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# Towards SDG 16:

PROMOTING JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE  
SOCIETIES IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA





## **TOWARDS SDG 16:**

Promoting Just, Peaceful and  
Inclusive Societies in Europe  
and Central Asia



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<sup>1</sup> All references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

# FOREWORD

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works around the world to help eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and exclusion, and make development more sustainable. With the targets of inclusive growth, better services, environmental sustainability, good governance, and security, we provide expertise in development thinking and practice, which, in combination with our decades of experience, helps to support countries in meeting their development aspirations, and ensure the voices of all sections of society are represented.

As a key part of this development agenda, UNDP's governance and peacebuilding work lays the foundation for further development gains. By helping to strengthen representative governance, increase political inclusiveness, improve the capacity of institutions and quality of regulation, and reduce violence, governance and peacebuilding in turn encourages open debate, raises awareness of issues, and fosters inclusive growth.

Given recent history, governance and peacebuilding is of particular importance in the Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS) region. By combining high-level strategic capabilities, specialist knowledge and on-the-ground experience, UNDP works to ensure its interventions are effective and meaningful. Operating from offices in every country in the region, as well as the regional hub in Istanbul, UNDP's ability to combine local expertise and regional level coordination provides us with a unique opportunity to effect real change. It is an approach that also allows UNDP to effectively manage political complexity and mitigate the risk of conflict and violence.

In 2015, UNDP's governance and peacebuilding work took on a new significance with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity that also seeks to promote peace and freedom. Together, the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda require all countries and stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, to take the bold and transformative steps urgently required to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path. As is outlined in the 2030 Agenda, it is vital that we recognise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

Adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at a historic UN Summit, the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda officially came into force on 1 January 2016. In response, over the next fifteen years, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. These efforts will be guided by a specific set of targets provided for each SDG. For UNDP's governance and peacebuilding programming, the targets under 'Goal 16 - Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies' and 'Goal 5 – Ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment' will be integrated into all of UNDP's governance and peacebuilding work.

Reflecting the importance of the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and their corresponding targets, this report has been prepared to provide an overview of UNDP's governance and peacebuilding work in the ECIS region, and to serve as a baseline for measuring progress. Focusing on 2015 – the year before work towards the SDGs began – this report provides analysis of the state of the region, major events, and achievements at both the regional level and for each country and territory. While not exhaustive, this report will allow for progress to be evaluated going forward, in addition to providing insights into how UNDP makes a difference at a practical level in promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies in the region.



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# PART I

# INTRODUCTION

In the ECIS region, UNDP works with local, national and international partners to strengthen inclusive and effective governance and peace, by advocating, advising, enabling discussion, fostering consensus and capacitating institutions. UNDP achieves these goals by creating an environment in which all partners, including civil society, can grow in strength and contribute towards sustainable development.

UNDP's work in this area, broadly labelled as governance and peacebuilding, consists of four focus areas:

1. **Conflict prevention and peacebuilding** – promoting social cohesion, strengthening intercommunity ties and improving inclusiveness to prevent conflict, build peace and make nations more resilient;
2. **Responsive and accountable institutions** – working with governments and citizens to ensure government processes and service delivery at national and local levels meets the

needs of citizens, maximizes transparency, and have clear chains of accountability;

3. **Inclusive political processes** – ensuring that parliaments, elections and the political system in general is inclusive, responsive and provides a voice for all citizens;
4. **Rule of law, justice, security and human rights** – working with, governments, justice and security institutions and citizens to strengthen the rule of law, improve the capacity and fairness of the justice system, and support the promotion and protection of human rights for all.

While these focus areas have distinct goals, programmes initiated and supported by UNDP often link several, if not all, of these focus areas, exhibiting how intertwined they are. Overall, this work bridges the gap between humanitarian, peacebuilding and longer-term development efforts, helping to peacefully settle disputes and progress towards accountable governance.

Finally, as mentioned in the foreword, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 SDGs, 2015 will serve as a benchmark for the next 15 years, not just for UNDP's governance and peacebuilding work, but for development progress more generally in all countries and territories in the region. As such, with the 2030 Agenda providing the agenda and the SDGs providing the goals and specific targets to aim for over the next 15 years, 'Goal 16 - Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies' and 'Goal 5 – Ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment' will become central to all of UNDP's governance and peacebuilding programming going forward.

## KEY SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE AND THE CIS

The ECIS region is a geographically, economically and politically diverse region. While all countries and territories in the region (except Albania and Turkey) were part of the former Soviet Union or the former Yugoslavia, they have diverged significantly from that shared past. The establishment of democratic institutions, market economies and conflict prevention strategies have had different levels of success. Foreign policy decisions to prioritize a relationship with the Russian Federation, the European Union (EU), or neither, have also led to very different approaches to governance and domestic policy.

Economically, all countries and territories in the region are considered middle income, however, significant variation exists within this categorization. In 2014, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita varied from over US\$10,000 in Turkey<sup>2</sup> to just over US\$1,000 in Tajikistan.<sup>3</sup> This variation in GDP also alludes to some of the different drivers

of these economies. Countries such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have undergone rapid economic growth as a result of large resource endowments and high commodity prices. Other countries, such as the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Moldova, have seen slower growth and remain heavily reliant on agriculture and remittances from migrant workers.

The different political and economic environments in the region provide not only a range of challenges in themselves, but also impact on how different events and crises are experienced. In order to be effective, UNDP's governance and peacebuilding support intrinsically takes into account how socio-economic and political developments impact each country and territory in the region, and in turn affects UNDP's programming.

## ONGOING CONFLICTS AND THE REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS

Sparked by the ongoing conflict in Syria, several countries in the ECIS region were impacted by the refugee and migrant crisis in 2015. With approximately 4.8 million people fleeing the violence in Syria,<sup>4</sup> in addition to those fleeing other conflict zones such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, a change in German refugee policy<sup>5</sup> led many of these refugees and migrants to begin to transit through Turkey, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary and Austria to reach Germany, with nearly 1.1 million ultimately arriving.<sup>6</sup> With border services overrun, several countries along the transit route began erecting border fences in order to stem the flow, forcing many refugees and migrants to stay longer than intended in transit countries.

This huge influx of people had a significant impact on affected countries, primarily on border

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank, "Turkey Overview". Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/overview> (accessed 10 June 2016)

<sup>3</sup> The World Bank, "GDP per Capita - Tajikistan".

Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=TJ> (accessed 17 August 2016)

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs, "Syria Crisis: Regional Overview".

Available from <http://www.unocha.org/syrian-arab-republic/syria-country-profile/about-crisis>

<sup>5</sup> Deutsche Welle, "Germany suspends 'Dublin rules' for Syrians", 25 August 2015.

Available from <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-suspends-dublin-rules-for-syrians/a-18671698>

<sup>6</sup> Deutsche Welle, "Nearly 1.1 million migrants arrived in Germany in 2015", 30 December 2015.

Available from <http://www.dw.com/en/nearly-11-million-migrants-arrived-in-germany-in-2015/a-18952130>

management and policy, but also on local governments and host communities. Turkey continues to host the largest population of refugees, both in the ECIS and globally,<sup>7</sup> mostly concentrated near the southern border with Syria. This large population is putting considerable pressure on municipal services and on the communities themselves. Serbia was able to effectively process large numbers of asylum seekers and assist them in transiting the country, but refugee camps set up in Belgrade and other locations were quickly overwhelmed, again putting pressure on municipal services and small communities. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia faced many of the same issues, with the added complication of an already fragile relationship with Greece, from where many of the asylum seekers were arriving.

In addition to driving the refugee and migrant crisis, ongoing conflicts in countries bordering the region are also having other impacts on ECIS countries and territories. As a result of

The refugee transit camp Vinojug in Gevgelija, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has seen up to 11,000 people per day transiting through it in 2015



Photo by: Ivan Zverzhanovski

their proximity to the conflicts (i.e. Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan), Turkey and Central Asia are facing challenges such as maintaining effective border management, countering terrorism, and the proliferation of arms and other instruments of war. The radicalization of local populations and citizens travelling to fight in these conflicts, often alongside extremist groups, is another serious issue that has arisen and has extended

beyond neighbouring countries to, among others, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kazakhstan and Kosovo. Furthermore, the ongoing conflict in the eastern Donbas region of Ukraine remains unresolved, with sporadic bouts of organized violence continuing. Although a partial ceasefire has reduced the violence, the costs of the conflict continue to accumulate with large numbers of displaced people and significant reductions in economic output. The conflict has also had an impact outside of Ukraine in neighbouring countries with large ethnic Russian populations.

## ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN

A number of external events led to slowing economic growth across the ECIS region in 2015. The twin shocks of lower commodity prices and the economic slowdown in Russia had a range of impacts for countries such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Previously strong rates of economic growth have fallen, low rates of unemployment have edged up, while currency fluctuations have led to the abandonment or devaluation of currency pegs. Although this should provide a boost to export industries, the reliance on imports for many basic goods means there is upwards pressure on inflation and the cost of living.

For the non-commodity exporting nations in the CIS, the impact is being felt primarily through the reduction of remittances. Many of the economies in the region are heavily reliant on remittances, with estimates that personal remittances make up more than 20 percent of GDP in Moldova, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic.<sup>8</sup> With Russia and Kazakhstan being the main destinations for migrant workers, the slowdowns in those economies, in combination with new restrictions on migrant workers,<sup>9</sup> are forcing many out of employment. Compounding the impact of falling remittance flows, many migrant workers are returning home to weak labour markets in depressed economies, putting downwards pressure on wages.

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR, "Facts and Figures about Refugees".

Available from <http://www.unhcr.ie/about-unhcr/facts-and-figures-about-refugees> (accessed 15 August 2016)

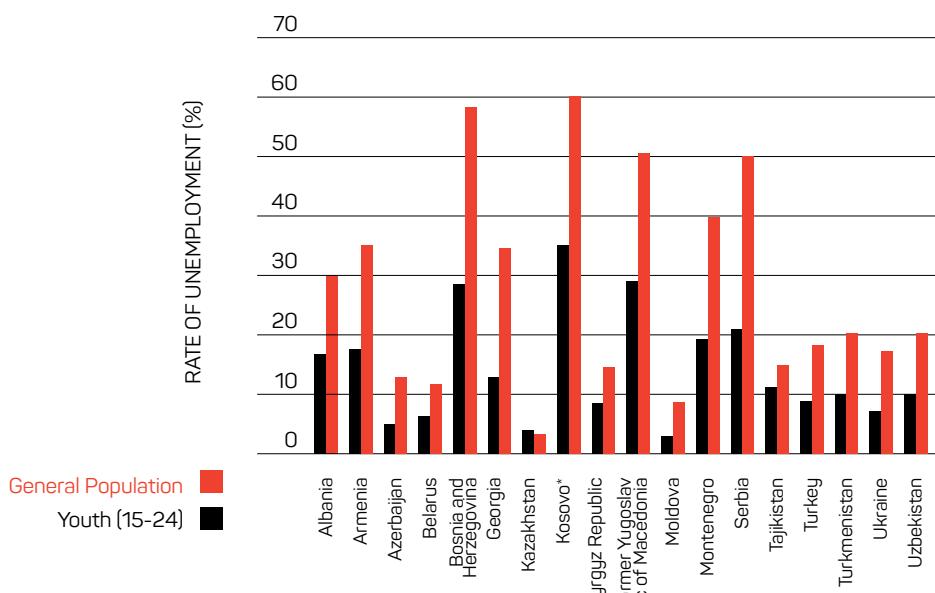
<sup>8</sup> The World Bank, "Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)".

Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DTGDZS> (accessed 19 July 2016)

<sup>9</sup> The Diplomat, "Times Are Getting Tougher for Central Asian Migrant Workers in Russia", 7 April 2015.

Available from <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/times-are-getting-tougher-for-central-asian-migrant-workers-in-russia/>

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATES - 2014



Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators,  
The World Bank<sup>10</sup> / \* Kosovo figures from UNDP<sup>11</sup>

## POLITICAL PROCESSES

Several countries in the ECIS region held important elections in 2015. In Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Belarus, presidential elections saw the long-term incumbents returned to power, although Islam Karimov, the re-elected president of Uzbekistan,

Overall, these shocks have primarily served to exacerbate underlying issues in most places. A number of countries and territories are experiencing a rising threat from religious and violent extremism, aided by growing rates of unemployment, frustration at a lack of opportunities and in some cases their proximity to conflicts. In the Western Balkans, the slowdown has slowed progress on addressing longstanding unemployment, particularly amongst women and youths, which is having a destabilizing impact, with frustration with the situation often contributing to mass protests, political instability and ethnic tensions. A longer term impact is the continued brain drain from the region, as educated and ambitious youths leave for Europe and North America in search of better prospects.

passed away in September 2016. Parliamentary elections were held in Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey and the Kyrgyz Republic and nationwide local elections were also held in Ukraine, Moldova and Albania, with the Albanian elections being the first since a country wide consolidation of local government.

<sup>10</sup> The World Bank, "Worldwide Governance Indicators".

Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/worldwide-governance-indicators> (accessed 17 June 2016)

<sup>11</sup> UNDP in Kosovo, "About Kosovo".

Available from <http://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/countryinfo.html> (accessed 23 June 2016)

For development efforts, elections can often be a double-edged sword. In some cases, political processes and politicians seeking office enable the reform agenda to advance quickly. In Albania and Moldova for example, these elections provided the opportunity to lock in significant advances in women's political participation through the election of larger numbers of female candidates. In other cases, important reforms are seen as too risky in the lead up to an election, which can effectively stall progress over the election period.

There was also significant political instability and allegations of large-scale corruption that arose in 2015 in several countries and territories. In Ukraine, while the prolonged government crisis was resolved following the appointment of a new Prime Minister, social discontent continues and chances for pre-term elections remain high. In Kosovo, political disagreement between the Government and opposition parties escalated into a series of violent protests, both inside and outside the Parliament. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, evidence that the Government had been wiretapping journalists, religious figures and politicians, as well as participating in high-level corruption, led to large demonstrations. Similarly, in Moldova allegations that a prominent politician played a role in a large-scale bank fraud<sup>12</sup> that occurred in 2014 also led to mass protests and the collapse of the governing coalition. Although the protests themselves often have negative consequences, in a region where autocratic regimes and political disengagement have been part of modern history, the willingness of people to advocate for their rights and demand more transparency and accountability from their governments may be indicative of a positive change.

At the same time, several of the CIS countries have been moving to restrict political freedom through laws to limit the space and funding for civil society and non governmental organizations (NGOs). Modelled on Russian legislation passed in 2012, the laws typically require NGOs that receive foreign funding to register as foreign agents, and those

involved in politics to undergo financial audits and report regularly on their activities.<sup>13</sup> In a similar vein, legislation to restrict the rights of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) community are also being considered around the region.

## **OPENING UP, REFORMS AND EU ACCESSION**

2015 also saw the continuation of some positive longer term trends in the ECIS region. Over the past decade many countries and territories have moved to better align themselves with the EU in hopes of progressing towards EU accession. Accession to the EU is seen as vital for a number of reasons, including infrastructure funding assistance, visa-free travel and access to the largest single market in the world. These powerful incentives have enabled the EU to drive reforms and development, particularly reinforcing the independence of institutions, increasing the transparency of governments and political processes, improving gender equality and strengthening the rule of law.

In 2015, Albania, BiH, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine all continued efforts to make reforms with the goal of EU accession in mind. The commitment to reform in Ukraine has been particularly impressive given the ongoing challenges in the eastern Donbas region.

The trend towards increasing transparency and improved public administration can be seen in other countries in 2015. In Belarus, the Government made a commitment to transparency and openness in public administration, as well as to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In Kazakhstan, the Government launched a reform process which is anticipated to strongly impact on institutional efficiency, government openness and long-term economic development. In addition to these examples, other countries are also developing strategies and action plans aimed at increasing transparency and expanding reforms to strengthen governance institutions and decision-making processes.

<sup>12</sup> The amount stolen was reported to be over US\$1 billion – or around 12 percent of Moldova's annual GDP

<sup>13</sup> BBC News, "Russian parliament adopts NGO 'foreign agents' bill", 13 July 2012.  
Available from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18826661>

# CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

## OVERVIEW

The legacy of conflict and the prevalence of protracted and so-called frozen conflicts throughout the ECIS region has long undermined development efforts and progress on a range of socio-economic and other indicators. In addition, a number of places in the region exist where tensions between different ethnic, religious and political groups risk escalating into more formal conflicts.

