



BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN THE STATE & THE PEOPLE

AN OVERVIEW OF TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

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DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE



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FOREWORD

The UN, and especially UNDP, have supported public administration reform in developing countries since the early 1960's, taking the lead in recognising the importance of effective public administration for national development.

Over the years, UNDP has maintained its engagement and reputation as a leading source of technical assistance at the country level. It also extended its portfolio into decentralization and local governance – which saw a boost in the 1990's as a result of the increased emphasis on Democratic Governance – concentrating its efforts on supporting civic engagement, participation, empowerment and improved service delivery.

Activities in these two service lines have been further intensified in response to the enhanced significance currently accorded to the role of public administration (PA) and local governance (LG) within the development process, particularly against the backdrop of complex economic and social challenges. As the capacity and the role of the State in reducing poverty, achieving the Millennium Development Goals and promoting equitable and sustainable growth regains focus in light of the last years' crises, the work being undertaken in public administration and local governance should also gain more visibility. An effective and efficient public administration – at both the national and local levels – coupled with healthy local governance arrangements can indeed drive development efforts. Manifestly, these two areas complement one another and serve a broad development agenda that needs to be well coordinated. Public administration and local governments can play a key role in efforts to improve State-society relationships and shore up the institutional capacity of the State on a long term basis, provided that the policies implemented remain mindful of local governance dynamics, foster inclusion, civil responsibility, empowerment and participation.

We would like to thank all the colleagues in Country Offices, Regional Centres and Headquarters who provided comments and inputs in the process of producing this paper. It is our hope that this publication will stimulate the debate on the role of public administration and local governance in development.



Geraldine Fraser–Moleketi
Practice Director
Democratic Governance Group
Bureau for Development Policy



INTRODUCTION

As part of the process of renewing its strategic thinking in the area of public administration and local governance (PA&LG), the *Responsive Institutions Cluster*¹ within the Democratic Governance Group (DGG), Bureau for Development Policy (BDP), undertook a comprehensive stock-taking exercise of UNDP's projects in these service lines at country and regional level across all five regions². In addition to compiling information on all ongoing civil service reform, decentralization and local government projects, the five resulting regional papers³ also include information on initiatives related to other service lines that touch directly on public administration at national and sub-national levels:

- Projects that support strategic policy making at the centre of government.
- Institutional strengthening projects focused on specific agencies or ministries.
- Anti-corruption projects that include initiatives to address the accountability, transparency and integrity of the public administration and local governments.
- Institutional and capacity development projects focusing on the public sector.
- Aid coordination and aid effectiveness initiatives that deal directly with budget policy and coordination.
- Projects that support E-government development and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).
- Access to information projects that deal essentially with the supply of government information.
- Projects that support the streamlining of regulations and administrative procedures.
- Initiatives that address gender policies in public administration and local governments.

The large portfolio of PA&LG projects included in the regional monographs provide clear evidence of UNDP's continued – and robust – involvement in these two service lines. Today, UNDP is active in PA&LG in 124 countries, implementing close

¹ The *Responsive Institutions Cluster* is the policy team within UNDP mainly responsible for supporting national governments in: (a) implementing public administration reforms in national governments and local authorities; and (b) promoting access to justice and the rule of law. In these areas, programme priority is given to strengthening the mechanisms of responsiveness and public accountability to the concerns and interests of poor people, women, and other vulnerable or excluded groups.

² The regional stock-takings were prepared on the basis of desk reviews of existing project documents, project briefs, UNDP websites, project databases of individual Country Offices and Regional Centers, the DGTF database and Atlas. Research was complemented with additional inputs from the field, where available. The stock-taking papers focus on UNDP's current or, at least, most recent interventions. Unless there was a compelling reason for including them, projects that were finalized before 2008 were not included.

³ The five regional monographs are available on: <http://www.undp.org/governance/library.shtml>.

to 500 PA&LG related projects and programmes across all five regions⁴. These initiatives range from supporting the Strategy and Policy Unit in the Office of the President of Sierra Leone, modernising the civil service and public administration in Syria and Tunisia and developing the capacity of the Aceh Government in Indonesia, to promoting inter-municipal cooperation for improved service delivery in the FYR of Macedonia and supporting strategies for improving the quality of public management in Venezuela. This geographical spread and the variety of themes addressed, characterize UNDP's current portfolio in these two service lines. It also indicates a vast amount of PA&LG activity, itself representative of a high and diverse demand from developing countries for UNDP support in this field.

Based on a comparative analysis of the regional stock-taking monographs, this paper provides an overview of developments and trends in PA&LG at the country, regional and global levels. Although it does not evaluate the projects' outputs, it does offer an analysis of the different areas where UNDP's work in the sector is concentrated as well as looking at PA&LG interventions in special development situations, especially at the challenges encountered in post-conflict environments, which bring into sharp relief the close interdependence between PA&LG. Finally, it also provides an overview of emerging issues and challenges in these two sectors, thus linking UNDP's current portfolio to the way forward.



⁴ Some caution is however needed when interpreting these figures, as a number of projects that would normally fall under *Inclusive Participation*, but actually deal with developing the capacity of other democratic institutions (e.g. support to electoral bodies or Human Rights Commissions), continue to be classified under the *Responsive Institutions* outcome.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION & LOCAL GOVERNANCE: THE NUMBER ONE AREA OF SUPPORT IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The regional papers show that despite the absence of global programmes⁵ in both service lines, demand for UNDP assistance in PA&LG remains very high at the country level and continues to represent the largest sector within UNDP's Democratic Governance Practice.

A substantial percentage of UNDP's activity in democratic governance has a direct link to public administration reform (PAR) at national and/or sub-national level. A survey undertaken in 2007⁶ highlighted that 60% of UNDP's local governance projects dealt directly with PAR, and nearly half of UNDP's E-governance and ICT projects had a direct bearing on PA&LG⁷. In addition, most capacity development initiatives⁸ and many projects tackling corruption⁹, directly target the performance of public administration. The list further increases when aid coordination is included as a core government function. A similar conclusion can be drawn when analyzing the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) projects that were approved over the past years¹⁰.

PA&LG is also the number one topic in terms of queries on the Democratic Governance Practice Network (DGPNet)¹¹, dealing with a variety of challenges faced

OVERVIEW OF DGTTF-FUNDED PROJECTS (2006-2010)

- n **2006 & 2007:** during these years, the service line for *Decentralization and Local Governance* was second in demand, after *Access to Justice* and *Human Rights*. DGTTF supported a total of 19 projects under this service line in 2007, out of a total of 109, including two regional projects in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- n **2008:** *Public Administration Reform* and *Anti-corruption* came third with a total of 17 projects (compared with 13 in 2007), representing US\$ 1.77 million – or 16% – of the total DGTTF funds.
- n **2009:** 17 out of 49 (34%) of approved DGTTF projects were related to *Public Administration* and *Local Governance*.
- n **2010:** 11 out of 35 (31%) of the approved projects are in the area of *Public Administration* and *Local Governance*.

Note: when including projects on Anti-corruption and E-governance that deal directly with public administration, support to public institutions clearly remains the largest recipient of funds from the DGTTF.

⁵ The Democratic Governance Group in the Bureau for Development Policy currently has global programmes in the area of *Elections*, *Anti-Corruption*, *Access to Justice*, *Human Rights*, *Governance Assessments* and *Parliamentary Development*.

⁶ The survey was based on the Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF) results database 2004-2007, the DGTTF reports, and the results of a web-based questionnaire.

⁷ See, for example, Guinea's "*Appui a la Modernization de l'Administration a Travers les NTIC*" project.

⁸ See, for example, the "Capacity Building for European Integration" project in Kosovo.

⁹ See, for example, the "Strengthening Transparency and Integrity in the Civil Service" project in Egypt.

¹⁰ The DGTTF provides UNDP Country Offices and regional programmes with financing to explore innovative and catalytic approaches to address governance issues. From 2002 to 2009, DGTTF disbursed approximately US\$ 95 million for a total of 697 projects in the field.

¹¹ DGPNet is a global electronic network open to UNDP staff and UN staff working on UNDP projects. It serves as an internal exchange forum focusing on new and upcoming national, regional and global activities and resources available within UNDP's governance community. It is also a tool for sharing comparative experiences and good practices and for discussing substantive issues related to democratic governance. Currently, DGPNet has +1,500 members representing all of UNDP's thematic groups and more than 100 Country Offices.

by the national and sub-national governments (such as land management, procurement, budget support, special incentives for diplomatic staff, training programmes of public servants, codes of conduct for the public administration, etc.). This snapshot of query topics shows a variety of issues that UNDP Country Offices have to deal with in response to – often ad hoc – demands for advice or comparative experiences by national counterparts.

Nonetheless, despite numerous targeted discussions on the DGP network, there is still insufficient cross-learning within the organization on what works and what does not in PA&LG. Tools and knowledge generated in certain parts of the world, or even in certain practices or groups that also address PA&LG issues, are not necessarily known and/or used by other parts of the organization. Knowledge sharing is the backbone of any vibrant community of practice and UNDP has a lot to offer. However, much more has to be done in terms of learning from individual experiences and the details of the enabling environment that supported, delayed or obstructed change in a given context.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

While there are currently no global programmes on PA&LG at corporate level, a series of initiatives have been developed at regional level. Several regional and/or sub-regional communities of practice (CoP) have been established, providing a foundation for a future global CoP on PA&LG. Though some of these initiatives are not explicitly linked to the PA&LG service lines, they do include activities that contribute to strengthening the responsiveness of PA&LG by addressing accountability, access to information, E-governance and/or anti-corruption.

One such regional community of practice is the Public Administration and Anti-Corruption Practitioners Network established by the Bratislava Regional Centre (BRC) in 2005, and supported by the Regional Centre for Public Administration Reform for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)¹². Several sub-regional initiatives have also been hosted by UNDP Country Offices, such as the “Civil Service Reform Conference in Western Balkans” (Bosnia and Herzegovina), “Performance Based Budgeting” (Russia) and “Border Management in Central Asia” (Kyrgyzstan). The “Ex-Ante Policy Impact Assessments” project, implemented in partnership with the Open Society Institute (OSI), facilitates an interactive professional network and provides specialized knowledge products to policy development practitioners from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova and Serbia. A new stage of the programme is currently under discussion.

¹² Recently launched by the BRC and funded through a US\$ 7.1 million contribution from Greece, this initiative aims to establish an on-line resource centre in PAR in the region.



UNDP's Regional Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (RC-ESA), based in Johannesburg, manages the "Africa Governance and Public Administration Programme" (AGPAP); one of four components of the Regional Bureau for Africa's "Consolidating Democratic Governance in Africa Programme" (CDGAP). The programme has been designed as a long-term framework on Governance and Public Administration. To reinforce capacities, the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) has recruited over 40 senior economists based in Country Offices throughout the continent. The Regional Centre in Dakar hosts both the sub-regional project on public administration in West Africa (sponsored by the Spanish Trust Fund), and the POLE project (Development Policy and Public Finance) which supports governments in West Africa with tools and processes for improved coherence between public finance and national poverty reduction strategies. The "Strengthening Local Government Capacities in Eastern and Southern Africa" will support the region's efforts at decentralized governance and local development. A number of regional initiatives have also been developed to facilitate cooperation amongst countries and the transfer of experience and knowledge for replication. The African Peer Review Mechanism, for example, supports a governance related knowledge management mechanism spanning 30 countries.

The "Programme on Governance in the Arab Region" (POGAR), launched by the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) in 2000, has supported a wide range of

initiatives dedicated to the promotion and development of good governance practices and related reforms in the Arab States, in tandem with the Arab Human Development Reports. The 2008 outcome evaluation of RBAS' Regional Programme, underlines the need for increased attention to public administration reform, E-government and local government. In this context, it is worth noting the joint initiative between the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and UNDP-POGAR for supporting the establishment of a dataset and key indicators on the public sector across Arab countries, expected to help governments better plan, monitor and measure their public policies and governance reform agendas. POGAR is also managing the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET), established in July 2008 by heads and senior officials from anti-corruption authorities in sixteen Arab countries. The initiative is supported by other regional and global actors including the League of Arab States (LoAS), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the OECD. Today, ACINET provides a regional platform for policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and capacity development in the area of anti-corruption.

The Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC) implements the “Management System in Support of the Functioning of Democratic Institutions”¹³ (SIGOB) project based in Paraguay. For the past 15 years, SIGOB has focused on supporting the centre of government, building on the experiences of UNDP's former regional project for the “Institutional Strengthening of Presidential Offices in Latin America and the Caribbean”. The programme promotes transparency, citizens' interaction and access to information, and offers substantive inputs for strategic planning and programming harnessing ICT potentials. The Regional Centre in Panama coordinates the “Local Proposals for Governance in Latin America”¹⁴ (PROLOGO) initiative, aimed at strengthening democratic governance at the local level by providing conceptual and practical tools as well as training for community leaders and authorities, and creating a network for knowledge exchange amongst municipalities. The Panama Centre also launched the “Transparency and Accountability in Local Governments”¹⁵ (TRAALOG), a regional initiative that aims to offer technical advice and assistance to UNDP COs in Latin America and the Caribbean. The initiative provides targeted support to ongoing and/or new initiatives that focus on transparency, accountability and anti-corruption at the sub-national level (municipalities, counties, provinces, departments, states).

The “Asia Pacific Regional Governance Programme” (ARGP) focuses on accountability and transparency. Within the local governance service line, the UN implements a joint regional initiative on “Local Infrastructure and Service Delivery for the MDGs”. UNDP's “Regional Initiative on Local Democracy in Asia” aims to address the need for more substantive knowledge on the state of local representative

¹³ *Sistema de Programación y Gestión de Gobierno.*

¹⁴ PROLOGO, funded by the Generalitat de Valencia (Spain), is being implemented in 3 municipalities: Cartagena (Colombia), El Cercado (Dominican Republic) and Santa Tecla (El Salvador). Local Centers offer a place of interaction where local authorities and citizens can discuss public policy.

¹⁵ *Transparencia y Rendición de Cuentas en los Gobiernos Locales.*

systems in, and for exploring ways to improve local representative institutions which constitute, for many citizens, one of the most important avenues for participation in governance and for influencing decision-making of direct relevance to their livelihoods. The Regional Centre in Bangkok (RCB) also launched the “Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness” initiative, while the “Pacific Governance Programme” is working with Ombudsman institutions on access to information.



REGIONAL COMPARISON

Public administration and local governance stand high on the agenda of all regional bureaux. Recent and ongoing PA&LG related projects have been reported by 40 countries of the African Region (comprising 45 Country Offices), 25 in Asia Pacific (24 COs), 22 countries in the Eastern Europe and the CIS (28 COs), 21 in the Latin America and Caribbean (24 COs), and 16 Arab States countries (18 COs). The charts below provide an overview of the current regional spread of PA&LG projects, grouped according to the 11 areas of intervention covered in the regional stock-taking exercises¹⁶.

¹⁶ All figures have been extracted from the five regional stock-taking papers.

