initiatives selected by the community-based organizations bolstered the notion that local governments should work for the men and women they represent.

By the end of the Kukes Regional Development Initiative in 2008, its activities had reached 89 percent of people in the programme area. According to a survey of over 700 local residents, the community-based organizations



A prosthetic technician in Kukes Regional Hospital provides a routine check-up for a mine survivor.



Mine risk education activities taught children to stay safe.

in particular fostered a sense of greater involvement in local decision-making, for both men and women. The survey found that 97 percent of people interviewed believed that the local projects had a positive impact.

While the Kukes Regional Development Initiative has now ended, UNDP sustains its investment in the region through continued support for economic progress. The area has outstanding natural resources—spectacular mountains, lakes, and alpine pastures and valleys—with great potential for ecotourism. Continued partnership with the European Commission has led to the launch of programmes supporting ecotourism development and sustainable environmental management, including through developing capacities for cross-border cooperation with partners in Montenegro and, in the future, Kosovo¹. Other activities are helping to extend employment and vocational training options for young people.

One kind of security returned to Albania when the last known mine was extracted from the ground. Now a new kind is taking root, one that promises a future where women and men have more opportunities to earn livelihoods, become educated and have a full say in making decisions about their communities.



Farmers have returned to cultivating their land, now that it is free of mines.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **13,000** anti-personnel mines destroyed.
- **16 million** square metres of agricultural land and pastures cleared.
- **New investments** in roads, water supply systems, health centres and schools.
- **185 community organizations** set up to implement small-scale development projects.

¹ Refers to UN-administered Kosovo as per UN Security Council Resolution 1244.



Toxic military waste was removed from Boka Bay.

Montenegro: Defence Reform Ushers in Greater Security

Montenegro's Boka Bay is a place of striking beauty. Bare rock walls soar 1,000 metres above the sapphire blue waters of the Adriatic Sea. Red-roofed fishing villages nestle on islands and in low-lying areas. The ancient port of Kotor, with its graceful Venetian architecture, has gained renown as a World Cultural Heritage site.

Only a few years ago, this unique place faced a dire threat: 128 tons of toxic fuel, once destined to propel anti-ship rockets, was stored on the shore, at risk of leaking from outdated storage tanks. Almost 26 tons of inflammable napalm thickener sat at a nearby airport. Fortunately, the Montenegrin Government had recognized the urgent need to take action. It requested the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and UNDP to assist in what became a successful clean up.

UNDP technical experts worked with Ministry of Defence officials to identify international and EU environmental and safety requirements to guide disposal, and to select a Swedish company equipped to carry it out. The waste was decanted into special containers and transferred to a facility in Sweden where it could be safely destroyed, monitored by a team of observers from Montenegro.

"My family, friends and neighbours were all concerned," says local resident Tamara Jurlina, who lives near the storage area. "Now we know our environment is no longer endangered, and this threat is removed for good."

Planning new strategies

Cleaning up Boka Bay has been part of Montenegro's broader effort to reform its armed forces, deal with its remnants of war and restore confidence in a peaceful future. When Montenegro gained independence from Serbia in 2006, decades of armed conflict in the region came to a close. It inherited redundant and outdated weaponry, poorly maintained military facilities, and a surplus stockpile of 45 million rounds of ammunition, about 4.5 kilogrammes for every Montenegrin man, woman and child.

While originally meant for security, the excess arms now sharply raised the risk of insecurity. The environmental threat in Boka Bay was one concern. Another came from explosive materials not being properly stored. In 2006, a storage facility near the village of Vir blew up in the middle of the night, destroying houses and injuring 32 people, with earthquake-like tremors felt up to 10 kilometres away. Surpluses and inadequate storage also meant that bullets, bombs and other items could more readily fall into the wrong hands, including those of criminals and terrorists.

In 2007, as Montenegro's Ministry of Defence determined that initial priorities for security reform should include reducing ammunition and safeguarding remaining stores, as defined by NATO operational standards. It also committed to complying with all relevant European Union, UN and OSCE agreements on small arms and light weapons.