UNDP's work on conflict prevention and peacebuilding aims to promote social cohesion and

empower nations and communities to become more inclusive and resilient to external and internal shocks. In order to achieve these aims, UNDP utilizes overlapping approaches with different focuses, which in the region can be classified into several broad categories:

- **Conflict Analysis and Risk Assessment** – Sound analysis is not only central to understanding the causes and drivers of conflict, capacities for peace, and key stakeholders, but is also critical to developing strategic approaches for the UN system to comprehen-

sively support national efforts to address conflicts and protect development gains.

- **Opening Dialogues and Confidence-Building** – In areas where conflict and/or re-occurring violence have led to divisions, opening dialogues and confidence building aims to increase engagement and trust between people and communities on opposite sides of conflict divides by identifying and addressing shared challenges, and establishing formal frameworks to pre-empt future conflict.
- **Reconciliation and Peacebuilding** – Where communities with a history of tension and conflict continue to live together, an increased emphasis on reconciliation and the prevention of violence is required to mitigate the higher risk of conflict re-emerging and sustain peace over the long term.
- **Conflict Management and Recovery** – Typically combining elements of cross-border peacebuilding and confidence building, managing active conflict and facilitating recovery requires a specialized approach that also aims to reduce and eliminate violence, reintegrate internally displaced persons (IDPs), support reforms that address the causes of conflict, and identify priorities for rebuilding.

UNDP's *Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding* work is designed to help countries meet targets under:

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



### GOAL 5 – ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

### GOAL 16 – PROMOTE JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

- Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

## KEY TRENDS

### PROTRACTED CONFLICTS AND ONGOING TENSION

The ECIS region provides a wide and diverse range of examples of protracted conflict and conflict-related political complexity. These range from highly volatile situations with regular outbreaks of violence, to situations where conflict is not an immediate risk and/or sovereignty is not overtly contested, but where structural tensions, conflict drivers and/or the legacy of armed conflict have complicated the political landscape.

The most recent, and arguably most significant, conflict to occur in the ECIS region since the end of the wars in the Western Balkans is the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Initiated by a series of events starting in 2013, the conflict continues in the eastern Donbas region of Ukraine. Despite a series of ceasefires negotiated over the past two years, regular violations continue to occur.

In other parts of the ECIS region, ceasefires have ended formal conflicts and contributed to a fragile stability, but internationally mediated peace talks have, broadly, failed to bring lasting solutions.

This can be seen in locations such as Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Often, in the absence of a political settlement, these conflicts continue in political form, perpetuating the divides in and polarisation of societies. The legacy of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have similar qualities, as political challenges continue to haunt the region. Concessions arising from negotiations are often hard fought and suffer from a lack of support from the population, as was evidenced in 2015 by the large-scale protests in both Pristina and Belgrade after an EU-brokered agreement was signed. In BiH, the presence of a peace treaty has not addressed the country's divisions along ethnic lines, both politically and geographically. In 2015, several issues reinforced this polarization and placed a renewed strain on peacebuilding efforts. Similarly, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, tension between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians has led to occasional flare-ups, including a gun battle between Macedonian Police and ethnic Albanian gunmen in Kumanovo in May 2015.

The Fergana Valley shared by Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan represents another source of volatility in the ECIS region. As a result of the multi-ethnic composition of the valley and the historical rivalries between those ethnic groups, disputes often arise due to the location of different ethnic communities across modern boundaries, and the need to share resources, such as arable land, water and transport.

While many of these conflicts appear small and localized, they present a considerable threat to the wider European and Eurasian security architecture, with a risk that outbreaks of violence can spread quickly and/or lead to undesirable political and economic outcomes. It is also for this reason that developments that can exacerbate existing tensions, like the migration crisis in the Western Balkans and Turkey, or the economic slowdown impacting countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, are carefully considered in the context of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

## **NEW AND OLD THREATS FROM VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

Violent extremism in the ECIS region threatens to reverse the development gains made over the past twenty years. Some places are more impacted than others, with the situation in parts of the Western Balkans, Turkey and the Caucasus being particularly challenging. More recently, the threat level has been increasing substantially in Central Asia.

Much of the discourse on violent extremism paints it as a religious phenomenon, and while religious drivers are a factor, this is not always the case. Many of the causes of violent extremism relate to a broad range of identity-based concerns, such as political exclusion of certain groups and ideologies around separatism. Broadly, radical ideologies are associated with high and extreme inequality and injustice (or the perception of inequality and injustice) – whether it be social, economic and political. Resorting to violence can therefore be understood as being motivated by hopelessness and frustration.

Extremist organizations look to take advantage of this frustration by preying on vulnerable members of society, such as the marginalized and unemployed, particularly among the youth. Another group at a high risk are economic migrants, for example Central Asian migrants to Russia who, by virtue of being in a foreign country, are cut off from their normal social networks. Social and other forms of new media are also a factor in higher and more active means of recruitment.

A relatively new threat that has emerged as a result of violent extremism, both in the ECIS region and in Western Europe, is that of individuals who opt to become foreign terrorist fighters. In the ECIS region, Turkey and Uzbekistan have seen the largest number of people leave to fight in foreign conflicts, at least partially due to their proximity to active conflicts (Syria and Afghanistan respectively), but several other countries and territories in the region have also seen significant numbers of citizens take up arms.

## ESTIMATED FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ - 2015

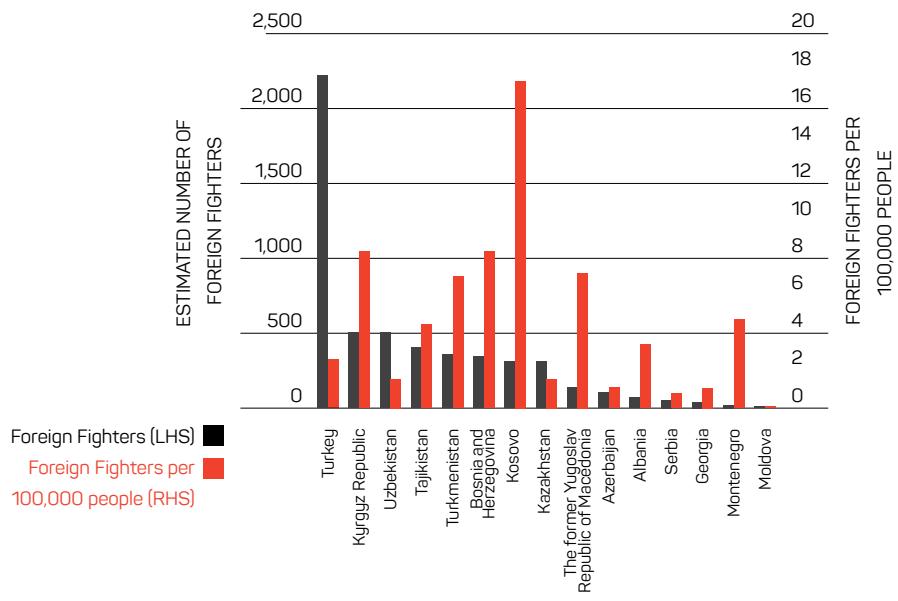
In order to counter the violence of extremists, some governments in the ECIS region, particularly those in Central Asia, have resorted to security responses, including restrictions on movement, assembly and free speech. While this type of response is often effective, if it is not carefully targeted or combined with prevention and development efforts, there is a risk of exacerbating feelings of injustice and grievance. This in turn can heighten the risk of further violent extremism and create new populations that can be targeted by extremist recruiters.

Some governments have also modified or introduced laws to ensure foreign fighters can be prosecuted when they return. However, due to the transnational nature of the phenomenon making it difficult to know whom among a population has become a foreign fighter or even how many there are, the effectiveness of this strategy appears limited.

## WHAT WE DO

### CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND RISK ASSESSMENT

UNDP has been working in contexts of conflict-related political complexity in the ECIS region for more than 15 years, particularly in partnership with the EU and the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA). It has developed a range of tools in these contexts to drive an increasingly analytical and evidence-based approach, and has cultivated a strong knowledge base in effective programming that ranges from conflict-sensitive approaches to area-based development to more active work using development assistance to foster confidence in protracted conflict situations. The development mandate provides UNDP with political neutrality and substantial operational capacities to deliver development solutions in these challenging environments.



Source: Foreign Fighter Estimates: The Soufan Group<sup>14</sup> | Population Estimates: The World Bank<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The Soufan Group, "Foreign Fighters", December 2015.  
Available from [http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG\\_ForeignFightersUpdate\\_FINAL.pdf](http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> The World Bank, "Population, total". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL> (accessed 19 August 2016)

Based on this extensive experience, UNDP's approach has two key dimensions:

- Accurately identify and assess development needs and priorities at the local level, in order to effectively target assistance, and thus adhere to core principles of conflict sensitivity, including the 'do no harm' philosophy; and
- Directly engage with and facilitate inclusive participation of people at the community level in decision-making, to focus on addressing shared challenges and development issues at the inter-community level, irrespective of the higher level political context.