Chart 1: Overview of PA&LG Projects according to Region and Area of Intervention

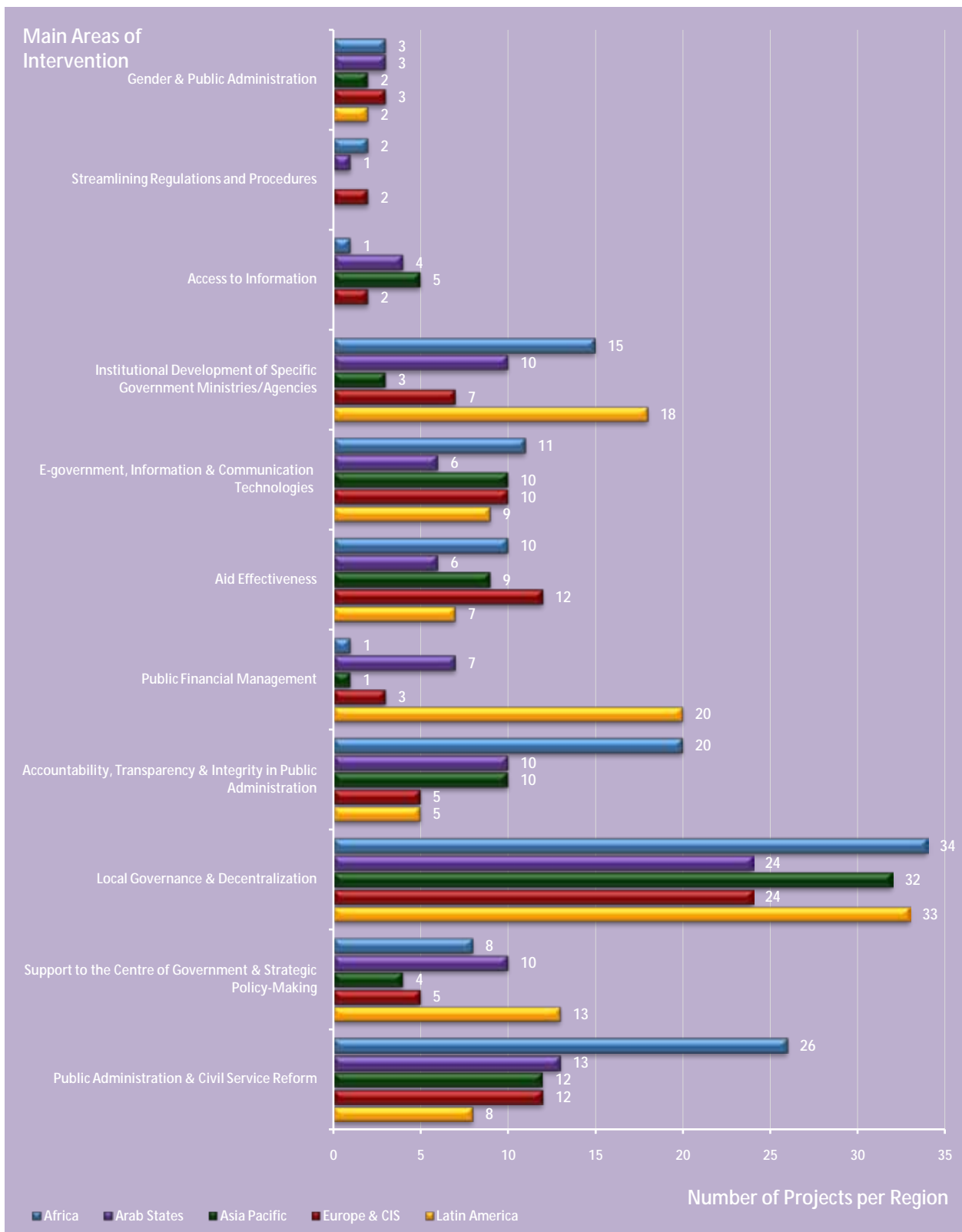


Chart 2: Overview of PA&LG Projects in Africa

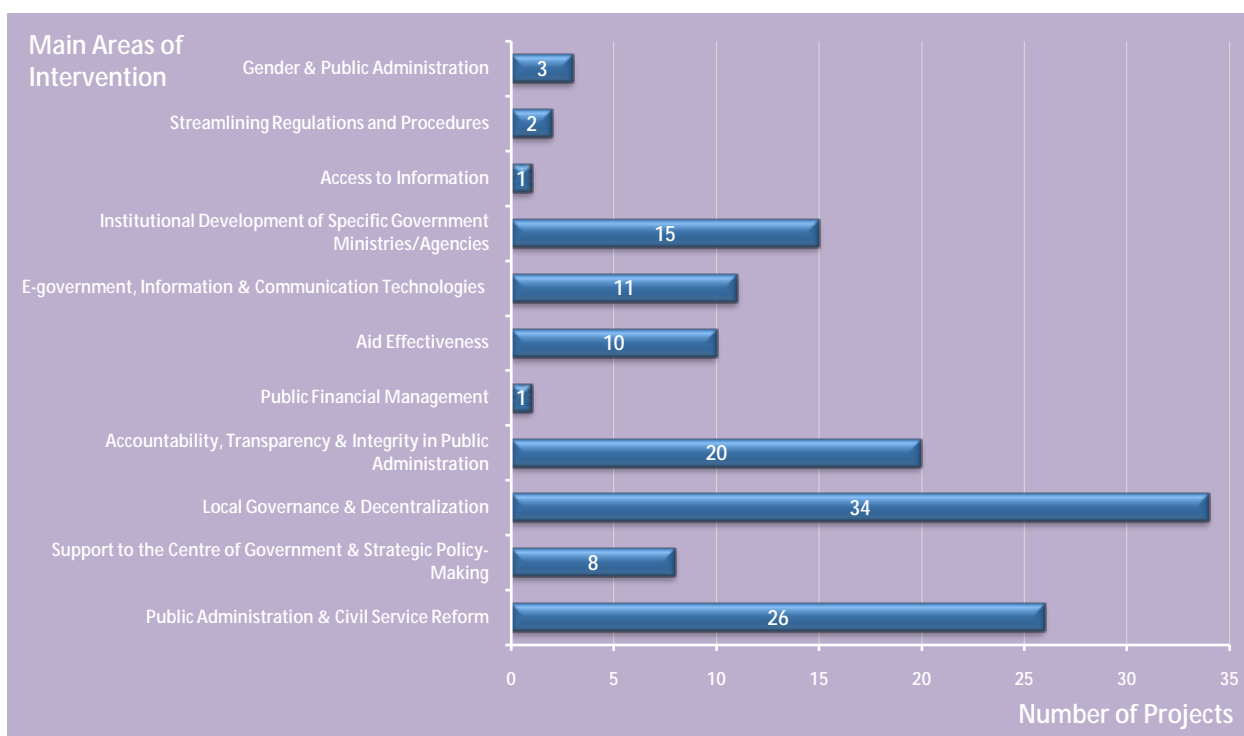


Chart 3: Overview of PA&LG Projects in the Arab States

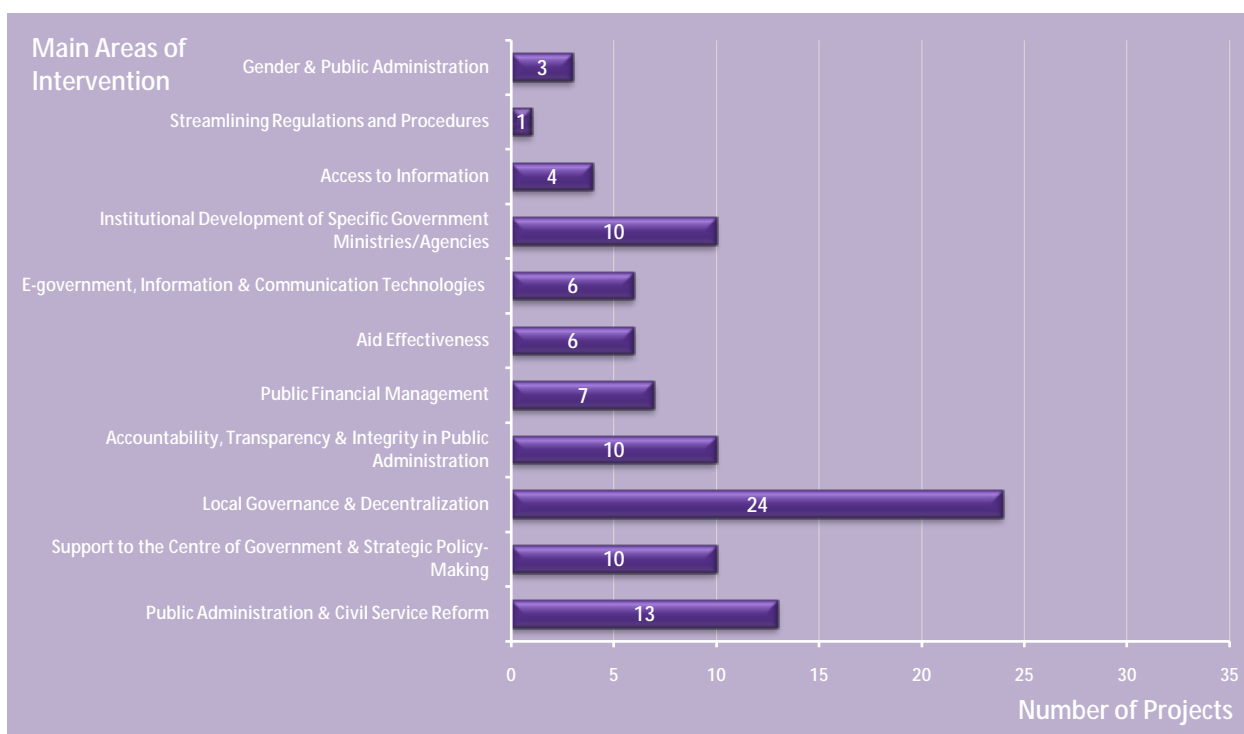


Chart 4: Overview of PA&LG Projects in Asia Pacific



Chart 5: Overview of PA&LG Projects in Eastern Europe & the CIS

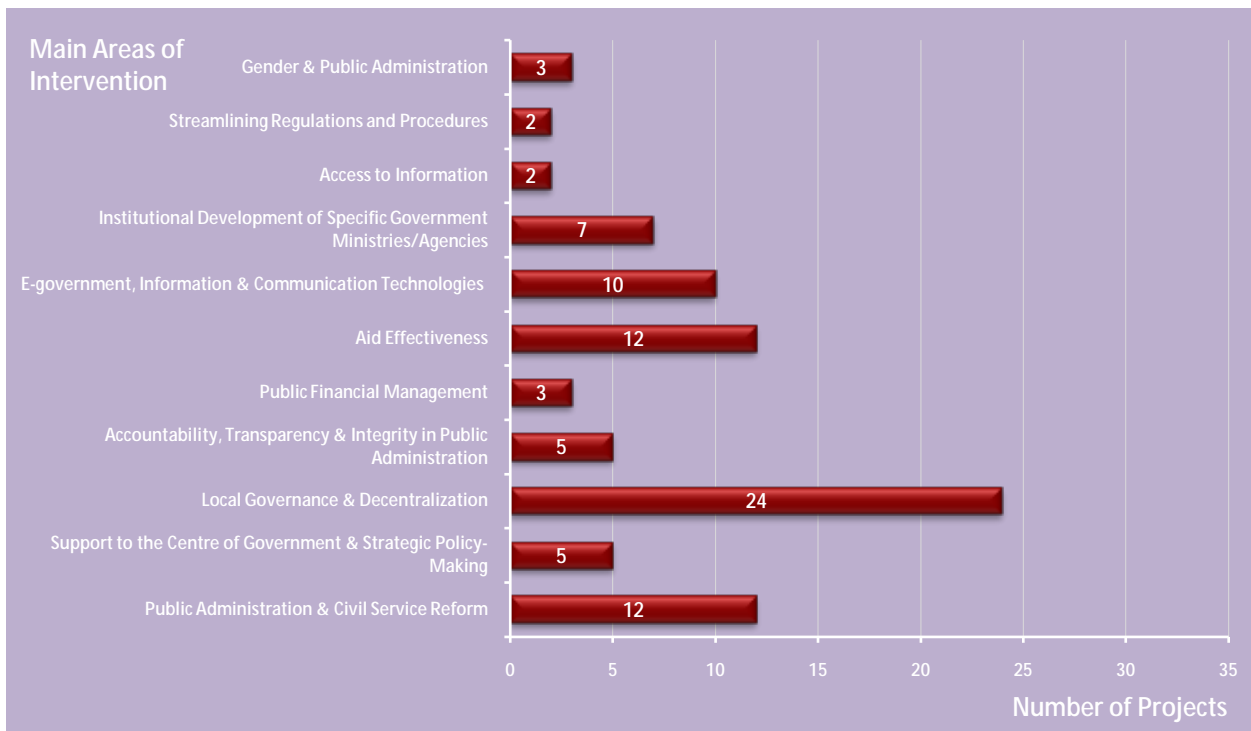
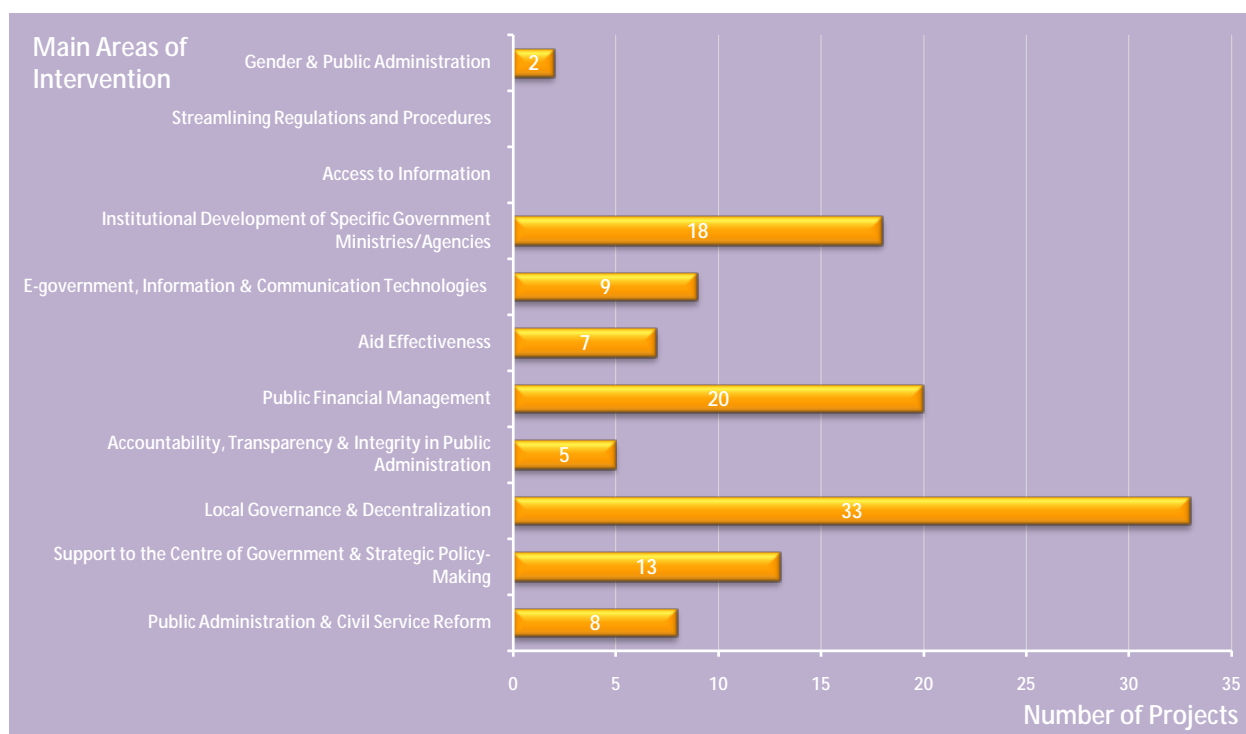


Chart 6: Overview of PA&LG Projects in Latin America & the Caribbean

COUNTRIES COVERED

The bulk of UNDP's projects are implemented in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Lower Middle Income Countries (LMICs). It explains the large number of PA&LG projects in Africa and Asia Pacific as these two regions host most of the LDCs¹⁷. In the Arab States Region, there are several public administration projects in the Upper Middle Income Countries (UMICs) such as Lebanon and Libya, and in the higher income economies like Kuwait, Algeria and Saudi Arabia. In Kuwait, for example, UNDP is assisting the Information and Decision Support Secretariat in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers to improve its performance and obtain ISO 9001 certification.