To assist in planning to achieve these goals, the ministry requested the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC)—mandated by UNDP and the Regional Cooperation Council to support arms control—to conduct an ammunition technical assessment. It provided a comprehensive look at Montenegro's needs and capabilities for destroying surpluses and maintaining stockpiles in line with international standards. A review of nine storage facilities, for example, found that five did not meet NATO guidelines for safety distances to civilian areas.

Using recommendations in the assessment, the Ministry of Defence drew up a plan to get rid of toxic military waste, reduce ammunition supplies, destroy and recycle heavy weapons like tanks, and effectively manage storage. The plan emphasized environmentally benign disposal, in compliance with EU legislation, and stressed developing national capacities to sustain secure management over the longer term.

UNDP, in collaboration with OSCE, supported the development and implementation of the plan, with funding from Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, as well as other donors participating through the OSCE. Both organizations have been engaged in helping a number of post-conflict states across the region reduce and secure weapons stocks, among them Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Tajikistan and Ukraine.



The Boka Bay cleanup took place in conformity with national and EU environmental and safety requirements.

Reducing and recycling

The Boka Bay clean up was one early success. Another was the destruction of surplus heavy weapons—which were both a security liability and expensive to maintain. This began with an assessment of disposal options that indicated dismantling and recycling as the best choice. Over 60 T-55 tanks and more than 1,000 heavy weapons were melted down for scrap, following the provisions of the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. Extensive local and

international media attention, including by CNN, sent a strong public message that Montenegro had begun to make a serious investment in peace.

Ammunition reduction focused first on destroying technically simple items that did not require additional capacities or equipment. About 480 tons were melted down and recycled. At the same time, Defence Ministry staff began evaluating military facilities as a first step towards developing capacities to handle more complex disposals. Two were selected, and are now being readied for operations.

This has entailed modernizing some equipment, as well as developing technical skills to meet disposal requirements that widely vary by the type of ammunition. New guidelines for transporting explosive materials have been developed, and monitoring systems created to track disposal. To respond to public concerns about potential dangers, representatives from the ministries of defence and interior met with communities close to the destruction sites to explain safety precautions and the importance of controlled reductions.

Once the facilities fully come on line, they will help Montenegro achieve a goal of reducing all surplus or obsolete stocks, and maintaining a safe quantity of 2,500 tons, down from 9,900 tons.

For securing remaining ammunition, the Ministry of Defence chose its Taras storage depot for a modernization pilot—over time, it aims to reduce its nine depots to three. A \$1.7 million upgrade included state-of-the-art security surveillance and fire alarm systems, and facilities to maintain 24-hour armed guards. Paved roads facilitate access. A new staff has been trained to monitor and control access to the facility.



Obsolete heavy weapons were cut down for recycling.



The Government has committed over \$1 million from selling recycled weapons and ammunition to continued reduction of its stockpiles.

Continued progress

At the opening of the Taras storage site, Minister of Defence Boro Vučinić underlined that Montenegro has far to go in reducing the legacy of its past. But, he says, “we are fully aware of the threat (of surplus ammunition), and we will continue working on its destruction, in order to remove the risk and ensure the safety of our citizens.”

A second arms storage facility at Brezovik is already in the final stages of preparation for a similar \$3.3 million reconstruction. Some 700 tons of the oldest and most unstable weapons are slated for destruction by the end of 2012. Toward these ends, the Government has committed over \$1 million from selling recycled weapons and ammunition. It will allocate another \$500,000 by the end of 2012.

Lessons learned in Montenegro are being used in other countries in South-eastern Europe, spread through OSCE and UNDP support. A new demilitarization programme in Georgia, for example, is prioritizing community and environmental security, based in part on the experience in Boka Bay. Within and across nations, efforts to destroy excess weapons and ammunition and foster safe communities will help mark the return to development and peace.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Removal of **128 tons** of toxic rocket fuel.
- Over **60 T-55 tanks**, more than **1,000 heavy weapons** and **480 tons** of ammunition melted down and recycled.
- **Modernization** of ammunition storage facilities.
- Development of disposal facilities for a future **75 percent** reduction in ammunition stockpiles.

A decorative graphic consisting of several colored squares (orange, red, blue, yellow, green) arranged in a stepped pattern on the left side of the page.

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