A key pillar in UNDP's conflict analysis and risk assessment work, as well as conflict and peace-building programming more generally, is the deployment of Peace and Development Advisors, with the UNDP-DPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention being the primary facilitator of these deployments.

This global programme enables access to a global network of specialized expertise at the local level, helping Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams analyse, adapt and respond to complex political development with conflict-sensitive programming. In 2015, Peace and Development Advisors were deployed in eight countries in the ECIS region.

UNDP also has a number of other partners in its conflict analysis and risk assessment work. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has deployed Human Rights Advisors to provide guidance on navigating politically complex situations where human rights violations are in question and the Human Rights Up-Front mechanism has reviewed risks in specific countries in the region. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has also been an important and long-term partner in this work across the region.

## **TURNING IMPARTIALITY INTO ACTION – HOW DPA AND UNDP WORK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT CITIZENS IN AREAS WHERE FEW OTHERS CAN OPERATE**

In most of the region's protracted conflicts, the situation has worsened considerably over the course of 2015 and 2016. In some cases, such as Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, long-standing political processes have ground to virtual stalemate. In others, the protracted conflicts have returned to open combat. In eastern Ukraine, the conflict continues to simmer dangerously, with violence at times escalating significantly. Within this increasingly polarized regional and international environment, the number of actors considered "impartial" has continued to decrease, having the unfortunate overall effect of further isolating these communities and making the situation for already-vulnerable communities that much more precarious.

In recognition of the fact that delivering basic welfare and livelihood-improving assistance requires careful political calibration, throughout the course of 2015, UNDP continued to strengthen its joint work with DPA. This work focuses on supporting UN Country Teams with Peace and Development Advisors that assist UN programming in these highly sensitive conditions – including in BiH, Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

In BiH, at a time of heightened social tension between youth and the Government, and with considerable residual inter-ethnic divisions, the Dialogue for the Future programme opened up a new form of structured dialogue between young people and the (mainly older) members of the Government about what type of future citizens want for their country, as well as nation-wide opportunities to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue. The project went on to support a number of innovative initiatives that corresponded with this vision.

In Georgia, at a time of reduced dialogue between Tbilisi and Sukhumi, the highly political and long-stalled project to resurface the Enguri Bridge – the principal connection between communities separated by conflict and living on both sides of the Enguri River, was finally agreed. This has allowed for contact to be re-established, families to be reunited and a reduction in operational obstacles for businesses.



## Highlights



*Peace and Development Advisors were deployed in 8 countries in the ECIS region.*



Photo by: UNDP Georgia

**Resurfacing the Enguri Bridge, the principal connection between the territory of Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia**

In the fertile Fergana Valley between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, UNDP's long-standing area-based work in ethnically-divided communities, where violent clashes are frequent, intensified and expanded to embed a community-owned early warning system. This system uses metrics to alert community leaders to deteriorating conditions and allows for targeted development assistance to be provided to those leaders, facilitating community-level decisions that can lead to community-level projects. Early indicators demonstrate that tensions and violent clashes are reducing as a result.

All of this work has been enabled by an increasingly functional Joint Programme between DPA and UNDP delivering development assistance in areas beset by division and conflict.

*"UNDP and DPA continue to strengthen their partnership in the ECIS region, in an increasingly complex geo-political environment. In particular, UNDP and DPA work together closely to support the UN Country Teams in a growing number of challenging socio-economic, governance and peace and security settings.*

*Some of these challenges include latent, deep-rooted and unresolved inter-ethnic and/or religious tensions; tensions related to disputed territories or unresolved or protracted conflicts undermining peace and security; democratic governance deficit and adverse impact of global trends, including migration, transnational crime and violent extremism.*

*As evidence of this support to UN Country Teams, we can point to our close cooperation in developing coordinated, UN system-wide responses to politically-sensitive events, including election-related violence, constitutional reviews efforts and legislative changes that may contribute to political instability.*

*The UNDP-DPA partnership helps bringing together the UN's political and development capacities in more efficient and effective ways to address such challenges. The partnership has augmented the capacity of the UN to carry out its mandates for early warning/early action, conflict prevention, mediation, peace-building, reconciliation, promotion of dialogue and development and helps to reinforce the UNCT's ability to work with relevant Member States and to send coherent messages at critical moments. These increased efforts often take place within the framework of the UNDP-DPA Joint Programme to support strengthening national capacities for conflict prevention, which uses various tools, including the deployment of Peace and Development Advisors, in several countries of the ECIS, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Tajikistan."*

*- Mr. Levent Bilman, Director, Europe Division, UN Department of Political Affairs*

## OPENING DIALOGUES AND CONFIENCE-BUILDING

With a goal of improving the relationships between people, communities and eventually populations that are divided due to conflict, UNDP employs a range of measures to open dialogues, build confidence, encourage interaction, and establish shared understanding.

In Moldova, the absence of a political resolution to the Transnistria dispute and the functional separation of societies and political structures on both sides of the Dniester river has complicated future negotiations and hinders socio-economic development, stability and security. The protracted division has also led to the emergence of parallel systems, which in turn have created both practical and psychological barriers to inter-communal interactions. As such, UNDP's goals in affected communities are to increase positive interactions and diminish the negative impact of high-level political disputes on the local populations.

To achieve this, UNDP has been working in partnership with the EU since 2009 to employ a range of confidence building measures, including a combination of infrastructure works, capacity development initiatives, and financial support mechanisms for communities on both sides of the Dniester. Although activities tend to focus on reducing the isolation of Transnistria, they strive to balance the benefits received by both sides to avoid creating resentment or exacerbat-



Event to announce funding for infrastructure projects in communities from both banks of the Nistru River in Moldova

Photo by: UNDP Moldova

ing tensions, and place priority on initiatives implemented by cross-river partnerships.

Local development has also been a key focus during this work. Social infrastructure, such as the rehabilitation of shared healthcare institutions, community markets, roads, and educational institutions in strategic locations, often provides a place for individuals from different communities to interact and engage through common interests. Infrastructure projects also help to alleviate unemployment through the creation of short-term employment during the construction phase and long-term employment through agreements with the community to take over maintenance of the facilities.

The integration of civil society has proven to be one of the more successful aspects of this work. With grant eligibility often conditional on the partnering of civil society organisations representing communities on both sides of the river, these projects have helped establish ongoing and meaningful partnerships.

## UNDERSTANDING WHAT DIVIDES AND UNITES SOCIETIES – HOW THE SOCIAL COHESION AND RECONCILIATION INDEX (SCORE) HAS BETTER TARGETED UNDP'S PEACEBUILDING ASSISTANCE

In societies beset by conflict and division, tools are needed to measure the cohesiveness, or lack thereof, between groups in order to guide peacebuilding policies and activities. For too long peacebuilding approaches have sought to promote peace through addressing known grievances – but these have not always reflected the full spectrum of what divides and unites a given community.

In response to this need, SCORE was developed in Cyprus in 2012 by the UNDP Action for Cooperation and

Trust programme, in collaboration with the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Development (SeeD) and with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The primary benefit of SCORE in guiding peacebuilding policies and activities is that it is both a descriptive and predictive model for ascertaining the level of social cohesion and potential for reconciliation that exists within a society. It does this by:



- 
- a) Measuring social cohesion (the extent to which co-existence between individuals in a society and the institutions that surround them is harmonious) and reconciliation (the propensity to come closer to formerly adversarial groups) in any given society as two key indicators of peace;
  - b) Monitoring the levels of these two indicators over time; and
  - c) Using the results to formulate evidence-based policy and targeted programmes which can respond more precisely to conflict transformation needs.

Initially, rolled out in Cyprus in 2013, results for SCORE have been utilized in the development of evidence-based policy recommendations that have been shared through Track 1 and Track 2 political processes, as well as the UN Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission, civil society, political parties and local authorities. The continuing impact of SCORE is evident in several developments in the Cyprus peace process, which have been informed by the policy recommendations generated using evidence collected by SCORE. Examples of these recommendations, and subsequent policy decisions, developed based on the information gathered by SCORE in Cyprus are:

Similarly, in Georgia, UNDP has been using confidence building measures to help bring communities closer together on the ground. Working in partnership with the EU and the Kingdom of the Netherlands since 2010, the Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM) programme is a status-neutral, apolitical and flexible programme designed to provide support to confidence building opportunities throughout Georgia (including the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) at the grassroots level.