Most of UNDP's activities in the MICs are in Europe and the CIS and Latin America. In the latter in particular, projects implemented with support from UNDP are often funded by the host government or by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), as is the case with the "Programme of Reform of the Public Administration" in Colombia (2004-2010, US\$ 7 million), an initiative financed through a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).

¹⁷ There are 33 LDCs in Africa, 15 in Asia and 1 in Latin America (Haiti).

FUNDING

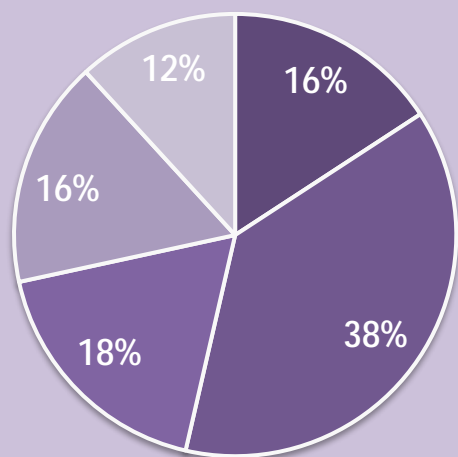
The data available for the projects included in the regional papers indicate a wide variety of project activity. The nature of the engagements varies considerably as well: from smaller interventions such as the anti-corruption project in Barbados (US\$ 90,000), the support to the Planning Commission in Syria (US\$ 87,000), or the gender in local governance project in the Dominican Republic (US\$ 59,000) to the US\$ 19 million ART programme in Lebanon, the US\$ 14.5 million Public Sector Capacity Development Initiative in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), or the

US\$ 22 million anti-corruption project in Afghanistan. There are larger programmes as well, but these are usually multi-donor funded, such as the joint UN local governance and local development programme in Nepal (US\$ 54 million), the support to democratic institutions project in Ethiopia (US\$ 50 million) or the local recovery programme in South Sudan (US\$ 46.8 million). Some of these larger programmes are funded by the IFIs and implemented with support from UNDP, as is frequently the case in Latin America¹⁸.

Consequently, some of these larger figures should be taken with caution, as they often reflect the budget of the entire programme funded by the IFIs or the government, rather than the component being implemented and/or funded by UNDP. Moreover, this overview does not necessarily specify the nature of UNDP's involvement in the projects' implementation in terms of providing advisory and capacity development support or a more restricted management (e.g. procurement) and coordination support.

Taking into account the list of projects for which accurate data is available, the majority (82%) of UNDP's interventions in PA&LG range from US\$ 200,000 to US\$ 5 million.

FIGURE 1: BREAKDOWN OF PROJECTS ACCORDING TO BUDGET SIZE



- US\$ 200,000 - US\$ 400,000
- US\$ 400,000 - US\$ 1 million
- US\$ 1 - US\$ 2 million
- US\$ 2 - US\$ 5 million
- US\$ 5 million & above

¹⁸ Brazil, Peru, Venezuela and Colombia all have projects ranging between US\$ 30 and 100 million.

MAIN AREAS OF INTERVENTION

This section analyses the global portfolio of projects to examine the nature of UNDP's involvement, the predominant areas of support, and identify emerging trends and PA&LG issues. Across all regions, UNDP has been consistently involved in four core areas of PA&LG, as measured by the number of projects and amount of dedicated funding. These are:

- Public Administration and Civil Service Reform.
- Local Governance and Decentralization.
- Accountability, Integrity and Transparency in Public Administration.
- Institutional Strengthening.

The increased recognition of the prominent role played by PA&LG in the achievement of higher levels of human development and solidifying State-citizen relationships, has reinforced the importance and scope of these two service lines. PA&LG has been addressed through a broad range of initiatives, responding not only to the more traditional concerns for modernizing the public administration and local administrations and training of public servants, local government officials and elected representatives, but also to the call for accelerating the achievement of the MDGs, building sustainable peace, and expanding the space for citizens' voice and participation in governance related processes. These fields are not necessarily free-standing, and frequently overlap with and/or complement the main areas of operation mentioned above. Projects or programmes are multifaceted, addressing 'complex' policy problems, which do not necessarily conform to neat classification.

The wide diversity of UNDP's PA&LG portfolio is also representative of the large and heterogeneous group of countries served, in terms of social and economic conditions, constitutional, political and legal systems, institutional capacity, levels of human development, variations in population and geographical size and divergence in cultures. Hence, the quality and effectiveness of public administration and local governance may also vary significantly.



PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

Developing the capacity of the public service and the public administration is considered a *sine qua non*, not only to guarantee inclusive MDG achievement, but also to foster national ownership and the sustainability of development interventions and programmes. Many attempts have been – and continue to be – made to modernise the public administration, with considerable success in some countries and less progress in others. Globally, UNDP has a total of 71 projects that deal with various aspects of public administration and civil service reform, as evidenced by the five regional stock-taking papers. With a total of 26 projects, public sector and civil service reform is particularly popular in Africa¹⁹. While the other regions do not boast as many initiatives in this field, activity is still significant: 13 projects in the Arab Region, 12 projects in both Asia Pacific and Eastern Europe and the CIS,

¹⁹ While projects in Africa are more numerous than in other Regions, on average their budgets tend to be smaller, with the exception of key investments made in some post-conflict countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo.

and 8 projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. Although many projects focus on one government agency (e.g. the Civil Service Commission or the Ministry of Public Administration Reform), they are designed to bring about systemic changes to public administration or the management of its human resources, thus having broader effects beyond the department where the project is located.

Public sector and civil service reform projects have a strong capacity development component²⁰ (a term liberally utilized in many project descriptions), focusing on improving public service delivery through institutional development, enhanced accountability, staff motivation and incentives for staff performance. The choice of capacity development activities is largely determined by the national context, UNDP's own capacity and resources, and the recipient government's priorities. For example, in Afghanistan and Timor Leste, negligible public administration capacity has entailed building from the bottom up, emphasizing the development of rules, regulations and basic administrative structures and building the skills of public servants. Innovative capacity development approaches have been used in various contexts, such as the capacity development facilities/funds in Kosovo and Afghanistan. In contrast, in Eastern Europe and the CIS, the focus has been on bureaucratic modernization to overcome the legacy of the central-planning style of administration; while in countries like Tunisia or Syria, projects focus on eliminating red tape and developing quality assurance mechanisms, including through the use of ICTs.

The large number of UNDP-supported projects in Africa shows that governments in that region have progressively moved away from the prior focus on structural adjustment programmes and the (external) pressure to reduce public administration expenditure and make government smaller. They have increasingly put emphasis on the importance of establishing properly functioning systems of public administration in order to improve welfare indicators and promote sustainable growth and development. This change is reflected in the number and diversity of UNDP-supported public administration and civil service reform projects, aimed at addressing fundamental capacity weaknesses and maladministration practices. Consequently, initiatives prioritize the review of public administration systems, designing and implementing new human resource management (HRM) systems, training and building capacity to manage reform, setting performance standards, restructuring government organizations and developing capacities for pro-poor growth.

In Asia Pacific, most PAR projects are supporting societal transitions. This is the case in China, Vietnam and Laos, where public administration reform is linked to the introduction of home-grown governance changes (e.g. China's "Innovations in the Public Sector for Good Governance", Vietnam's "Master Public Administration

²⁰ UNDP's Strategic Plan 2008-2011 positions capacity development as the organisation's core contribution to development. Responding to the growing demand for capacity development support, UNDP helps governments, civil society and other partners to build the skills, knowledge and experience they need to improve peoples' lives. This approach takes the existing base of capacities in every situation as its starting point and supports national efforts to extend and retain them, building on nationally determined priorities, policies and desired results.

Reform” program or Lao PDR’s “Governance and Public Administration Reform – GPAR” project). In Bangladesh and Maldives, the public administration and civil service reform projects address the change management initiatives necessary to accompany the democratisation processes, to ensure the public service’s contribution towards more open, responsive and cost-effective government.

While the demand for support in PAR is still high, the focus of these projects has changed and diversified over the years. For example, while training remains an important component, it has ceased to be the sole objective of capacity development projects. The number of functional review projects, many of which were implemented in the transition countries in Eastern Europe, has also decreased. Finally, promoting a professional and value-based civil service remains an important aspect of UNDP’s governance work, especially in post-conflict societies and the new or restored democracies. The challenge is to take a flexible and context-sensitive approach and avoid exclusive reference to benchmarks that are merely reflecting a westernized model of society, focused essentially on formal institutions and processes.

SUPPORT TO THE CENTRE OF GOVERNMENT AND STRATEGIC POLICY-MAKING

UNDP has long provided assistance to the centre of government, a field which has considerable strategic potential in terms of supporting the overall direction and management of national policies. The total number of projects within this portfolio remains significant (40 projects²¹), and is currently most common in Latin America (13 projects), probably as a direct result of the regional SIGOB project. Both Africa (8) and the Arab States (10) regions have important projects in this area, such as the capacity development of senior public servants in Zambia and the “Support to the Strategy and Policy Unit in the Office of the President” project in Sierra Leone. Specific projects like these are less frequent in the Asia Pacific and Eastern Europe and the CIS regions, currently implementing 4 and 5 projects respectively. However, these figures need to be taken with some caution as UNDP also operates at the centre of government through a variety of development initiatives led by other practices, such as poverty reduction projects.

Initiatives listed under this category can also be closely related to, or overlap with, projects listed under other areas of intervention such as Public Sector and Civil Service Reform, Aid Effectiveness, and even Local Governance and Decentralization. A good example is the “Capacity for External Resources and Development

²¹ These include projects with substantial investments such as the US\$ 17 million project in Afghanistan in support of the President’s Office, and the US\$ 7.6 million project in Zimbabwe aimed at strengthening government capacity for results-based management.

Management” project in Tanzania, whose objectives include both increasing national capacity for aid coordination, and strengthening the President’s Economic Policy Advisory Unit so as to ensure the adoption of equitable pro-poor and gender-sensitive economic policies and programmes.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND DECENTRALIZATION

Another area of substantial UNDP involvement in Democratic Governance is Local Governance and Decentralization. While in the past, decentralisation and local government were often addressed and viewed separately from public administration, the need to synchronise efforts to improve public administration and local governance is no longer questioned. There is a growing recognition that efforts to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs provide best results when addressed at the sub-national level, where most of the service delivery actually takes place. But results have been more visible where policies to improve local governance were also supported by efforts to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the public administration at national and sub-national levels (e.g. the GPAR project and its provincial pilots in Lao PDR).

For the vast majority of poor people, sub-national democratic institutions constitute one of the most important avenues for participation in governance and decision-making processes directly relevant to their lives and livelihoods. Whatever way a country structures power,



competences and finances across different tiers of government, sub-national governments (or other service providers at the local level) are almost always at the core of the delivery of public services. Early support to local governance is also crucial in post-conflict environments and in countries facing violent internal conflicts, as it provides space for more context-sensitive peace agreements.

Local governance, decentralization and devolution of power and responsibilities have opened new opportunities for sub-national governments, but have also created new challenges and exposed institutional vulnerabilities. The increased recognition of the critical importance of local governance for promoting democracy and improved delivery of public services has resulted in a global explosion of interest and activity in this field²², and is clearly reflected in UNDP's portfolio, which totals 147 projects. This increased demand is most prominent in the Africa (34 projects), Latin America (33 projects) and Asia Pacific (32 projects) regions, while 24 local governance projects are being implemented in both the Arab States, and Europe and the CIS. This makes Local Governance and Decentralization by far the largest sector in UNDP's Democratic Governance portfolio, both in terms of number of projects and in scale of investment. In contrast to UNDP's previous strategic plans, where local governance was explicitly linked to decentralisation policies, the latest strategic plan (2008-2011, extended until 2013) implicitly identifies local governance as a cross-practice approach to promote local development in its multiple facets. It underscores the importance of civic engagement and using local government "*capacity and resources to deliver effective economic and social policies that promote human development and manage the public services that citizens expect*". It identifies several priority areas for UNDP support, including capacity strengthening of national and local authorities to undertake participatory planning processes, assessment and adoption of effective service delivery systems. It also affirms the need to restore the foundations of local development for crisis prevention and recovery by strengthening local capacities for development, management, resolutions and planning.

While there are many more projects that address local development, this paper (and the regional stock-taking papers) focuses on local governance projects in the democratic governance portfolio only, as these represent the large majority of Country Office programming in this sector. Nonetheless, strategic thinking on how UNDP should organise itself to achieve the best possible results at the local level will require for policy advisory services and programming on local governance to be addressed from both a UNDP cross-practice, and a broader UN perspective.

The re-evaluation of the role of the "local" in national development has also broadened the range of activities well beyond the technical focus on capacity-building of local governments. Up to now, UNDP local governance projects have essentially focused on four main areas: (i) creating an enabling environment for democratic

²² This is evident even in countries where the status of local governments, in terms of legislation, policies, competencies and decentralization processes and implementation, is still unfolding.



local governance and effective decentralization; (ii) helping local communities establish and maintain democratic systems of governance; (iii) improving the ability and capacity of local governments to become better administrators, raise revenue, and deliver high quality services; and (iv) regional/local development²³.

In each region there are a number of projects focusing on specific local governance challenges in a particular geographical area: e.g. local development in Rutana province (Burundi) or support to local authorities in Mopti and Tombouctou (Mali); capacity building and institutional development of the Mathanna Governorate (Iraq); governance reforms in Baluchistan (Pakistan) or governance and PAR in Sekong province (Laos); the Chisinau Municipal development project (Moldova), strengthening regional governance in Kvemo Kvartili region (Georgia) or the “Strengthening Guayaquil Municipality” project (Ecuador).

In the Arab States region, UNDP-supported projects indicate that the Arab world’s predilection for centralized government is gradually giving way to cautious experimentation with decentralization. Programme interventions focus mainly on upgrading national ministries responsible for local government reform, providing legal framework drafts and enhancing capacities in municipalities as part of local area development. More specifically, in Djibouti and Yemen, UNDP is helping with the implementation of decentralization laws, while in Lebanon and Sudan, projects are primarily focusing on capacity development in particularly needy regions. Where

²³ UNDP has been applying a community-base / area-based development approach (CBA/ABD) to human development in Ukraine since 1992 through its local development projects, including the “Chernobyl Recovery and Development Programme”, “Crimea Integration and Development Programme”, “Municipal Governance and Sustainable Development Programme” and “Community Based Approach to Local Development Project”. Today, UNDP Ukraine provides assistance to over 2,000 rural and urban communities across the country to go through the process of social mobilization. The CBA is present in one third of Ukraine’s districts (rayons) and covers 10% of villages in the country.

local government infrastructure is more developed, such as in Morocco and Egypt, the focus of UNDP-supported efforts has been on strengthening information systems, E-governance and accountability.

In the Eastern Europe and the CIS Region, the main challenge is to re-orient the local apparatus of the State away from the central planning, standardization and bureaucratic dysfunctions of the previous centralized regimes, and towards the modern management systems found in liberal democratic market economies. However, the level of commitment to decentralized governance varies. The Western Balkans and Western CIS countries have initiated a range of reforms aimed at fostering effective local public service provision and active citizens' participation, while the Central Asia States (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan) do not necessarily follow the same governance transition model due to existing monocentric power structures. The main focus of the political elites has been to manage economic, technological and societal changes in a way that does not de-stabilize the existing power structure.

At present, UNDP is supporting a variety of projects such as knowledge-based advice at central and regional levels (Moldova); transparent local budgetary and financial systems (Kyrgyzstan); and a participatory approach to local/regional development (Ukraine). The latter represents an approach that combines local development with the development of the capacities of sub-national actors (local authorities and local communities) to create the democratic space in support of citizen participation and decision-making. Several initiatives promote inter-municipal cooperation (Kosovo, fYR of Macedonia), while others are explicitly aimed at reducing the profound regional inequalities found in many countries in the region, such as the "Zeravshan Valley Initiative" in Tajikistan.

The Asia Pacific Region has seen a major expansion of democratic institutions to the sub-national level. Over the last two years alone, several countries have expanded local democracy and more are in the process to do so. All but a few countries have some form of local elected councils. Despite progress in establishing formal local governance institutions, the region still faces challenges in rooting these democratic developments. Many parameters – such as the inclusiveness, representation and accountability of local institutions – are lagging behind, resulting in a mixed democratic landscape. While there are a number of success stories, there are also countries that face a decline, or 'backward trend' in terms of the enabling environment for opening both a democratic space and broader citizens' rights²⁴.

²⁴ "Across the Asia-Pacific region, more people than ever before now have opportunities to democratically elect their leaders. However, the extent to which these leaders actually act on behalf of citizens is questionable, and opportunities for meaningful participation in political life amongst the majority of citizens appear to be declining in a number of countries." (Asia Pacific Democratic Governance regional Consultations. Draft Report of the Regional Community of Practice meeting in Bangkok, 1-3 September 2010).

UNDP's portfolio in Asia Pacific has an extensive and contrasting range of projects, reflecting the diversity of countries in terms of scale, political regimes, welfare indicators and degree of decentralization. Thus, UNDP-supported projects are tailored to fit the particular context of each country, such as encouraging participation by traditional authorities in Pacific Island States²⁵; continuing the longstanding support to decentralization processes and widening the democratic space in Cambodia and Sri Lanka²⁶; decentral-



izing planning and expenditure management in Laos; and capacity-building for more autonomous local government in the Indonesian province of Aceh. In Bangladesh, the local governance and decentralization programme contributes to enhancing Union Parishads financial capacities through increasing their authority for resource mobilization, management of block grants and planning and implementation of local development projects.

The Africa Region has the largest portfolio of UNDP-supported projects in Local Governance and Decentralization in terms of numbers and funding. Overall, African governments recently started to pay increased attention to the vital role that strong local governance arrangements can play in national development, and are progressively seeing these as an advantage rather than a threat to central government. Projects in the Africa Region are generally concerned with the early stages of decentralization, such as finalizing the legal framework in Burkina Faso; supporting consultations related to the review of Burundi's decentralization process, also linked to the role local governments in the peacebuilding process; the assessment of local governance capacity in post-conflict Liberia; or supporting the Ministry of Decentralization in Madagascar. Enhancing local capacities, participation and partnership-building are also amongst the key priorities in UNDP-supported projects in the region. At the same time, the emerging challenges of ur-

²⁵ Through initiatives such as the "Building Resilient Communities - Towards Effective Governance" project in Vanuatu.

²⁶ Mainly through the provision of support to local councils, development of media and enhancing access to information.

ban governance are tackled in projects in Nigeria and Uganda²⁷.

In Latin America, decentralization stands high on the policy agenda of many countries. Nearly every country in the region has experienced some form of local governance reforms, although at different paces, degrees and levels of institutionalization. Despite the significant progress in terms of democratization of electoral processes and citizens' participation, the model of local governance can still be described as deconcentration or delegation rather than devolution of power, which often causes tensions between national and sub-national authorities. Lack of normative frameworks that can guide the scope and depth of decentralization more effectively, makes the process of decentralization fragile and fragmented. To sustain the momentum, UNDP has been supporting the development of normative frameworks in Bolivia and Panama, while in Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Trinidad and Tobago, UNDP has been supporting local governments to strengthen their capacities to roll-out the decentralization processes.

Promoting equitable regional and polycentric development is another priority for the region which historically suffers from significant territorial disparities. In Brazil, UNDP implements a number of projects which support the regionalization process, while in Haiti, Honduras, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay, territorial development is used as an entry point for fostering pro-poor policies, inclusive development and strengthening local service delivery. In Colombia, the local governance programme is tailored to support the conflict/peace transformation processes.

The "Support to Thematic and Territorial Networks for Human Development"²⁸ global programme, better known as ART, was established in 2005 and has evolved into a very strategic UN initiative for spearheading decentralized cooperation and promoting innovative approaches to territorial development. The ART International Initiative promotes and supports the formulation and implementation of Framework-Programmes²⁹, which offer a joint planning methodology for local, national and international actors to contribute to the human development of different countries and the achievement of the MDGs in a co-ordinated and complementary way. As such, the ART initiative is being increasingly considered by national and international partners as the operational hand for implementing the Paris Aid Effectiveness Agenda at the local level³⁰.

The particular strength of this programme rests in its close alignment with national development priorities, ensuring flexibility, adaptation to country context, national ownership and inclusiveness. In some countries, this flexible approach has made a politically sensitive governance issue acceptable to the political leadership (e.g.

²⁷ However, projects specifically addressing urban governance issues are still exceptional.

²⁸ *Appui aux Réseaux Territoriaux pour le Développement Humain*.

²⁹ Formerly known by the acronym ART GOLD (Governance and Local Development).

³⁰ At present, the programme is active in Asia (Indonesia, Sri Lanka), Africa (Mozambique, Senegal), Eastern Europe (Albania, Kosovo), Latin America (Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Uruguay) and some Mediterranean countries of the Arab Region (Lebanon, Morocco).

Cuba). ART initiatives have been employed as a coordination mechanism for the implementation of National Development Plans (NDPs), such as in Bolivia and Sri Lanka; for Poverty Reduction Strategies and cross-border initiatives (e.g. Dominican Republic); and to accompany the implementation of regional development policies (e.g. Albania and Indonesia). Participative local development planning and local economic development initiatives have also been used as entry points for supporting the democratization and decentralization processes in Morocco and Mozambique. The ART-REDES programme in Colombia concentrated primarily on strengthening local communities in order to support the peacebuilding process and the country's transition towards a participatory democracy; while the sub-regional ART MyDEL³¹ programme focuses on the economic empowerment of women in Central America. In some countries, ART programmes were instrumental in supporting a “One UN”³² approach to local development, or involved a coalition of UN agencies (e.g. ART Sri Lanka's partnership with UNVs, UNICEF and WHO).

ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Public sector integrity and accountability is another core field in which UNDP is involved in across all five regions, implementing a growing number of projects in recent years. The regional stock-taking overviews include only those anti-corruption initiatives that wholly or partially target the public administration at central and sub-national levels, of which most are in the Africa (20), Asia Pacific (10) and the Arab States (10) regions, while the Europe and CIS as well as the Latin American and the Caribbean regions account for only 5 projects each.

This field has evolved from an earlier focus on anti-corruption measures to a broader perspective encompassing the improvement of institutional performance, and broader frameworks of good governance. In Egypt, efforts for enhancing transparency and integrity in the civil service have been supported through a civil service code of conduct, better performance management and the establishment of an Ombudsman system. Many (if not most) of these projects provide support to special anti-corruption agencies or similar institutions, such as the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery and Corruption in Sri Lanka, the High Office of

³¹ The ART “Women and Local Economic Development” programme has been designed as a regional initiative covering El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

³² “One UN” or “Delivering as One”, a pilot initiative launched by the Secretary-General in 2007, aims to make the UN system more coherent, effective and efficient in order to provide development assistance in a more coordinated way. The governments of eight countries — Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay, and Viet Nam — volunteered to become “Delivering as One” pilots. Together they are experimenting with ways to increase the UN system's impact through more coherent programmes, reduced transaction costs for governments, and lower overhead costs for the UN system, based on four core principles: (i) One Leader, (ii) One Budget; (iii) One Programme; (iv) One Office.



Oversight in Afghanistan or the Independent Authority Against Corruption in Mongolia. Initiatives are increasingly supporting institutions at local (e.g. in Burundi) or sectoral levels (e.g. the “Promoting Ethics and Professional Standards in the Ministry of Health” project in Mongolia). Anti-corruption efforts are also being mainstreamed into wide-ranging reform initiatives, as in the case of Ethiopia, where the “Support to the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission” project is not only concerned with building the Commission’s capacity to investigate cases but also supports enhanced accountability and integrity in the civil service.

Most projects provide support to central government entities and, to a lesser extent, to sub-national authorities, although efforts are increasing alongside initiatives to improve subnational government capacities for transparent and efficient financial management. For example, in the fYR of Macedonia, the UNDP-supported “Fighting Corruption to Improve Governance” project promotes accountability and transparency as indispensable pillars of local democratic governance. In Latin America, the TRALOG project managed by the Panama Regional Centre is a regional initiative that aims to offer targeted support to UNDP Country Offices to ongoing or new initiatives that focus their attention on transparency, accountability and anti-corruption at the sub-national level (municipalities, counties, provinces, departments, states). In some cases, projects are focused on specific government processes, as in Malawi, where a UNDP-supported project aims to build national

procurement capacity. Anti-corruption is clearly emerging as a new critical policy area and a governance priority articulated by governments, non-state actors and development partners. UNDP's portfolio in this area continues to expand, as witnessed by the growing level of global and regional activity under the DGG managed "Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development" (PACDE).

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is increasingly becoming the driving force and rallying factor behind the anti-corruption legal frameworks, debates and reforms in most regions. While the ratification of UNCAC³³ in itself does not necessarily guarantee that the norms and standards provided therein will be implemented, it does indicate the acceptance of a degree of accountability. Given its specific section on public sector reform, it also provides a good entry point for public administration and local governance reforms.

PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Public Financial Management is traditionally a very important area of PAR but it is an area in which UNDP's involvement is limited, at least at the national level³⁴. Support continues to be offered, albeit increasingly under the portfolio of the UNDP Poverty Practice / BDP, and linked to MDG budgeting schemes. Initiatives to enhance aid coordination and aid effectiveness, in line with the principles and commitments in the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) also have strong links with public financial management, and these initiatives are generally coordinated by the Capacity Development Group / BDP.

UNDP is involved in public financial management in 32 countries, 20 of which are in Latin America. Though smaller in terms of numbers, the 7 projects in the Arab Region account for most of the spending on this activity – US\$ 40.3 million – focused on building capacities in property tax administration, customs and financial oversight. In the other regions, it is an area of public administration activity that has been mostly supported by the IFIs, especially the World Bank. In Latin America, several of these projects, while implemented by UNDP, are funded by the IFIs.

One particular area where UNDP does have a comparative advantage, and which could be developed further, is in the field of sub-national finance. Several projects

³³ In Africa 35 countries ratified and 6 countries acceded; in the Arab States, 11 countries ratified and 2 acceded; in Asia Pacific, 18 countries ratified and 4 acceded; in Europe and the CIS, 18 countries ratified, 5 acceded and there was one succession; and for Latin America, 26 countries ratified and 4 countries acceded (info obtained from OECD website 13 September 2010).

³⁴ UNDP's reduced activities in economic governance and financial management can also be explained by the abolition of the positions of senior economists that existed in all Country Offices until the late 1990s. Africa in particular has very few projects in this sector at national level, with the exception of the island State of Mauritius, where UNDP is supporting a large results-based budgeting reform process. This trend in Africa may alter, however, as the regional bureau has recently recruited 40 new senior economists for its Country Offices throughout the region.

under the Local Governance and Decentralization category involve financial organization and capacity-building at local levels of government, often in collaboration with UNCDF. In 40 of the 49 LDCs, UNCDF has joint programs with UNDP on local governance/local development.

AID EFFECTIVENESS

While the coordination of aid has occupied a prominent place in the development discourse for quite some time, since the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), the focus has shifted towards national ownership, alignment, harmonisation and mutual accountability. The conceptual shift from simple coordination to development aid effectiveness has increased the demand for expertise in designing and operating the institutional apparatus, which will eventually improve aid effectiveness.

UNDP has been well placed so far to provide advice on these matters, and lists 44 projects under Aid Effectiveness: 12 in the Europe and CIS Region, 9 in the Asia Pacific Region, 6 in the Arab Region, 10 countries in Africa and 7 in Latin America. A key component of many of these projects is the establishment of an Aid



Management Information System (AIMS) of commitments, disbursements and activities which allows developing countries to incorporate aid flows into their national budgets and improve the overall alignment of assistance with national priorities³⁵. However, the new generation of projects puts greater emphasis on enhancing the strategic planning capacities of national institutions, which should enable a better alignment of Official Development Assistance (ODA) with national development priorities. The size of projects varies, ranging from a US\$ 110,000 project to develop capacities for aid coordination in Guinea, to the US\$ 7.5 million “Making Budgets and Aid Work” project in Afghanistan or the US\$ 6.5 million project on aid coordination and aid effectiveness in Argentina.

In March 2009, the Asia Pacific region established the Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness (CDDE) Facility to respond to the demands of partner countries in the region for peer-to-peer initiatives to help them improve the management of aid partnerships for development effectiveness and poverty reduction. The CDDE Facility now serves a CoP of over 500 members across the region, providing access to a wide range of innovative capacity development services to practitioners from governments, civil society organizations, parliaments and donor agencies. The initiative marks a shift from country-based projects towards a regional initiative that uses south-south exchange as a powerful vehicle for capacity development and cooperation³⁶.

E-GOVERNMENT / INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS)

A general trend in the process of modernising the public administration at national and sub-national levels is the introduction of ICTs. The increasing use of information technology in public administration has enabled greater integration and alignment of local governments into national systems. It also offers opportunities for citizens to have easier access to services and provides a platform for drawing them into consultations and dialogue with people’s representatives and local and national authorities. E-government – aimed at promoting the use of ICTs to enhance the effectiveness, openness and accessibility of government services – remains an important area of demand and support at the Country Office level. UNDP currently supports 46 E-government projects in 33 countries³⁷, spread across all regions: 11 projects in Africa, 6 projects in the Arab Region, 10 projects each in Asia Pacific and Europe and CIS, and 9 projects in Latin America. These projects

³⁵ Such as the “Development Assistance Database” project in Guatemala.

³⁶ See: <http://www.aideffectiveness.org>.