At its core, COBERM is a small-scale grants facility for civil society organisations to strengthen their capacity to monitor and improve the accountability and transparency of authorities (both *de jure* and *de facto*). With improved skills and other capacities, and the financial motivation to re-establish connections across the conflict divide, there have been corresponding improvements in transparency and accountability, and a reduction in tensions and the potential for conflict.

COBERM has also provided a platform for civil society organizations, together with local communities from conflict-affected areas, to identi-

**SCORE recommendation 1:** The need to enhance pluralism to help both communities become more comfortable with cultural diversity.

**Policy Decision 1:** Establishment of a technical committee on culture. This has led to the leaders from both communities attending cultural events together for the first time in the history of the conflict, to public acclaim.

**SCORE Recommendation 2:** Create practical ways to reduce the social distance between the two communities.

**Policy Decision 2:** Change in policy by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, who abolished the requirement to complete administrative forms at crossing points. This requirement had been often cited as a barrier to Greek Cypriots being able to cross to the Turkish Cypriot side.

**SCORE Recommendation 3:** The perspectives of women need to be better understood in the peace process, as women are more likely to reject political compromise.

**Policy Decision 3:** Establishment of a committee on gender equality.

Based on the success of SCORE in Cyprus, it was subsequently extended to UNDP's peacebuilding work in BiH (2013-2014) and Ukraine (2016-2017). Further expansion is also expected in the future.

fy conflict triggers and propose ways to address them in the form of development projects. The large number and wide geographical coverage of the grants, as well as the wide range of civil society partners, have ensured an increase in direct interactions across the conflict divides. This has provided numerous opportunities for joint cooperation on issues of common interest, normalizing cooperation between communities, and helping to establish sustainable partnerships involving youth groups, writers, farmers, linguists, and veterinarians. An independent evaluation has confirmed that COBERM is an effective model for confidence building and has changed the civil dialogue climate, which is particularly crucial in Georgia, where little progress has been made on the political front on bridging the divide between communities.

In the South Caucasus, existing high tensions and the lack of any direct contact between civil society groups and/or other actors from Armenia and Azerbaijan, have created a situation where there is little opportunity to discuss possible paths forward. In an attempt to open up a new dialogue, the Peace and Development Advisor in Georgia took the lead in organising two



A young gamer plays 'Peace Park' – an online game developed as part of COBERM to encourage peace and cooperation in the South Caucasus

Photo by: COBERM

roundtables with representatives from the UN and partner civil society organisations from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to discuss the future of the United Nation's development agenda and the 'World We Want' in the South Caucasus. In this case, the SDGs offered an entry point for the UN in the South Caucasus to link peacebuilding and development. Civil society actors from

the South Caucasus were brought together for an open joint discussion on common issues, with interactions between participants from all three countries remaining constructive, and a set of common issues, opportunities and challenges being agreed by everyone.

## Highlights



*Infrastructure works, capacity development initiatives, and financial support mechanisms have helped communities work together on both sides of the Dniester river in Moldova.*



*Grants provided to fund numerous rounds of projects aimed at rebuilding connections between communities, including a project to resurface the principal connection between Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia – the Enguri Bridge.*



*Constructive dialogue established between civil society organizations from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia on the SDGs in the South Caucasus.*

## RECONCILIATION AND PEACEBUILDING

In many places in the ECIS region, historically conflicted communities remain in close proximity and are required to interact on a daily basis despite the legacy of conflict and division. In these cases, UNDP's work focuses facilitating reconciliation and preventing outbreaks of violence.

In 2014 and 2015, one of UNDP's major initiatives aimed to address ongoing tensions between communities in the border areas of Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, particularly in and around the Fergana Valley where communities are often in close proximity and not always in alignment with modern borders.

UNDP's interventions were based on the assessment that much of the tension between these communities arises due to a lack of information. With local community leaders being important figures in these communities, UNDP provided these leaders with information on the challenges and risks facing their communities, allowing them to advocate for joint projects and activities with other communities to address those problems. As a result, this cooperative problem solving helped to normalize relationships, build trust, and reduce the potential for violent conflict.

The project was designed on three pillars:

- Providing Kyrgyz and Tajik community leaders with access to reliable and balanced information about local conflict dynamics and trends;
- Strengthening local mechanisms for dialogue, deliberation, and problem-solving; and
- Support for jointly agreed and jointly implemented activities to build trust and establish a pattern of practical cooperation between communities.

To address the first pillar, a community-based conflict monitoring mechanism, TRACTION (TRends for ACTION), was developed to monitor the conflict situation based on a list of ten substantive policy areas including water resources, access to land, road/transport, and prevailing attitudes toward the other side. TRACTION also

allows for the tracking of conflict likelihood over time, the categorization and quantification of reported disputes and clashes, and the identification of trends and patterns. With this information, themes and issues for community dialogues were identified, allowing the subsequent implementation of confidence-building infrastructure initiatives to remain focused on addressing specific conflict causes and drivers.

The results of this cross-border intervention were so convincing that, in 2015, the UN country teams in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan developed a joint programme, supported by the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office Peacebuilding Fund and the Swiss Development Cooperation, to be implemented with assistance from five UN agencies between 2015 and 2017.

Addressing the legacy of the conflicts in the breakup of the former Yugoslavia is also a focus of UNDP's engagement. In BiH, the Dialogue for the Future remains one of the flagship projects for reconciliation in the ECIS region, helping to address past grievances, bring together communities from different ethnic groups, and build understanding. To date, Dialogue for the Future has directly engaged over 54,000 citizens with Dialogue Platform Conferences, youth forums, trainings, and various grants facility projects. Similarly, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNDP is working to reconcile differences between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians in Kumanovo and Gostivar. With the goal of strengthening social cohesion among youth living in multi-ethnic areas, in 2015 this work focused on establishing youth councils, with workshops, trainings, street art performances and debates to raise awareness of the councils, as well as bringing youth from different communities together.



Dialogue for the Future conference in Sarajevo

Photo by: UNDP BiH

## Highlights



*A new system (TRACTION) established in Tajik and Kyrgyz border communities in the Fergana Valley to monitor the conflict situation and encourage community dialogues.*



*UNDP's positive impact inspired UN country teams in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan to develop a joint programme that will be implemented with assistance from five UN agencies.*



*Dialogue for the Future continues to engage large numbers of people in BiH through a number of events.*



*Youth Councils established in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to help strengthen social cohesion between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians.*

### CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY

In situations where violence and conflict are still occurring, a different approach must be taken to peacebuilding that recognizes the fragility and dangers of the situation, as well as the risks of exacerbating violence and underlying tensions. UNDP's support in the ECIS region's most active conflict in Ukraine has centred around a two-pronged approach: supporting broad scale reform linked to the drivers of conflict and the Maidan protests, and facilitating recovery and peacebuilding, specifically in the Donbas region.

At the national level, UNDP aims to facilitate government reform processes in several areas, including decentralisation, rule of law, human rights, voice and participation, anti-corruption, as well as those that seek to address the often difficult political, social and regional aspirations with-

in Ukrainian society. A survey on decentralisation and the rights of women in rural areas was implemented in partnership with the Office of the Ombudsman, with the information collected by this survey to be used to help inform future decentralization reforms. UNDP has also been working extensively with local civil society and NGOs in the areas of decentralization, constitutional reform, and parliamentary development. Looking forward, two major projects are planned targeting parliamentary reform, and rule of law and community justice. Developed in 2015, these projects have now secured funding from the EU and the Netherlands respectively, ensuring UNDP's work in these areas can continue.

In support of recovery, UNDP launched a Dialogue Support Platform to help improve coordination and cooperation between organizations working in Ukraine, allowing for the sharing

of knowledge and expertise, and improving the impact of development efforts. UNDP also supported the provision of legal aid in conflict-affected communities, allowing people in those communities to seek justice without resorting to violence or other forms of retaliation. The Restoration of Governance and Reconciliation Project in the Donbas, with support of Switzerland and Sweden, also launched a number of important initiatives aimed at reducing social tension and enhancing the capacity of local governments to improve public service provision and include citizens in decision-making process. Funds from the EU will support expansion of the project to the implementation of decentralization reform and the strengthening of gender equality impact in cooperation with UN Women.