³⁷ The list is not exhaustive; it only includes those ICT projects that have a direct link to public administration at central and sub-national level (the supply side). Hence, it does not include E-governance projects that essentially focus on participation (the demand side).

do not fully reflect the enormous increase in the use of new technologies in UNDP-supported projects in general, and in PA&LG in particular. Some ICTs projects are increasingly targeting local administrations³⁸ in support of local governance agencies, such as in Bhutan, where E-government was identified as a key tool for furthering democratization and popular participation; or in Mozambique, where the “Service Delivery Network to Support Decentralization” acted as a pilot for a knowledge network of E-government Access Centres.

ICT interventions range from establishing Management Information Systems for civil service management (Albania, Syria, Timor Leste, Guinea) and automation of civil registry systems (Georgia, Burundi, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo, Madagascar); to automation of tax and/or customs procedures (Iran, Azerbaijan). Other projects focus on central government procedures, such as the introduction of E-procurement in Jordan or the national E-governance network in Azerbaijan. As the range of ICT interventions continues to grow, caution will be required, as the more sophisticated ICT applications can have high set-up and maintenance costs, and raise problems of interoperability as well as privacy versus security concerns. Current experiences in the more developed countries are also showing automated public administrations that seem to have lost their human face.



³⁸ In Cuba, the DGTTF project developed the capacity of six municipalities by introducing ICTs as a means to provide public services, notably information on public housing. In Moldova, DGTTF supported the design of local public administration web sites and ICT based access to information points within local public administrations.

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIFIC GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES

UNDP is involved in initiatives providing support to specific ministries and agencies of government, and covering specialized fields of knowledge and skills such as land management, disaster preparedness, civil registry, agriculture, statistics, education, health, postal services, defence and national planning. The stock-taking exercise revealed a total of 53 projects in 39 countries, in an area that is often not sufficiently captured in annual reports, even though it represents an important portion of UNDP's work.

A particular focus is the support that UNDP, in all regions, is providing to ministries of foreign affairs. The fact that in many countries, the ministry of foreign affairs is the main counterpart of UNDP, explains the particular attention paid to this ministry³⁹. Other organizations receiving support range from the Civil Registry Agency in Moldova to the National Disaster Management Organization in Ghana, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in Lesotho and the Postal Service in Egypt.



ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Even though still modest in terms of projects, the global demand for support in the area of Access to Information has also had an impact on public administration and local governance. There are two sub-regional initiatives that are particularly worth mentioning. One is the Pacific Centre's initiative on access to information, the second is the Africa Governance Public Administration project (AGPA) for West-Africa, funded by the Spanish Trust fund, which covers access to information, in addition to public administration reform and E-governance/ICTs. Access to information seems however less of a priority when comparing the 8 regional projects supported by the trust fund.

³⁹ With 14 projects, it represents 25% of all institutional development initiatives.

Right to information laws in many countries around the world have changed the operating mode of the public service, enabling it to deliver better services, promote better accountability and transparency, and enhance citizen participation in the policy-making and decision-making processes⁴⁰. But, the need to develop public administration capacities for more open government is still not sufficiently addressed, in particular at the local level and in post-conflict countries, and will require additional investments. Initiatives tend to approach access to information from a demand perspective, when the supply side of the information chain is equally – if not more – important, and requires public administration resources and capacities, both at national and sub-national levels that are not always readily available.

Communication for Development (C4D) approaches can help address the needs of both the demand and supply side of the information chain. C4D, an integral part of UNDP's Access to Information work, focuses on establishing two-way communication mechanisms that allow people to access information and participate in decision making processes as well as enabling governments, at the national and sub-national level, to supply relevant information through appropriate channels.

STREAMLINING REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

There are very few projects that specifically target the challenges related to administrative procedures and regulations, also known as initiatives to cut down red tape or proceed with business re-engineering (e.g. the “Enhancing Service Delivery” project in Lesotho) related to specific administrative procedures (e.g. for obtaining various licences). This does not mean that such reforms are not undertaken, but they are usually embedded within other PA&LG (and other) projects. This is also an area that is largely covered by other development partners, in particular the IFIs (trade and investment) and the European Commission (EC).

GENDER AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

While UNDP has projects that particularly target women in certain institutions such as the parliament or political parties, there are very few initiatives that explicitly address gender in public administration and in local government. Nonetheless, there are some examples that merit attention such as the “Promotion of Women to the Civil Service” project in the Kyrgyz Republic, the “Women and Men Equal Oppor-

⁴⁰ In Bulgaria, the “Increasing Government Transparency and Accountability through Electronic Access to Information” project, executed by Access to Information Programme Foundation in partnership with the Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform, developed a model Freedom of Information (FOI) web site to provide access to information in government institutions.

tunities” project in the FYR of Macedonia and the “Empowerment of Women in the Public Sector in the context of International Economic Integration” in Vietnam.

The reality today is that public administrations in the majority of developing countries are not the driving force behind the implementation of international commitments and national policies on gender equality. On the contrary, the bureaucracy continues to be seen as a patriarchal institution which perpetuates, rather than challenges, gender biased traditions, habits and practices⁴¹.

The public administration at national and sub-national levels can provide an ideal entry point for pursuing gender equality and women’s empowerment. As the main instrument for policy-making, budgeting, designing and implementing programmes and projects, the public administration can realize a government’s commitment to gender equality by providing equal opportunities for both men and women to be employed as public servants and progress towards higher leadership positions, and setting the example for the sustainable enhancement of gender equality for the whole of society.



⁴¹ For example, the latest regional Human Development Report for Asia Pacific (“Power, Voices and Rights”) stresses that, despite the economic gains in the region, women continue to be held back and face barriers to the opportunities open to men.

SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXTS: POST-CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTS

In recent years, there has been a steady increase of public administration and local governance initiatives in post-conflict environments, with projects being currently implemented in nearly every fragile State. This should not come as a surprise, as it is essentially in these contexts where State capacity is weakest, government service delivery is poorest, and indicators of human welfare and economic development are lowest. However, conflict and post-conflict countries are not a homogenous group. Public administration systems may range from no functioning administration (e.g. Timor Leste after the events of 1999), to situations where the public service has continued to operate at least at the national level (e.g. Burundi in the 1990's), or has remained a strong force of State intervention (e.g. Serbia during the conflict). Depending on the context, national ownership of the process will be more or less pronounced, priorities will be different, and the time-frame between relief, reconstruction, and more sustainable patterns of development will alter substantially.

While post-conflict countries may be in great need of strong State structures and responsive local governments, they also represent the greatest test to PA&LG initiatives. The task is complex, as post-conflict governments have to address both the challenges common to many developing and transitional countries, as well as those specific to their post-conflict setting. Success will depend largely on the ability of the new government to restore trust and confidence in the public administration as a responsive and accountable institution, as well as a symbol of State legitimacy in the post-conflict era.

Recent events such as the Indian Ocean tsunami, the Haiti earthquake and floods and landslides in a number of countries around the world – most recently in Pakistan – have shown once again the vulnerability of countries to the combined im-

pact of conflict and natural disasters. Complex crisis-linked recovery challenges, where conflict, natural disaster and extreme poverty overlap, stretch institutional capacities and resources to a limit, as witnessed with the recent earthquake in Haiti, where PA&LG projects need to be redesigned to cope with new challenges. At the same time, natural disasters can trigger renewed efforts for finding solutions to existing conflict, as was the case in Aceh.

MAIN AREAS OF INTERVENTION IN POST-CONFLICT COUNTRIES

Public Administration and Civil Service Reform

The reform of the public administration and civil service personnel management system is critical not only to ensure that the post-conflict State is able to deliver core services, but also to ensure that employment opportunities are available to all segments of the population. Politicisation of the public service can easily become a trigger for new conflict, which is why PAR has been included in several peace agreements, such as those of Burundi and Liberia. Much has to do with the way the public administration is perceived by the public. Hence, in addition to strengthening the core public administration institutions, it is important for post-conflict initiatives in PA&LG to involve the broader stakeholder community. Nonetheless, further analysis is needed to determine whether a conflict sensitive lens has been sufficiently applied in project design and whether traditional institutions have been sufficiently taken into consideration⁴².

Most reform projects in post-conflict environments focus on developing the capacity of State institutions and civil servants (e.g. the “Civil Service Leadership Development” programme in Afghanistan or the support to Civil Service Reform in Timor Leste). Filling the capacity gaps in fragile environments remains a challenge. While hiring international consultants has long been seen as the most obvious solution, this has been increasingly questioned due to high costs, the risks of prolonged substitution (e.g. Timor Leste during



⁴² In Timor Leste it took a long time before sufficient attention was paid to informal processes of redress. In Angola, traditional authorities were more closely involved in the process of promoting a participatory democracy, including in the management of natural resources and land in particular. In some cases, dismantling old structures is part of the peacebuilding strategy; in Rwanda, for example, the government dismantled old politico-administrative structures and replaced old leadership groups with ones that could preach the message of peace.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In cooperation with the Oslo Governance Center, the Regional Center in Cairo conducted an in-depth study of 4 DGTTF projects in the conflict countries of the Arab States Region. These studies highlighted four key challenges:

- n **Local Legitimacy versus State Legitimacy.**
- n **Local Governance versus Local Government.**
- n **Efficiency versus Legitimacy.**
- n **Effectiveness vs Sustainability.**

The study drew attention to 5 operational risks to be contemplated in future programming: (i) prioritizing the technical rather than being informed by political analysis; (ii) remaining too conflict neutral so as to maintain and safeguard UNDP's development role; (iii) being piecemeal in the name of sequencing reform; (iv) being too input focused and, at best, too output focused; and (v) becoming locked into "silo" programming.

The study highlighted the need for a change in approach, particularly in regards to: (i) involving local traditional authorities in the peace-nation-state building process; (ii) enhancing integrity in contexts where lack thereof is part of a delicate political stability equation; and (iii) establishing responsible cooperation with the donor community on local governance in conflict countries.

Finally, the report also identified some good practices in the region: e.g. Lebanon's sensitivity to conflict in early recovery and current attempts to combine local poverty reduction with strengthened local governance; Yemen's integrated local governance program combining poverty reduction with local governance and decentralization; Southern Sudan local governance act which was based on consultative process with local authorities.

the initial years after the departure of the Indonesians) and perceived delays in fostering national ownership. The use of qualified nationals from the Diaspora remains an issue of debate⁴³, as these experiences have not always yielded positive results⁴⁴. Capacity-Building Funds have been a typical feature in Eastern Europe, where countries like Serbia have utilized technical assistance from custom-made rosters of international and local experts to support various government reform processes. A similar approach was attempted in Afghanistan through the "Capacity for Afghan Civil Service" programme, which sought coaching expertise in the region (mainly India) for the areas where capacity was seen as critical. Capacity Development Facilities were also tested in Kosovo and Timor Leste.

While public administration and civil service reform requires comprehensive action at both central and local levels, this has not always been the case in post-conflict countries. In some cases, centrally steered reforms are disconnected from – or ignore – the local realities (e.g. Timor Leste during the initial years after the conflict) while in others, progress is made at the periphery, because central governments are often too weak to take the lead (e.g. UNDP's interventions in South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland).

Support to the Centre of Government

Improving the efficiency of the policy-making process is critical in a peacebuilding process and usually involves the strengthening of the cabinet

⁴³ There are many ongoing or past initiatives involving the Diaspora, including the "Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals – TOKTEN" initiatives (implemented in Lebanon, Sudan, and Liberia) and the Capacity-Building Funds (tested in Serbia, Kosovo, Timor, and Afghanistan).

⁴⁴ Bringing in people from the Diaspora can create new tensions. The incentives provided for bringing these people back into the country may be considered unfair or not sufficiently transparent, and their may be scepticism regarding their motivation for returning to the country (high salaries or political gain). When Sierra Leone was planning for the recruitment of Diaspora experts for particular positions, with considerably higher remunerations, civil servants who would operate as their counterparts also claimed higher incentives ("Public Administration and Local Governance in Post-conflict Environments – A UN Discussion Paper on the Approach to Public Administration, Local Governance and Financial Transparency and Accountability in Post-conflict Peacebuilding Operations", UNDP 2009).

secretariat or equivalent agency, creating mechanisms for inter-ministerial coordination, ensuring that draft policies are based on appropriate analysis, and creating systems to disseminate policy decisions and monitor implementation. Support has not always been evenly spread. With the IFIs focusing more on central Finance and Economic Planning ministries, UNDP has provided support, in a number of post-conflict countries, to other departments that steer and coordinate policy at the centre of government, such as the Recovery and Reconstruction Unit in the Prime Minister's Office in Lebanon or the Office of the President in South Sudan. In addition to strategic policy-making, projects at the centre of government also aim to improve communications and relationships with the media, a key aspect, for example, of UNDP's support to the Office of the President Spokesperson in Afghanistan.

Local Governance and Decentralization

A decentralized presence allows the State to increase its visibility and establish its legitimacy at the local level, deploy civil servants, focus service delivery, provide more efficient communication, and maintain order and security. These processes can be influenced by a desire to appease grievances over perceived inequalities, or a need to resist pressure from local elites and other interest groups pushing for



rapid decentralization (and even secession)⁴⁵. Experience and research thus call for a much needed, and well analysed, approach to decentralized governance in post-conflict societies. Improving local governance creates great opportunities for building democratic governance institutions and mindsets from the bottom up that can have important benefits in terms of a more conflict sensitive distribution of peace dividends.

Given the increasing intra-state nature of many conflicts, often linked to calls for increased autonomy or participation in national power and resource-sharing, decentralization and local governance arrangements have emerged as a key area in peacebuilding agendas. The merits of locally conceived and implemented actions, which provide space for interaction, engagement and cohesion between different ethnic, cultural or religious groups in conflict-prone environments have been recognized by the wider development community, and been increasingly applied by UNDP and its partners. There is, however, a growing awareness of the gap that exists between the establishment of local institutions, and their capacity to deliver for peace and development. Consequently, the ways of supporting local governments to effectively promote peace and the delivery of basic services, need to be further explored and analysed.

In some cases, UNDP tackles local governance through a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The “Afghan Sub-national Governance Programme” is an example of a comprehensive approach that works at national, provincial, district and municipal level, involving the parliamentary sub-committee on sub-national governance and central agencies such as the Civil Service Council. In others, there is a more specific focus on certain geographical areas⁴⁶. In Angola, for example, UNDP worked with 15 municipalities identified through an assessment of needs and challenges, while UNDP Iraq implemented a capacity-building and institutional development project for the Mathanna Governorate, considered one of the poorest provinces⁴⁷. The situation is somewhat different in Timor Leste where the joint UNDP/UNCDF “Local Governance Support Project” uses pilot districts (including for elections) before expanding to additional districts.

In post-conflict contexts, severe knowledge and skills deficits are frequently compounded by State structures that are unable, and sometimes reluctant, to significantly and effectively engage citizens. In a number of post-conflict countries, UNDP supported programmes have paid due attention to ensuring that local governance interventions are implemented hand-in-hand with capacity development programmes following comprehensive needs assessments (e.g. Timor Leste, Iraq). The promotion of local governance projects in the Central African Republic, for ex-

⁴⁵ This power struggle is usually connected to attempts to retain control over resources and/or to weaken the central government thus easing opportunities for illicit activities.

⁴⁶ Asymmetric solutions whereby certain regions or local units benefit from arrangements that apply to them alone are increasingly seen as possible solutions to problems specific to certain parts of the country.

⁴⁷ Regional and local initiatives were also used in Sierra Leone, Burundi, Palestine, Haiti and Colombia.

ample, includes training of mayors, staff and civil society representatives in good governance and municipal management, and the establishment of rural radios to promote people's participation. However, training individuals is not always the most sustainable solution. In response, UNDP Serbia supported the capacity development of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, and helped in developing a strategy and business plan for improved service delivery in member municipalities, including the institutionalization of a municipal training centre. Similarly, UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People supports the Association of Palestinian Local authorities.

As is the case with public administration reform, it is challenging to design a roadmap on how to proceed with local governance reforms in post-conflict environments. The "Aceh Government Transformation" programme is a good example of how a natural disaster created a new momentum for peacebuilding in a conflict-prone Indonesian province. In Kenya, District Peace Committees, composed of representatives of the local administration and members of the civil society, were established in conflict affected districts to promote inter-communal dialogue and serve as part of an early conflict warning mechanism. Across all regions, UNDP has used country-specific local governance and decentralization interventions as an entry point for providing adequate response to post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, and as an effective conflict prevention and mitigation approach. Sub-national interventions, in particular those focusing on partnership-building between local authorities and citizens to increase access to quality public services, protect and respect human rights and contribute to empowerment and inclusion of marginalised groups in society, have been instrumental in rebuilding trust and ensuring long-term development.



Integrity, Accountability and Transparency⁴⁸

Even though post-conflict environments are usually prone to corruption, anti-corruption measures have been – until recently – given low priority in post-conflict programming. Concerns were often raised over the destabilizing effects which could result from tackling this problem upfront. Nonetheless, anti-corruption agencies have been amongst the core governance institutions proposed in peace agreements and compacts, in order to ensure integrity in public life. Although views on their efficiency differ, there is recognition today that corruption in post-conflict States needs to be addressed at an early stage, as not doing so would create the even greater risk of corruption becoming entrenched in society and leading to an increasingly negative public perception, which, in itself, can also fuel public discontent. However, more attention will be needed to mainstream integrity principles into the body of civil service ethics and professional standards.

UNDP's support has mainly focused on institutions. For example, UNDP supports the Kosovo Anti-Corruption Agency (KACA – established in 2006) and the Ombudsman's Office in Rwanda (established in 2004). The Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice in Timor Leste, which was also responsible for anti-corruption, was created immediately after independence⁴⁹. Burundi also took a different route, and established special Anti-Corruption Police Brigades and a Special Anti-Corruption Court, with UNDP assisting in the establishment and training of local anti-corruption task forces. UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People developed a local governance integrity toolkit which will be tested and applied in all municipalities. Today, UNDP's largest anti-corruption project in a post-conflict setting is the "Accountability and Transparency" project in Afghanistan, attached to the High Office of Oversight, created to solve overlapping institutional mandates, internal competition and weak capacities. The regional programme in RBAS is planning to study trends, challenges and entry points for anti-corruption in post conflict countries with a view to support interventions in this area of work.

Public Financial Management

Public financial management is amongst the core capacities that lay the groundwork for an effective and legitimate State. Given the dominant role of the IFIs in this area, UNDP's involvement in public financial management in post-conflict environments has been limited. A few exceptions include the support to property tax reform and related capacity development of the Ministry of Finance and 132 municipalities in the oPt; capacity development for fiscal reform in Lebanon; the "Support to the States in Southern Sudan" project which includes planning, budgeting and public financial management; and capacity development for financial management in South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland.

⁴⁸ For more information on this topic, see: "Fighting Corruption in Post-Conflict and Recovery Situations, Learning from the Past" (UNDP, 2010).

⁴⁹ An Anti-Corruption Commission has now been established and the first commissioner was appointed in February 2010.

Aid Effectiveness

Post-conflict contexts are characterised by large numbers of aid, technical assistance and heavy influx of external decision-making. To be effective, donor funding should ideally be aligned with national priorities, hence the need for effective aid coordination mechanisms. This should not only involve strengthening donor coordination mechanisms at macro and sectoral levels, but also implementing national aid information management systems linked to the national planning and budgeting processes. Building national capacities to manage aid effectiveness can also contribute to a sense of ownership over the post-conflict reconstruction and development agendas.

UNDP continues to play a key role in this area in a number of countries, and just recently again in Haiti, to help national authorities coordinate the massive influx of assistance. In this context, assistance is linked to both public financial management, and support to the centre of government, and aims to build sustainable institutional capacity, as well as improving both the alignment and effectiveness of aid. In Sierra Leone, for example, the initial “Sierra Leone Information Systems” (SLIS) project established by OCHA in 2002, evolved into a more comprehensive programme that assists the Development Assistance Coordination Office (Office of the Vice-President) in developing the capacity for data collection, processing, management and analysis at local and central levels. The “Making Aid Work” pro-



ject in Nepal supports a nationally-led aid coordination process at macro and sectoral levels, through improved aid management information systems linked to national planning and budgeting processes.

Institutional Development: Civil Registry as a Means to Provide Legal Identity

Legal identity is a precondition for access to livelihoods; without identity, marginalised people have no voice or access to benefits. Many post-conflict societies have seen a partial or near total destruction of their administrative records. There are numerous cases where this “administrative vacuum” resulted in human rights violations affecting all groups in society, and particularly the poor. In response, UNDP is active in countries like Burundi, where support is provided to the Ministry of Interior and Communal Development for the rehabilitation of the Civil Registry Services. In addition to capacity development initiatives at national and commune level, the project will equip registry offices in all 129 communes with filing cabinets and computer equipment. There are also excellent learning opportunities from ongoing projects in more advanced administrative environments such as Georgia, where the proposed reform relates to the entire system of civil acts and the administration and issuance of identity cards and passports, all underpinned by an appropriate legal framework.



EMERGING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

UNDP continues to respond to numerous requests for assistance across the broad field of PA&LG, confirming its centrality in contemporary development theory and practice – especially as viewed through a democratic governance lens – its increasing contributions in State and peacebuilding contexts, and its crucial role in the achievement of the MDGs. Even though the stock-taking reports refrain from judging results and outcomes, the analysis of the numerous project documents revealed a range of challenges and issues relating to PA&LG, some new and some seemingly intractable and longstanding. Hence, the stock-taking and analysis of trends provide sufficient material for UNDP to reflect deeper on its strengths and comparative advantages, missing links, remaining gaps and weaknesses, new areas that require a stronger focus or even new investments, or alternatively, on areas that merit a scaling down of UNDP involvement. This last section suggests areas that will require UNDP's future attention; it thus provides the link between UNDP's current portfolio and the way forward. It also takes into account the findings and recommendations of the independent evaluation report that assesses UNDP's contribution to local governance and that calls for a more coherent, integrated and strategic approach to local governance. It does, at the same time, point to certain resource constraints that will need to be taken into account when deciding on current and emerging priorities.

CROSS-PRACTICE FOCUS AREAS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Widening the Democratic Space

PA&LG initiatives have an important role to play in widening the space for State-citizen interaction. Still, only a limited number of projects are addressing these issues in an explicit manner. In many countries, both LDCs and HMICs, the organizational culture and professional values of the public administration and local governments are not yet attuned to more open and interactive relationships between the State and the people. Government officials and public servants are not yet sufficiently sensitised and equipped to meet the increasing demands for transparency and responsiveness that come with democratic development, under whatever forms these may manifest themselves. Compliance with international human

rights standards is not sufficiently integrated in the civil service training programs, access to judicial remedies and other dispute resolution mechanisms are considered to be the sole responsibility of the justice sector, while State-society dialogue remains hampered by a tendency to information hoarding and suspicion towards non-state actors. Much more remains to be done in support of home-grown solutions to changing attitudes and behaviour.

Accelerating the Achievement of the MDGs

A mapping of democratic governance projects in support of the MDGs was undertaken in May 2009. Together with the PA&LG stock-taking exercise, that mapping shows that the clustering of UNDP's work in practices and services lines has not always been conducive to a coherent and coordinated approach to MDG achievement.

Projects and programs that have a very explicit and comprehensive focus on the MDGs can be included and reported as part of UNDP's support to the Poverty / MDG Practice or as part of Democratic Governance interventions; and few projects in either practice fully integrate with those in other practices. The decision at the country level to include certain initiatives either within the democratic governance programme area or another programme appears arbitrary. More can be gained by combining the strengths available in the different practices. Within the democratic



governance arena, MDG related projects fall into two categories: (i) those with a direct linkage to the MDGs (this is the case with quite a number of local governance projects⁵⁰); and (ii) those that are indirectly contributing to MDG achievement by focusing on institutions or processes that will provide an enabling institutional environment for MDG acceleration. Not all of these projects mention the MDGs, but they nevertheless contribute to their achievement by ensuring that resources and public goods and services are efficiently, effectively and equitably provided.

Two areas have recently gained attention in the debate on how to accelerate MDG progress:

- **Taxation Policies** have been recently brought back into the limelight, as a result of intensified international development-related discussions (Financing for Development, High Level Plenary meeting on the MDGs, OECD, G20, etc). Since national resources, and in particular tax revenues, enable governments to fulfil sovereign duties and the delivery of basic services, improving the capacity of States to effectively raise taxes is not only a means to increase domestic resources and ensure equitable distribution of wealth, but also a way to support sound management of public funds, increase the credibility of public institutions and improve governance and rule of law. Recent UNDP work has relevantly highlighted that lack of transparency, tax evasion and weak institutions are key bottlenecks against MDG achievement. Even though UNDP has a rather limited number of projects dealing directly or indirectly with tax admini-



⁵⁰ These initiatives focus on raising awareness of the MDGs at the local level; engaging local communities in MDG planning; improved institutional performance in service delivery; information systems and capacities for systematic monitoring and evaluation of MDG and poverty reduction progress at the local level.

stration, in the present MDG climate, the organization has a clear stake in this debate and can contribute to addressing the challenges faced by many developing countries. As part of its MDG Breakthrough Strategy, UNDP can assist national counterparts in assessing the capacities of national tax administrations, analyse the governance context and political economy to detect risks and/or opportunities in tax policies, and support the improvement of public management transparency, in particular at sub-national levels. UNDP can also engage civil society in monitoring the quality of the operations of revenue administrations, in particular at the subnational level.

- **Fiscal decentralization and local financing** have emerged as an important thematic area with major implications for poverty reduction, achievement of MDGs and transparent and accountable public finance management that can benefit from cross-practice partnerships. The wave of decentralization reforms, which have positioned local governments as the principal providers of services critical to the achievement of the MDGs, has triggered the need for redefining local financing models. Application of pro-poor fiscal models, which will expand the fiscal space for local authorities and in parallel address vertical and horizontal imbalances and fiscal gaps of local governments, are important aspects of any efforts for accelerating the achievement of the MDGs. It is also important to understand the particularities of the different sectors, as the manner in which local public services necessary to ensure MDG attainment are best organized, financed and delivered, will vary between sectors, each of which may have its own technical, institutional and financing characteristics. In 40 of the 49 LDCs, UNDP collaborates with UNCDF on all local development projects, using seed capital to develop local institutional capacities in planning and financial management by coupling real resource management responsibilities with capacity-building support services and feeding lessons learned into the national policy making process. But demand is equally coming from non-LDCs and post-conflict countries.

The development of mechanisms for an integrated response to MDG challenges at country-level, will considerably contribute to maximizing the impact of UNDP's (and the UN's) work. Similarly, integrated support to central and local governments' efforts at better resourcing as well as improved governance systems for service delivery, will result in more equitable delivery of MDG-relevant services and investments at the local level.

Post-Conflict Environments

In 2009, the UN *Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict* highlighted public administration amongst the areas that require a more effective and predictable approach. The World Bank was singled out in the report as having a comparative advantage in addressing public administration at the national level, in particular in public financial management. Within the

UN, work is underway to implement the recommendations of the Policy Committee (19 November 2009) on a joint UN approach to PA&LG in post-conflict environments. Much of UNDP's future work on PA&LG will need to concentrate on the post-conflict countries. Thus, it is of particular importance to reflect on what makes PA&LG interventions different in post-conflict contexts, and apply a conflict sensitive lens in the identification of priorities and in the sequencing of programme activities. In order to do this, project design must be informed by post-conflict needs assessments, and by an analysis of the root causes of conflict, the post-conflict political backdrop and the enduring conflict drivers.

UNDP's capacity in these two service lines needs to be strengthened to ensure effective, predictable and timely support to Country Offices. A broader evaluation of UNDP's (and the UN's) interventions in PA&LG in post-conflict environments is necessary and a lessons learned review is currently in progress. Some of the issues that have already been identified as requiring increased attention include:

- **Indigenous and traditional institutions:** BCPR's recent work on post-conflict governance (report forthcoming) stresses the need to rethink conventional approaches, underlying assumptions, and bureaucratic procedures. Rather than a near exclusive focus on rebuilding institutions, UNDP needs to engage non-State actors so that trust in formal institutions can be engendered. Equally important is to have a good understanding of the political settlement and democratic culture in post-conflict environments.
- **Land Governance:** while land represents a large percentage of litigations, land governance is currently not sufficiently taken into account when designing post-conflict PA&LG programmes and related human rights issues (Burundi and Angola are two examples).



- **Access to information:** a second gap is the weak attention given to ensuring access to fair and unbiased information. This is vital in preventing the renewal of violence and fostering peace and development. Access to information, open government and effective communication has long been seen as a development issue that needs to be addressed once the basic elements of a functioning administration have been put in place. However, recent experiences point to the risks of popular discontent that could be mitigated through early improvements in the manner the public administration system communicates with the people and the media.

UNDP is increasingly focusing its capacity development efforts at the local level. Strengthening local level governance structures has emerged as a key instrument for both national and international partners in managing the implementation and the long term consolidation of peace and stability. Local governments are now increasingly considered to play a key role in responding to the socio-economic needs of affected populations in both the immediate post-conflict humanitarian / early recovery phase and in the long term, as part of the consolidation of peace and State-building. In addition, attention to local governance is essential for improving State-society relationships in post-conflict environments. Hence the need to not only strengthen local governments but also pay due attention to improving local governance arrangements. This involves working with local government executives to ensure that planning and delivery systems involve citizen representation within the concerned local area. It also means ensuring that the outsourcing of services to non-state providers is embedded within a national and local capacity development strategy. That strategy needs to ensure that local communities are involved in the planning, implementation, use and monitoring of basic social services such as education, health, water and sanitation. The purpose of a clear transition plan is to ensure that crisis-based efforts to deliver basic services – possibly through non-state providers – are linked to capacity development initiatives allowing State institutions at national and local levels to assume responsibility for coordination and provision of services.

Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction

The consequences of climate change are numerous and have a direct impact on people (in particular, the poorest), making livelihoods and living conditions more vulnerable. The consequences of climate change can be even more acute in urban areas, as more poor people are affected. Today, despite the importance attached to the conservation of ecosystems and disaster risk management, there is little hard evidence that climate change issues figure prominently on the routine agenda of most local governments. National Adaptation Programmes of Action to Climate Change (NAPAs) have provided a starting point for identifying national priorities. However, they rarely identify the need to work closely with local institutions in implementing priority actions on climate change. Because of the cross-cutting nature of climate change, responsibilities for addressing climate related issues remain

fragmented between a multiplicity of ministries that have responsibilities in this sector.