Tree planting at the launch of a project to restore social services at the Sloviansk Rayon Hospital in the Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine



Photo by: Eugene Zelenko/UNDP Ukraine

As a framework for this work in 2015, UNDP helped to coordinate and complete the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment of government controlled areas of Eastern Ukraine. Aimed at providing a review of the current state of governance and infrastructure in conflict-affected areas, the assessment was widely circulated amongst national and international stakeholders and formally endorsed through a Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers, establishing it as a government-owned framework for prioritizing recovery and peacebuilding programming in the short to medium term.

Following up on the assessment, UNDP has provided technical support to the inter-ministerial working group charged with implementing the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment. Already this work has led to a draft resolution on the establishment of a Council for Donbas Recovery. This council, when established, will serve as a high-level forum for policy dialogue with international partners on rolling out the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment, under the Government's leadership.

Finally, with a risk of conflict spreading to neighbouring areas, UNDP performed an early assessment of the risks to inter-community relations, and the implementation of the steps to mitigate those risks. This included confidence-building measures and dialogues at the local level in four neighbouring oblasts (Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia and Kherson).

## Highlights



*Completion of the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment, which was subsequently endorsed by the Government, providing a framework for future recovery and peacebuilding efforts.*



*Funding secured for two new projects on parliamentary reform and rule of law and community justice, and Restoration of Governance project expanded.*



*Launched a Dialogue Support Platform to facilitate co-operation and effective knowledge sharing.*

# RESPONSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE INSTITUTIONS

## OVERVIEW

Building responsive and accountable institutions at all levels of government is central to ensuring that development is both effective and sustainable. At its core, this work is about supporting efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government and the provision of services, and covers three primary areas:

- **Anti-Corruption and Transparency** – Combating corruption and increasing transparency in order to reduce the opportunities for corruption to occur, improve access to services for the poor and the disadvantaged, and increase the openness and effectiveness of institutions and development efforts.

- **Core Government Functions** – Supporting the delivery of quality services and improved accountability, including through technology and innovation, with the aim of building resilience to crises and strengthening the relationship between the state and the people at all levels of society.

- **Local Governance and Local Development** – Empowering local governments, facilitating the decentralization of government to the local level and encouraging public engagement in local decision-making and service delivery – typically the most accessible and responsive level of government.

An overarching theme to UNDP's work to create responsive and accountable institutions through-

out the ECIS region is encouraging strong citizen engagement. This increased engagement not only further improves responsiveness, but also ensures citizens feel a sense of ownership of, and commitment to, development decisions affecting their lives.

UNDP's *Responsive and Accountable Institutions* work is designed to help countries meet targets under:

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



### GOAL 5 – ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

### GOAL 16 – PROMOTE JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

- Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
- Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements
- Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

## KEY TRENDS

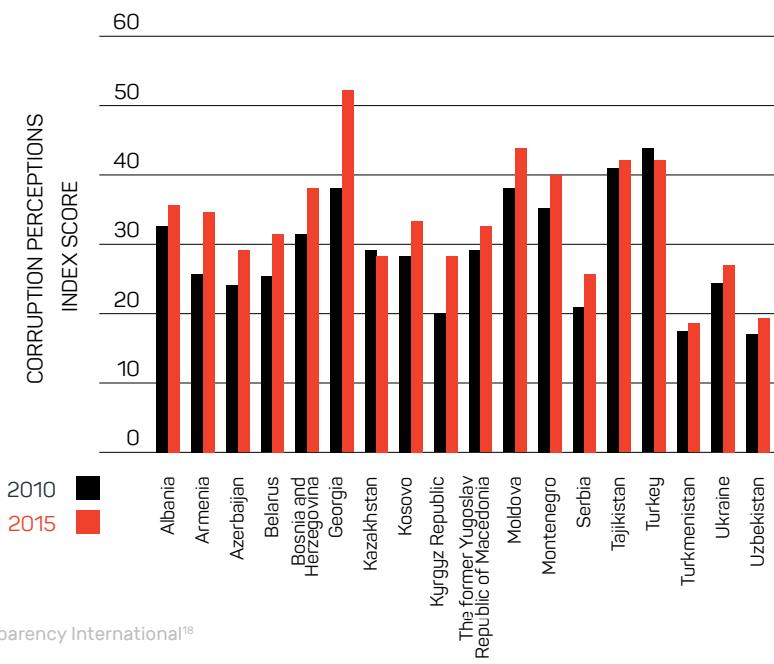
### CORRUPTION SLOWLY DECLINING

Often one of the most significant and persistent impediments to development efforts, corruption remains a challenge across the ECIS region. In 2015, several major corruption scandals in the region served to highlight this problem. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the release of evidence implicating the Government in the wide-spread wiretapping of a range of officials and of other abuses of power has led to ongoing mass protests. In Moldova, the impact of a large bank fraud perpetrated in 2014 continues to be felt, with the implication of a key government member in the fraud leading to mass protests and a no-confidence vote for the ruling coalition.

On the Corruption Perceptions Index<sup>17</sup> (CPI), Georgia is the best performing nation in the ECIS region. Yet with a score of 52/100, Georgia is only the 48th highest ranked nation globally. At the same time, some of the worst performing countries on the index are in the ECIS region, despite often being in a significantly better economic position than other countries with comparable ratings. Nonetheless, almost all countries in the region have shown improvement since 2010, with Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic and Montenegro making the largest gains. While the approaches to combatting corruption vary from Georgia's sweeping top-down changes to more incremental approaches taken in other countries, the one constant in successful efforts to reduce corruption is strong political support. For this reason, gains made are also often fragile, as seen in some countries which regressed over the period 2010 to 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2015". Available from <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015> (accessed 2 August 2016)

## CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX SCORES - 2010 AND 2015



Source: Transparency International<sup>18</sup>

### INCREASING GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS AND REGULATORY QUALITY

The ability of governments to formulate and implement good policy, as well as deliver services and fulfil the core functions of government, is a key measure of progress. In the ECIS region in particular, the equitable and effective delivery of services tends to have an outsized impact on citizens, due both to relatively low income levels and the centrally planned heritage of many economies. While obviously vitally important for citizens, effective governance is also crucial for successful development efforts, with UNDP's development programming increasingly reliant on government and regulatory bodies protecting and extending gains made.

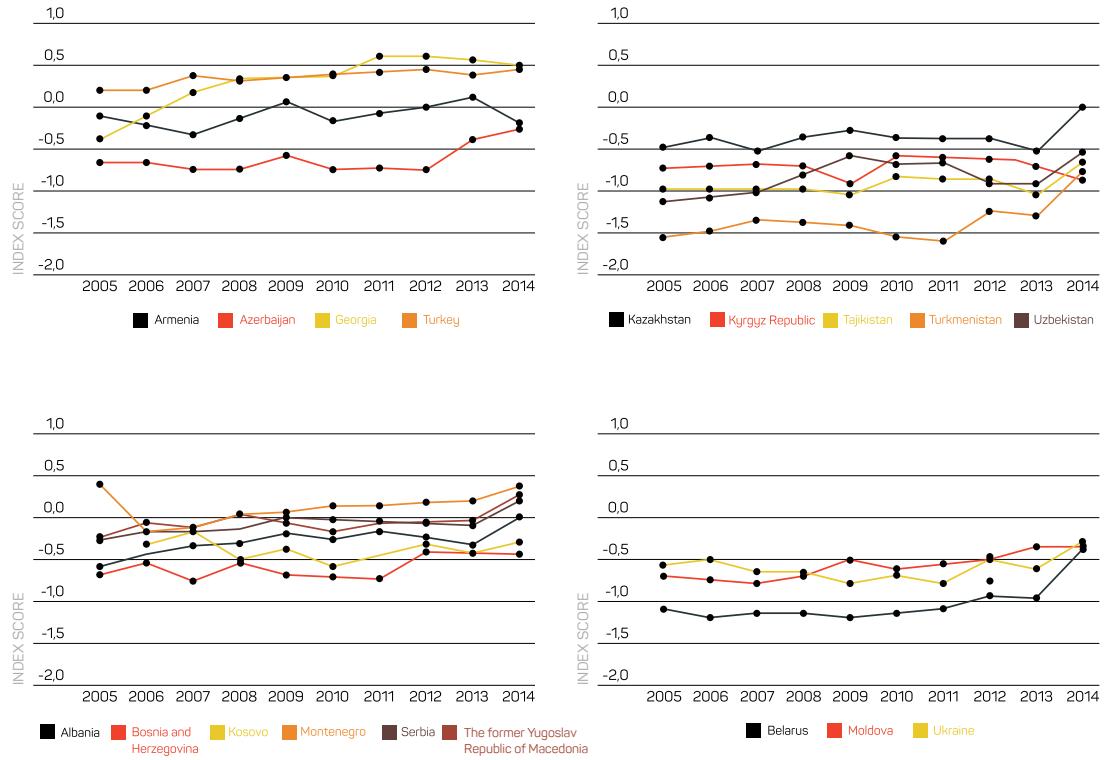
The expectations of citizens in regards to government services are also changing over time. With all countries in the region now categorized as middle income, the people of the ECIS region are increasingly demanding a higher quality of

government action plan, or are in the process of developing one. These action plans should enable countries to build a solid foundation for anti-corruption and transparency reforms going forward, allowing for significant improvements in the near future.