Addressing climate change through a local governance lens is lacking and urgently needed. The “United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries” (UN-REDD)⁵¹ is a good example on how to move forward, linking environmental policy-making to forest governance systems and their impact on the poor and rural communities that are highly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change. Many solutions to climate change challenges involve governance issues: assessing the governance challenges related to forest management⁵², legal enforcement, land tenure and user rights, anti-corruption efforts, legitimacy in land-use planning, access to relevant information, etc. Yet, addressing climate change and environmental management in local governance projects is still not sufficiently incorporated at the country level.

A similar observation can be made regarding local governance and disaster risk re-



⁵¹ The Programme was launched in September 2008 to assist developing countries prepare and implement national REDD+ strategies, and builds on the convening power and expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

⁵² The Oslo Governance Centre is supporting UNREDD with country-led forest governance assessments

duction, closely linked to the climate change and environmental sustainability debate. These development problems need to be addressed from a holistic perspective and the forward looking discussion on UNDP's work in PA&LG needs to take that into account. This means better identifying governance deficits at sub-national level that impede on sound planning, effective communications, environmental management, public investment practices, etc. It will require incorporating disaster risk reduction considerations into broader local development strategies, based on an inclusive policy dialogue with concerned sectors, and a culture of planning and implementation that builds on government-civil society partnerships.

The relevance of governance to disaster risk reduction is increasingly recognised, and has been confirmed by several recent empirical studies. Disasters are primarily experienced at the local level, but the scale of resources and capacity required for effective disaster risk reduction and recovery, as well as the provision of legislative and regulatory frameworks, usually requires the involvement of central government. Hence, the level of performance of the public administration and local governments has a direct impact on the way societies can respond to natural disasters. Although the evidence on disasters providing an entry point / breakthrough for improving governance is rather thin and capacities are usually highly dependent on high levels of development assistance, exceptional circumstances can speed up innovations in governance and public administration to stand model for improved, well-coordinated pro-poor local service delivery. At the time of the Tsunami in 2005, Indonesia utilized recovery and reconstruction programmes effectively for improving its governance systems at the local (Aceh in particular) and

national levels. On the other hand, recovery in the wake of cyclone Nargis brought little difference to the governance system in Myanmar. The practical difficulties in finding ways for government to work across ministerial lines have also sparked the debate on the appropriate location of responsibility for disaster risk reduction. Some governments have pursued the model of putting in place a high profile agency with a strong political mandate to coordinate action across government. Others have pursued a more mainstreamed approach where responsibility for disaster risk reduction is located in each relevant line ministry and coordinated through a horizontal network or committee structure.

Land Governance and Natural Resources

There is increasing recognition that achieving long-term sustainable development requires equitable and responsible governance of land resources. For many poor and marginalized groups, secure land tenure is a key to their food security, income, housing, and hence, for their basic welfare. In some cases, it also contributes to a sense of identity, connection and security. At the same time, fees and taxes on land are often a significant source of government revenue,



particularly at the local level, and fiduciary and administrative effectiveness are important measurements of State functionality. Land and renewable resource governance is not a new area of BDP engagement. Given that it is a theme that cuts across most, if not all, of BDP's practice areas, UNDP has been addressing it both as a human rights and a development concern in various contexts such as the environment, governance and social justice, or economics; though not necessarily in an integrated manner.

In 2006-2007 UNDP/BDP carried out a global country-level survey for a cross practice initiative on land governance in order to determine how significant this issue is to UNDP's work, and identify the types of resources and capacities that would be required for UNDP to engage systematically. 120 responding Country Offices (COs) identified some 320 UNDP projects that have a direct or indirect relationship to land governance⁵³.

Country offices have expressed their readiness to implement activities in some specific land governance related areas. Taking all regional results together, the greatest willingness for support has been expressed in the areas of capacity development with respect to land governance; land policy; land rights; advocacy; land reform and technical assistance in land administration. These results, coupled with the continued interest from Regional Centers, clearly show that the demand for a greater emphasis on land governance type issues exists on the ground. In fact, more than 80% of COs expressed their willingness to further focus on, and invest in, land governance issue areas, in spite of recognizing the political risk, technical complexity and capacity constraints. Key issues identified through the global survey include:

- **Change in government policy and legislation** was mentioned by a significant number of Country Offices⁵⁴ (20) as an area where UNDP could play a supporting role as a way of creating an enabling environment for participation by affected people.
- **Lack of capacity of public administration structures** was the most important governance issue reported by Country Offices, particularly in relation to addressing land governance issues, thus justifying specific attention to PA&LG related work on land governance. Capacity building within relevant State institutions is an area where UNDP could play a role in facilitating the participation of affected people. Some Country Offices specifically suggested this could be done through decentralization processes of land administration.
- **Capacity building of local elected authorities which administer land related matters** was particularly highlighted. As such, they typically lead local

⁵³ Examples include the support to Benin's Ministry of Urbanism, Habitat and Land Reform on capacity development; the project on rural governance through land policy reform and public service delivery in China; and the Decentralization and Local Governance project in Angola, which includes improvement of local authorities' capacities to plan and manage resources

⁵⁴ For example The Gambia, Egypt, Cambodia, China, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Albania, Turkmenistan, Jamaica, Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Cape Verde, Guatemala.

decision making processes, and manage land titles and land administration in community areas. They help mediate conflicts related to land ownership and land use. They often manage community projects and are in charge of the identification and allocation of land for new residents. They may also be the custodians of traditional land and hence represent the nexus between formal and informal land resource governance, and a priority group through which to work for their compatibility. Incorporating dimensions of accountability, transparency and integrity will also be needed as, in practice, local authorities may choose to take advantage of their position (knowledge, respect, influence) to personally benefit from any discretionary powers they may have over land resources (through use and/or ownership).



Gender and Public Administration

With the exception of a few countries, very little has been done by UNDP, other donors or governments in developing and transitional countries to advance the interests of women in the public service. UNDP has supported hundreds of public administration reform projects, some of which have taken measures towards achieving gender equality, but samples of documented, successful interventions are not easy to find. Furthermore, a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of policies, tools and distinct initiatives is not available, and there is a lack of data on the distribution of women in government hierarchies. While there are some instances of progress, with women increasingly present in public services in middle and senior ranks, in the majority of developing countries public administration, especially at the senior levels, remains a male domain.

Surveys in both developed and developing countries showed that there is a direct relationship between the number of women working in a specific government's agency and the agency's willingness to advocate for women's issues. However, while many countries embarking on public administration reforms have formally

created the legal and policy space for promoting gender equity, women continue to be poorly represented within the public service across the globe, in particular in leadership and decision-making positions. In sum, the gender responsiveness of public administration can be improved by supporting gender equality in public administration employment. Addressing these challenges and bringing greater equality within the public service calls for a comprehensive approach to gender responsive public administration reform.

Without an evidence-based critical review of past efforts, it is difficult to promote, adapt, replicate, or share lessons from past initiatives and policy reforms with partners in a systematic way. It is suggested, therefore, that a component of UNDP's strategic thinking on PA&LG particularly address these gender related deficits, including through the:

- Improvement of gender disaggregated data.
- Promotion of gender equality in the public administration at central and local level.
- Analysis of the impact of specific steps, policies, approaches etc., designed to ensure the hiring, retention and capacity development of a critical mass of women within the public administration.
- Setting up of a global tracking and monitoring system of women's participation in public administration at national and subnational levels.

Urban Governance

The world urban population has grown at very high rates over the past two decades. According to the UN-HABITAT State of the World Cities Report 2008/2009, it is estimated that by the middle of the 21st century, half of the world's population will be living in urban areas. While the urban population in developed countries will remain unchanged in the next two decades, the urban populations in the developing world will more than double. It is estimated that over 60 million people – equal to the population of France – are added to cities and suburbs every year, mainly in low-income settlements in developing countries. Asia and Africa are particularly affected. Eight of the ten most populous cities in the world are on or near earthquake faults and some two thirds of the cities projected to exceed 8 million people by 2015 are in coastal areas where sea levels may rise as a result of climate change⁵⁵. In crisis and conflict countries, the large influx of displaced populations creates serious pressure for jobs, income opportunities, and safe housing, all of which lead to social problems. If the expansion of unregulated, informal settlements continues to be the principal mechanism for absorbing urban growth, many developing countries will face an increased risk of disasters and urbanization of poverty. Improving urban and local governance should therefore be a key priority in most developing countries.

⁵⁵ State of the World Report, WorldWatch, 2007.



Urban governance and delivery of services in megacities, urban slums, and informal or illegal settlements requires well targeted and innovative governance approaches. But the reality shows that related laws and regulations often lag behind. These policy and local governance gaps have negative consequences for the urban environment, the supply of safe land, secure housing, tenure, efficient infrastructure and services, and the overall well-being of the urban population, especially for the poor and marginalized groups⁵⁶.

To tackle the future faces of poverty, exclusion, environmental degradation and human insecurity, the development community will need to reach out to the poorest and most vulnerable in the urban settlements and hence address related governance challenges at the micro-urban levels.

Many questions arise from the growing urbanization, such as: how can megacities be governed efficiently and effectively? How can government-civil society partnerships be promoted in urban settings? How can local governments, particularly in cities, better deal with the environmental governance challenges? How can the pattern of gross spatial inequality present in many countries be addressed at the urban level? How can the accountability, enforcement and control regulation and mechanisms in the area of urban planning and urban management be improved? How can systems and procedures be enhanced to prevent urban governance related corruption? UNDP cannot address all these problems by itself, neither can other single UN agencies. But more progress could be made if these challenges were addressed as part of a “One UN” approach to urban development challenges.

⁵⁶ The majority of city inhabitants in the developing world are young people, who are the most affected by issues of poverty, exclusion, and unemployment, access to basic services, and the effects of natural disasters and climate change.

APPROACHES AND INNOVATIONS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

A Better Understanding of Political Economy Analysis

When designing PA&LG policies and interventions, more attention should be paid to questions of power-relationships and related risks, i.e. policy implementation risk analysis and a better understanding of the political economy of the reforms. It is clear that not all risks can be anticipated, but assessing such variables as the different actors' agendas, sequencing, the organizational capacity and institutional legitimacy of implementing agencies and, above all, their political feasibility, should be more thoroughly appraised in the design stage and consistently reviewed as the project progresses. PA&LG reforms are, by their very nature, long and often painful processes. This is especially the case in post-conflict countries, where many of the basic conditions to facilitate reconstruction are absent. However, one might also ask why public administration and local government systems remain dysfunctional in some countries after years of practice and reform. While technical explanations go some way in providing valid answers, it must be repeated that PA&LG is an inherently political matter. Thus, for PA&LG to succeed there must be political leaders and senior managers at national and sub-national levels who can act as champions and demonstrate a sustained commitment to the cause. They must be persuasive leaders who can convince public servants imbued with cultures of centralism and patronage that the new ways – focused on serving the public – are right and proper. While political stability can be positive to ensure a steady and continuing pace of reforms, democratic transition can also generate the long awaited momentum for change to accelerate in a new direction.

Integrating Rule of Law Dimensions and Perspectives in the Public Administration

Rule of law is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of



arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency. So far, rule of law has essentially been connected to the justice sector, while rule of law in the public administration has received less attention. This is considered an important neglect, as rule of law deficits in the public administration – lack of written decisions, lack of awareness of administrative rights and responsibilities, resistance of lower agencies to comply with decisions and rulings – can have a serious impact on individuals and communities. Additionally, administrative appeal mechanisms are often missing, insufficiently developed or little understood in post-crisis States. There may also be jurisdictional barriers preventing appeals against administrative decisions or other serious problems in accessing a judicial remedy. Members of weak and vulnerable groups often experience particular challenges in accessing justice.

Civic education and sensitizing initiatives regarding administrative rights are needed⁵⁷. By situating the public administration within a rule of law framework, the ‘users’ of the system become rights-holders, able to legally claim services and hold State agents accountable⁵⁸. A public administration that operates under the rule of law offers legal protection of individual rights, enhances the legitimacy of the State and helps to build confidence in the value of the rule of law in general⁵⁹.

Experience suggests that process performance in the public administration is higher if common rules and standards are applied, rather than if agencies apply their own specific rules and procedures. Accountability mechanisms also tend to work better if all agencies follow the same rules and are evaluated according to the same standards. Given the importance of rule of law in public administration, the Democratic Governance Group in BDP has recently partnered with the Rule of Law Programme at the Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sweden, in collaboration with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim of this collaboration is to develop tools to guide reform strategies for better integrating public administration and rule of law programming.

Area-Based Development

The evaluation report on UNDP’s contribution to local governance calls for a more holistic and synergistic approach to local governance, involving different practices and groups in an integrated fashion in addressing development challenges at the local level. In response, UNDP has called for particular attention to UNDP’s experiences with area-based and regional development.

⁵⁷ The Administrative Justice Initiative in Bosnia-Herzegovina is implemented by Vaša Prava (VP), a local NGO. This initiative provides an interesting perspective on how legal aid and paralegal activities can be employed in relation to the public administration and administrative justice. VP officers assist or represent indigent citizens in procedures and disputes with the administration. VP has also developed a strategic plan to assess the most common administrative problems faced by their clients, and a country-wide media and public education plan. VP lawyers have made a total of 16 radio and television appearances. Written and electronic public education materials, and a radio and television ‘jingle’ on administrative rights, have also been produced (Bergling et al.).

⁵⁸ See also the Guidance Note of the Secretary General on the Rule of Law Assistance, 14 April 2008.

⁵⁹ Bergling, P. et al., “Rule of Law in Public Administration: Problems and Ways Ahead in Peace Building and Development, Research Report”, Folke Bernadotte Academy 2008

Democratic change does not come from political declarations and constitutional reform alone. The widening of democratic space not only requires that State institutions to operate differently, but also that individuals and communities become (pro)active agents of change, and take responsibility for good governance. Area-based development programmes offer many opportunities for social mobilisation, across a wider scope of local communities. As opposed to the “integrated rural development projects” that UNDP used to support in the 1970s and 80s, current area-based development programs go beyond improving physical infrastructure, to become real laboratories of local direct democracy, enabling communities to learn and innovate so that, in the future, they can address more complex problems on their own. These area-based development approaches can be effective tools to deal with developmental challenges in the areas where standard instruments of regional policy do not bring expected results⁶⁰. Working with local communities through area-based programs not only opens windows for horizontal (geographical) expansion, but also feeds into the national policy debate on how to remove the policy and legal obstacles that prevent some of these community initiatives from reaching successful completion. Hence, the strength of community-mobilization



⁶⁰ Initially, UNDP Ukraine implemented area-based development (ABD) in a very specific context, in the Crimean region facing inter-ethnic tension as a result of the massive return of formerly deported people; and in Chernobyl-affected regions where ABD was seen as an effective tool to help populations to overcome victim syndrome. But programmes rapidly generated very interesting ‘side effects’, contributing substantially to the development of participatory mechanisms and to the establishment of a constructive citizens-governments dialogue.

approaches is also conditioned by efforts on the policy and legislative side as well as by capacity development activities for local decision-makers. Area-based development programmes can thus be very useful laboratories for bottom-up policy change processes. Especially in periods of political instability, when opportunities for policy work are more limited, assistance at the grass-root level helps to keep the momentum of transformation and sustains and nurtures the bottom-up demand for PA&LG reforms and for widening the democratic space, hence providing opportunities to exercise practical democracy at the local level.