government services. For some of the wealthier countries in the region, resources available domestically, both in terms of expertise and budgets, are enabling governments to substantially improve services to meet these higher expectations. Examples of this can be seen in Kazakhstan, Serbia and Azerbaijan, where improving the delivery of public services has been made a high priority. Conversely, for some of the poorer countries in the region, government budgets are still not strong enough to deliver the level of services expected, despite middle income status.

Currently, in the ECIS region, there is variability in the level of government effectiveness and regulatory quality which can be seen in data reflecting the perceptions of the quality of public services, of the independence of the civil service, and the policy formulation process and implementation capabilities.

<sup>18</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index". Available from <http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview> (last accessed 16 June 2016)



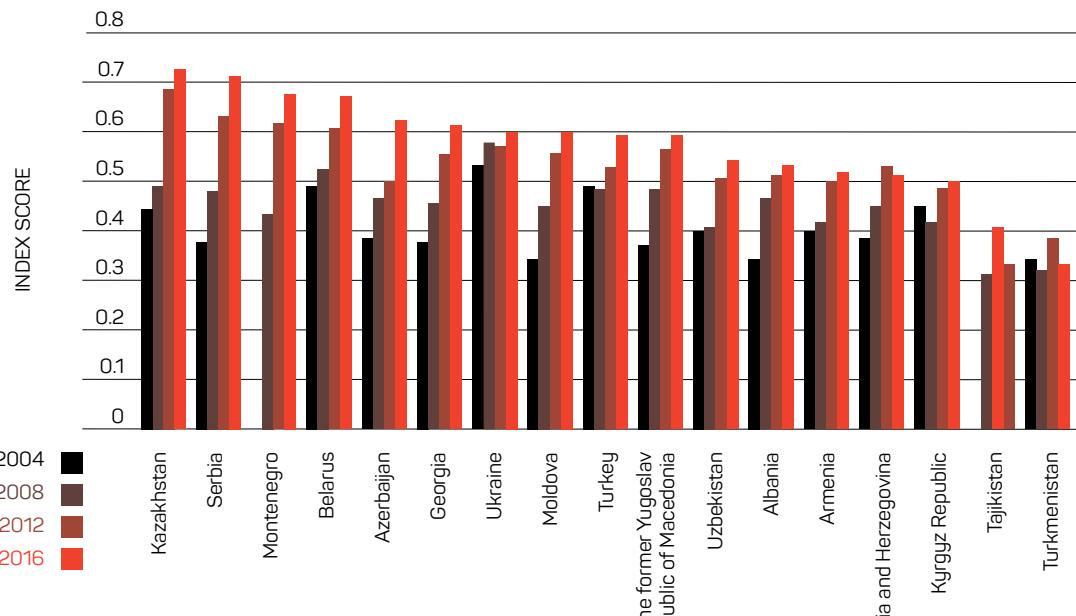
Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators, The World Bank<sup>19</sup>

### THE GROWING USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Governments across the region are increasingly looking technology to help streamline and improve service delivery and policy implementation. In recent years there has been a proliferation of e-government services, the establishment of larger online footprints, and the increasing use of data, both for evidenced-

based policy formation and for more effective targeting of service delivery. This increasing use of technology can be clearly seen looking at the E-Government Index, where almost all countries in the region have made significant advancements. Technology and innovation are not only a means to improve government effectiveness but have also developed as key tools in efforts to ensure civic engagement and social accountability in the region.

<sup>19</sup> The World Bank, "Worldwide Governance Indicators". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/worldwide-governance-indicators> (accessed 17 June 2016)

Source: UNIPACS<sup>20</sup>

## WHAT WE DO

### ANTI-CORRUPTION AND TRANSPARENCY

Corruption remains a major challenge throughout the ECIS region and, as a result, hampers development efforts, undermines effective and stable government, and complicates efforts to streamline services and processes. Combating corruption is thus considered a high priority for UNDP. Yet corruption is almost always hidden, making it a difficult challenge to address. Corruption can take a range of forms, including nepotism, cronyism and patronage and typically occurs in environments where laws have been ineffectively implemented, there is a lack of transparency, and/or there are ineffective checks and balances. Corruption can also vary greatly in scale, ranging from petty corruption (e.g. low- and mid-level officials soliciting bribes) to grand (or political) corruption (e.g. high ranking officials embezzling public funds or subordinating the public good for the benefit of vested interests).

Corruption left unchecked can become systemic and entrenched to the point that it becomes perceived as a cost of conducting business. The normalization of corruption can often be observed through citizens' apathy towards this challenge, and highlights the importance of citizenry playing an active role in fighting corruption. Without citizen ownership and support of anti-corruption efforts, any gains are likely to be quickly eroded and reversed.

In the ECIS region, UNDP works on reducing corruption risks and supporting national anti-corruption efforts. At the central level, we support all institutions responsible for integrity checks and balances, and implementing the UN Convention Against Corruption. National Anti-Corruption Agencies are natural allies. 2015 saw the launch of two large projects in Ukraine and Moldova to support the establishment or the strengthening of such institutions. Corruption risk assessments conducted in 2014 with the Anti-Corruption Agencies of BiH, Moldova and Kosovo were also the basis for a broad regional

<sup>20</sup> UNIPACS, "E-Government Development Index". Available from <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data-Center> (accessed 25 August 2016)

consultation and advocacy event focusing on procurement standards and openness.

The focus on international standards also translates into support for legislative drafting. In 2015, UNDP worked both on important anti-corruption reforms, such as laws on access to information and public councils in Kazakhstan, the Anti-Corruption Strategy in Armenia, and the anti-corruption reform packages and mainstreaming of anti-corruption principles across all sectors in Ukraine. Based on this work, representatives of Moldova and the Kyrgyz Republic shared their experience in assessing corruption risks in draft legislation at the UNCAC Conference of States Parties in St Petersburg. Their experience in identifying opportunities for corrupt practices in legal acts in sectors as varied as education or extractive industries led representatives from four countries to envisage similar tools.

In its work, UNDP partners with global actors such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the OECD Anti-Corruption Network, as well as key sub-regional actors such as the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI) and the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA). In 2015, UNDP also experimented with innovative approaches by working with the Behavioral Insight Team to promote soft strategies to reduce opportunistic corruption and informality in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Moldova.

Local institutions are often falling prey to tight local networks which promote corruption. At the same time, they also represent an opportunity to bring government closer to citizens and deliver key services. UNDP has been partnering with municipalities to develop transparency tools and strengthen integrity systems for a number of years. This work gained momentum in 2015 with the launch of the sub-regional project 'Promoting Integrity and Anti-Corruption in the Eastern Partnership area: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine', financed by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented in partnership with Partners

Foundation for Local Development. Local civil society practitioners from Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova were trained to accompany mayors in identifying and tackling vulnerabilities across their activities. Inspired by the success story of the city of La Paz, Bolivia, this project promotes a methodology which was recognized through the receipt of a UN Public Service Award. The ex-Mayor of La Paz visited Ukraine in December 2015 to launch the project in the presence of more than 150 practitioners and mayors from the ECIS region.



Opening of a 'one-stop-shop' in Uzbekistan, where users can directly pay their water bills, reducing the opportunity for corruption

Photo by: UNDP Uzbekistan

Beyond support for institutions, UNDP engages a broad range of citizens, media and groups on issues of corruption and accountability. In Turkey, 30 representatives from grassroots women organizations established formal channels to assess and monitor the work of their local government. Student and youth are also concerned by issues of corruption, and projects in Moldova, Kosovo and the Kyrgyz Republic gave them opportunities to report corruption instances and advocate for fair treatment for all. In Ukraine, UNDP worked with civil society organizations and other interest groups and established an Anti-Corruption School, providing exposure to the best practitioners in national transparency and integrity. In Serbia, UNDP supported journalists embedded in NGOs to investigate and write stories on corruption, resulting in over 100 articles written, and 20 cases where the Government commenced an investigation.