Sectoral Challenges and Cross-Sectoral Solutions: A Problem-Driven Approach

UNDP has a few interesting experiences in addressing governance challenges in particular service delivery sectors. One good example to learn from is the “Strengthening Ethics and Good Governance in the Health Sector” project in Mongolia, which addresses service delivery and MDG achievement through improvements in public administration at central and local levels, access to information, ICT developments, and measures to enhance a culture of integrity and participation, all through a sectoral lens, while also looking at cross-sectoral solutions. UNDP’s records show that this new approach has not yet fully penetrated down to the field, despite the potential it offers for stronger UN collaboration. UNDP’s MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF) essentially targets efforts and resources on the most critical gaps and challenges. Meeting the MDGs in an inclusive and sustainable manner requires (i) attention to the institutional factors that affect performance in specific sectors related to MDGs that are lagging behind; and (ii) assisting counterparts at national and sub-national levels in developing realistic home-grown so-

lutions, many of which may well be cross-sectoral in nature⁶¹. Solutions to specific MDG challenges can indeed arise from, and in turn have an impact on, a wide spectrum of circumstances that exist across multiple sectors. Sector-specific agencies, ministries and organizations are understandably focused on alleviating the immediate problem with which they are faced. For example, to accelerate MDG 5 on Maternal Mortality, the Ministry of Health will focus on improving emergency obstetric facilities and creating incentives for staff to work in remote areas. But sustainable solutions usually require other related problems (e.g. women's economic and legal empowerment and human rights issues such as gender equality, girls' education, gender-based violence) be addressed as well, and solutions can have an impact across health and non-health MDGs.

A problem-driven approach seeks to analyze all related institutional and governance arrangements and political drivers that affect specific MDG-related gaps or constraints and their links to other components of the system. It addresses the different elements of the problem, hence linking to relevant institutions in different sectors and at different levels of government. A problem driven approach also allows the analysis and addressing of patterns of exclusion and discrimination that may well differ from sector to sector. The approach requires lessons learned to be codified from a cross-practice perspective. Too often, important lessons in one field remain limited to practitioners and policy makers operating within their own particular specialty or domain. For example, given the important intersections between health and development, much can be gained by more actively building bridges between sectors and disciplines in order to document and share lessons regarding what has worked, what has not – and why⁶².

Seeking Economies of Scale

Financial crisis usually push governments towards cost-savings measures that mainly affect staff and budgets, while often keeping ill-functioning institutions afloat, without questioning the underlying rationale for creating and financing these institutions and organisational units at national and local level. Innovative solutions are needed to ensure services are delivered in the most cost-effective manner, ensuring an ideal combination of quality and quantity through new economies of scale at different levels. Various examples from the field showcase this new line of thinking that needs to capture UNDP's attention when strategizing on PA&LG:

- **Transnational Institutions:** many Small Island Developing States suffer from high transaction costs and limited markets. Their small size, limited resources and relative isolation tends to increase the cost of delivering services to their populations, making it particularly difficult to keep core governing institutions

⁶¹ For example, progress on MDG 4, like most of the health MDGs, also relies on services delivered outside of the health sector. For child health, ministries in charge of water and sanitation are key. Education is also critical, especially for mothers.

⁶² The "AIDS and MDGs' Approach: What is it, why does it matter, and how do we take it forward?", United Nations Development Programme, HIV/AIDS.

afloat. These diseconomies of scale provide small States with an incentive to explore cost-effective innovations in governance through international institutional cooperation, in particular looking more and more at transnational institutions. This is not about the regional institutions that follow from regional agreements (e.g. the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights), but about the possibility of establishing core governing institutions (e.g. auditor general, human rights commissions, anti-corruption bodies) that would be transnational in nature, covering different countries that share the cost of operations⁶³.

- **Cross-Border Governance:** the reflection on the enhancement of cross-border governance has recently deepened, in particular in Asia-Pacific, through regional consultations on how to strengthen regional capacities to formulate and enforce appropriate regulatory policies, develop legal frameworks, clarify the roles of national and regional institutions, and protect the rights of marginalized groups. Cross-border issues are those which cannot be resolved successfully by isolated policy action at the national or sub-national levels. This is not to suggest that sub-national governance institutions have a lesser role in working on cross-border governance issues, but merely reflects that these issues go beyond local and national boundaries. As the list of relevant cross-border



⁶³ See also Paul Collier, "Wars, Guns and Votes" (2009), in particular regarding the smaller nations.

issues continues to grow⁶⁴, it becomes more and more essential to forge strategic alliances to support the development of consolidated approaches and policies through regional platforms for dialogue and international mechanisms to ensure cross-border consultation and coordination between national and sub-national governments. Public goods that were previously considered as essentially national, have now become global public goods. Information is one such example, traditionally provided and controlled on a national basis, and currently provided from a variety of national and international sources, and hence, increasingly more difficult to control. These developments are leading towards a new generation of governance interventions, following changing global conditions that transcend national levels and which will have an increasing impact on public administration functions and practices.



- **Inter-Municipal Cooperation:** within nation States, there are similar opportunities for innovative solutions at the local level to ensure improved service delivery through institutional cooperation between local entities. One of the most successful innovations is the “Inter-Municipal Cooperation for Efficient Service Delivery” project in the FYR of Macedonia. Aimed at improving the efficiency of public service delivery, this is a truly innovative solution that can alleviate some of the impediments of under-capacitated small municipalities, and has a strong potential for knowledge sharing and replication across regions. UNDP should invest further in such initiatives, and ensure that current experiences are captured for further use in other regions.

Access to Information and Communication for Development

The right to information is fundamental in bolstering democratic principles of openness, transparency and accountability in societies and in eradicating poverty. In many countries people are still routinely denied access to information that should be in the public domain. Though a programming priority for UNDP, insufficient programmatic interventions are yet focused on enhancing the supply side of information. Where they do, they often focus on the introduction of technologies, neglecting indispensable changes in the skills and behaviour necessary for public servants to deal with a more open form of government. Based on UNDP’s country experience and consultations with selected specialists, enhancing access to in-

⁶⁴ Such issues include the effective management and delivery of common resources such as water, migration, fight against human trafficking, money laundering, etc.

formation from a responsive institutions perspective will require more attention to the strengthening of the legal and regulatory environment for freedom and pluralism of information, raising awareness on rights to official information, strengthening mechanisms to provide access to information (implementation of right to information legislation by government), adjusting the professional standards and behaviour of public servants and strengthening the communication capacity of local governments, in particular to reach out to the most vulnerable groups.

UNDP has used a range of Communication for Development (C4D) approaches to strengthen mechanisms to provide and access information. These include supporting existing traditional community centers (Chitalishta) in Bulgaria to serve as 'information intermediaries' and provide information on administrative services offered by local municipal institutions; establishing rural tele-centres in Bangladesh that also serve as a space for local government to provide agriculture and health extension services; and training local assembly officials in Timor Leste on consultation with local communities, dissemination of information about assembly activities and engagement with local media.

UNDP needs to make a consolidated effort to systematically integrate C4D approaches in the Public Administration and Local Governance area to strengthen information and communication mechanisms. These C4D approaches will reflect local realities and take into consideration the particular information needs of the people, providing a means to communicate and space to participate.



Accountability

Whatever the political setting, accountability provides an ideal entry point for working at the intersection of public administration and local governance. Greater financial independence, increased discretionary powers and new service delivery responsibilities have created opportunities to enhance local governance. These developments have also added to the importance of finding the right horizontal and vertical accountability mechanisms. Accountability is a critical issue in public administration and local governance but has not yet sufficiently been used as an entry point to materialize the synergies between DGG service lines and clusters, as well as other UNDP practice areas. Working on horizontal accountability mechanisms in a particular sector allows for linkages with UNDP's work on human rights institutions, anti-corruption agencies, parliamentary work and other specialised agencies. Vertical accountability mechanisms links to UNDP's work on social accountability (social audits, media, report cards etc). Developing frameworks to improve horizontal and vertical accountability also links to governance assessments and political economy analysis, including the constitutional/legal provisions in the sector(s) that UNDP programmes/projects would work on. Additionally, it would introduce a thorough understanding of financial modalities through which services are funded at the local level within the sector(s). An accountability dimension is also a key entry point for linking the work on democratic governance with UNDP's capacity development work to assess the institutional gaps related to existing and new accountability mechanisms.

Codifying Knowledge

The regional reports of UNDP-supported PA&LG projects make for impressive reading and promise great improvements in PA&LG and the outcomes of government policy. But the quality of UNDP's work needs further analysis, and more lessons need to be distilled from the wealth of experience in PA&LG that UNDP has gained and continues to gain in the field. What are the factors that make public administration and local governance initiatives progress in the right direction? How to adjust the pace of programming in special development situations? Although UNDP has been able, through the knowledge networks and regular knowledge codification, to capture part of that experience, much more can be done to ensure cross-fertilisation of knowledge between different regions and practices. In particular, when addressing public administration, local governance and local development from a more holistic and integrated perspective, a new approach is needed and different practices will need to consider how to organise themselves into cross-cutting, multi-professional task forces. Hence, knowledge will also need to be codified from a cross-practice perspective rather than from the current silo approach of the individual practices and service lines within them. With regard to the local governance agenda in particular, progress will increasingly be dependent on the way UNDP – and the UN collectively – will be able to work in a coordinated manner to address the development challenges that are posed at the local level.



CONCLUSION

This overview of trends in UNDP's work on public administration and local governance has highlighted the tremendous amount of work that is being undertaken at country and regional level to support governments and other stakeholders in strengthening domestic systems and processes in these areas.

The paper also points to a number of remaining gaps and weaknesses, as well as emerging issues that have come to occupy centre stage in the development debate and require proper attention. Despite increasing trends towards decentralised governance, many countries still display a high degree of political and economic centralization. When these political settings do not work "for" the people, they risk perpetuating geographical disparities and pockets of inequality and poverty that compromise the prospects of creating a safer and better environment for all.

In this complex, fast-changing and challenging environment, attention to the role of the State and, in particular, its public administration at national and sub-national levels, as well as the importance of local governance arrangements has received a new impetus. The majority of countries in all five regions where UNDP is operating have initiated processes of decentralization to sub-national governments and local administrations. These are taking place in different forms and advance at varying speed, often at times when the national public administration system and its de-concentrated offices are still struggling to reach a minimal level of performance. In such an evolving development climate, questions related to the new role of sub-national governments, their intra-governmental relations and new horizontal and vertical accountability mechanisms often remain unanswered. Hence, more work is needed both at the central and local levels to ensure that decentralization and local governance reforms are translated into: (i) sustainable local development results, and (ii) an enlarged democratic space for genuine local participation in public affairs, where governments and public institutions are effectively held accountable for their actions.

Indeed, quite a number of countries have organised elections and have introduced some form of electoral democracy. While slow, the political change taking place in many countries is also affecting the organisational culture and professional values of the public service at national and sub-national levels. As democratic reforms have swept across all five continents, the strengthening of public administration has gained renewed attention, largely driven by the need to enhance performance, service delivery, transparency and accountability. A new generation of local leaders are serving as catalysts for local development and an increasing amount of central government revenues are now being administered by sub-national governments, in consultation with local populations. Local governments are becoming

better at reflecting citizen priorities, providing services more efficiently and inspiring a greater sense of accountability to their constituents. Nonetheless, linking political developments with internal transformational change within the public service remains a major challenge, as public servants in many developing countries have not yet been sufficiently sensitised and socialised to operate in more open and transparent societies characterised by an increasing number of up and downward accountability obligations.

Regional integration is becoming an important driver for speeding up these reforms, as witnessed in Eastern Europe where the prospect of EU membership – even if still remote for some countries – has been instrumental in driving comprehensive State reforms. In other regions, cross-country consultations or peer review mechanisms – such as the African Peer Review Mechanism under the New Partnership for Africa's Development – are also used as tools for benchmarking progress on democratic governance in general, and public administration and local governance in particular. Most of these reform processes are still ongoing and will need to be appraised in the long term, but the importance of PA&LG is gaining traction and is being addressed from new, cross-cutting perspectives.

UNDP continues to play a key role in these developments, not only in terms of policy support and the establishment of systems at national level, but also at the sub-national level where local governance has emerged as a leading field of activity for UNDP. In contrast to previous interventions where public administration and local governance were approached separately, UNDP now emphasises the importance of much needed synergies at both national and sub-national levels of administration and governance. If national systems of public administration are not understood at the local level, or are disconnected from local realities, the gap between the centre and the periphery is likely to persist. If national policies issued by the central administration are not developed in consultation with the local level, popular acceptance of national public administration will remain weak. If local success stories are not translated into national policies and institutionalised practices, transformational change at the largest scale of society will be difficult. If local governments have no power and capacity for action, national policies will remain untenable. Hence, ensuring closer synergies when programming interventions in the two service lines will play a key role in strengthening the foundations of democratic governance in all levels of society.

This paper, and the five regional monographs that accompany it, constitute a stepping stone in the process of conducting a broader debate on UNDP's corporate, regional and national approach to public administration and local governance. A debate which will also be guided by the latest report of the UNDP Evaluation Office on UNDP's contribution to local governance. The overall aim is to strengthen UNDP's approach in assisting programme countries in these critical areas, so as to successfully build bridges between the State and the people and achieve effective long-term development results.

ACRONYMS

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
AIMS	Aid Management Information System
ACINET	Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network
AGPAP	Africa Governance and Public Administration Programme
ARGP	Asia Pacific Regional Governance Programme (UNDP)
ART	Support to Thematic and Territorial Networks for Human Development Global Programme / <i>Appui aux Réseaux Territoriaux pour le Développement Humain</i>
ART MyDEL	Women and Local Economic Development
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP)
BDP	Bureau for Development Policy (UNDP)
BRC	Bratislava Regional Center (UNDP)
CDDE	Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness Facility
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
C4D	Communication for Development
CoP	Community of Practice
CDGAP	Consolidating Democratic Governance in Africa Programme
CO	Country Office
DGG	Democratic Governance Group (BDP/UNDP)
DGPNet	Democratic Governance Practice Network
EC	European Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HDR	Human Development Report
HRM	Human Resource Management
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
LoAS	League of Arab States
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LMICs	Lower Middle Income Countries
MAF	MDG Acceleration Framework

MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NAPAs	National Adaptation Programmes of Action to Climate Change
NDPs	National Development Plans
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PACDE	Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development
PA&LG	Public Administration & Local Governance
PAR	Public Administration Reform
POGAR	Programme on Governance in the Arab Region
PROLOGO	Local Proposals for Governance in Latin America
RBA	Regional Bureau for Africa (UNDP)
RBAS	Regional Bureau for Arab States (UNDP)
RBAP	Regional Bureau for Asia Pacific (UNDP)
RBEC	Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (UNDP)
RBLAC	Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDP)
RCB	Regional Centre in Bangkok (UNDP)
RC-ESA	Regional Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (UNDP)
RCP	Regional Centre in Panama (UNDP)
SIGOB	Management System in Support of the Functioning of Democratic Institutions
TRALOG	Transparency and Accountability in Local Governments / <i>Transparencia y Rendición de Cuentas en los Gobiernos Locales</i>
UMICs	Upper Middle Income Countries
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCAC	United Nations Convention against Corruption
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
UNVs	United Nations Volunteers
WHO	World Health Organization

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Acknowledgments

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For comments and inquiries, please contact Patrick Keuleers, Senior Policy Advisor (DGG/BDP): patrick.keuleers@undp.org



United Nations Development Programme

Bureau for Development Policy
Democratic Governance Group
304 East 45th Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10017 USA

www.undp.org/governance