Some of the over 500 entrants in the 'Talent Does Not Take Bribes – Integrity in Images' contest in Moldova

Photo by: UNDP Moldova



Engaging the public can also be an extremely effective way to identify where corruption is occurring, as has been shown by the establishment of web portals that provide for members of the public to report corruption in Albania and Kosovo. These portals have received approximately 10,000 and 5,000 reports, respectively, which have generated responses from government and rule of law bodies, including the opening of investigations and the dismissal of officials from their jobs.

Transparency and social accountability is also at the core of the open data focus of UNDP in the region. In Ukraine, for example, UNDP contributed to the drafting of open data legislation, providing a legal backing for the publication of public data going forward. In Uzbekistan, UNDP helped to both

establish an open data portal and to publish data in the portal. As a result, 748 datasets have already been uploaded by 64 government agencies, and those datasets downloaded over 294,000 times. In Serbia, UNDP and the World Bank partnered on an open data readiness assessment.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is an important partner in UNDP's open data programming. Working together through the Open Data for Development programme, IDRC funds enable UNDP to serve as the secretariat for Open Data in Europe and Central Asia (ODECA), and to organize regional activities related to learning, sharing and data literacy. In 2015, a notable result of this partnership was the open data side event at the G20 in Antalya which saw the launch of the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Package, and the unveiling of the G20 Open Data Principles, which were adopted by the G20 Leaders in November 2015.

Open data has also been the focus of a major regional initiative in the Western Balkans, where in partnership with the Slovakian Ministry of Finance, UNDP is promoting the role of open data in improving transparency and building trust between governments and citizens. In 2015, the Slovakian Ministry of Finance agreed to extend and expand this partnership with the Transformative Governance and Finance Facility in 2016-2017.

*"The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been working with UNDP on fighting corruption in Europe and Central Asia under the umbrella of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and the 'Going beyond the Minimum' campaign associated to the implementation of the Convention. Over the years, the two agencies have supported United Nations agencies in mainstreaming anti-corruption in their work, partnering notably to deliver anti-corruption training to the United Nations Country Teams in the region and provide input to the process of preparing United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks. UNODC and UNDP have also worked hand in hand in numerous countries, such as Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan or Serbia, in supporting national self-assessments of the implementation of UNCAC. UNODC has benefitted from*

*its partnership with UNDP and its Country Offices throughout the region while implementing national and regional initiatives. In Kosovo, UNDP and UNODC have been partnering on the implementation of the SAEK project, a comprehensive initiative supporting the institutional and civil society fight against corruption, with UNODC implementing the judicial integrity component of the project. The many success stories documented through the SAEK project are the best examples of the value of UNODC and UNDP's partnership. UNODC and UNDP are therefore committed to further streamline the efforts of the two agencies to mutually reinforce their work in the region."*

– **Mr. Dimitri Vlassis**, Chief of the Corruption and Economic Crime Branch, UNODC

## Highlights

### OPEN DATA, BETTER GOVERNANCE

Citizen demand for more government accountability, transparency, and investment in public services and citizen-driven initiatives is high across the ECIS. In their effort to improve governance, societies are striving to utilize new technologies to improve people's lives and ensure more inclusive governance. Open data can be a powerful tool in bridging gaps between institutions and communities, requiring a diverse set of skills and resources for achieving responsive institutions, efficient public services and active participation.

To harness this, UNDP and the Slovak Ministry of Finance jointly organized the Ministry of Data, a public finance challenge targeting the Western Balkans. The initiative offered a platform for citizens to present creative data-driven tools and solutions to the abstract and detached nature of public finance data. 38 teams from five different countries and territories presented their innovations and five governments contributed data for the purposes of the competition, namely Slovakia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Albania. The projects presented featured open data portals, cross-country comparisons, and simplified asset declarations of public officials. The winning innovation, [www.relatewith.it](http://www.relatewith.it), simplifies large infrastructure projects into relatable concepts, such as how many schools could have been built or average salaries paid, applying and presenting this breakdown to data from three different countries in the region.

By bringing together problem-solvers from the Western Balkans to develop tools and contribute to greater transparency and accountability in public finance, the Ministry of Data demonstrated the demand for such initiatives, and their high potential to engage governments and empower citizens. In December 2015, the Slovak Ministry of Finance and UNDP built on this engagement to develop a significant regional project entitled the Transformative Governance and Finance Facility, which aims to harness the potential of technologies and innovation for improved governance.

This represents a continuation of UNDP's long-term partnership with the Slovak Republic for the support of official development assistance (ODA) delivery and capacity building, and reforms in public finance management across the ECIS region. The project aims to achieve the following outputs: enhanced knowledge and skills to use data for good governance and social impact in public sector institutions; empowerment of citizens to generate and use data to strengthen design and delivery of public services; regional collaboration and knowledge transfer between regional and national entities; and the development of a range of alternative financing mechanisms to be applied by governments and citizens in policymaking and public service delivery. By building links between governments, the international development community, civil society, start-ups, and individuals interested in social change, this project rallies actors around public sector innovation and uses creative minds to transform societies.

*"Our collaboration for the Ministry of Data, regional open data challenge, has demonstrated that by joining forces, we get better at innovating, working with communities on the ground and improving development and governance results."*  
– **Martina Kobilicova**, Director General (DG) of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Slovakia.



*Open data portal established in Uzbekistan, with 748 datasets available from 64 government agencies.*



*Partnership with Slovakia on Ministry of Data results in Transformative Governance and Finance Facility.*



*New Anti-Corruption Council established and anti-corruption strategy developed in Armenia.*



*Launch of the 'Promoting Integrity and Anti Corruption in the Eastern Partnership area: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine' regional project.*

## CORE GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS

Societies across the world are increasingly demanding better access to higher quality services, while also expecting governments and institutions to deliver on key functions. In response, many governments in the ECIS are now prioritizing institutional efficiency and effectiveness. While the move to improve core government functions is positive in itself, it can also help to reduce corruption and public distrust and disillusionment in the political system, all of which can be driven by inefficient and burdensome processes and regulations. That said, significant challenges remain before the benefits of many reforms can be realized.

A key challenge for many countries in the region is the ability to set up the machinery of government to function in less than optimal conditions. That is, to enable the provision of government services to continue through transitions of government, disasters and economic downturns, and for institutions to remain strong and independent in the face of government pressure, conflict, and extremism. Accordingly, UNDP's work in this area aims not just to improve government functions, but also to develop this resiliency.

Where governments are initiating new reforms, UNDP provides guidance and expert advice on high level strategies, action plans, and their implementation. For example, in Belarus, UNDP played a key role in the implementation of a recent government strategy to deliver more inclusive and responsive public services and improve public administration by securing commitments from partners to jointly enhance the capacity of civil servants and citizens in this area. In the Kyrgyz Republic, UNDP supported development of standards for 196 public services designed to make them more responsive to the needs of citizens. In Albania, UNDP helped to build the capacity of the newly established Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services through technical expertise and by providing office infrastructure. In Turkmenistan, UNDP supports the Civil Service Academy in enhancing its organizational strategy to ensure strong competencies for and professional development of civil servants. Similarly, in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, UNDP helps formulate and implement national strategies to improve service delivery and institutional capacities.

## REGIONAL HUB OF CIVIL SERVICE IN ASTANA

The Regional Hub of Civil Service in Astana (the Hub) is an initiative of the Government of Kazakhstan and UNDP established in March 2013 when representatives of 25 countries and five international organisations unanimously adopted the Hub's Founding Declaration. Financially and institutionally supported by the Government of Kazakhstan, with UNDP serving as the implementing partner, the Hub is a multilateral institutional platform for continuous exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of civil service development, aimed at stimulating civil service transformations in the region through fostering:

- Partnerships;
- Capacity building and peer-to-peer learning; and
- Evidence-based solutions, informed by a comprehensive research agenda.

As part of the Hub's work in 2015, in June an international conference entitled 'International Cooperation on Civil Service Excellence: A Bridge to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals' was held at the UN Headquarters in New York. Organized by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, the Hub and UNDP, the event gathered over sixty representatives

and experts from UN Member States, academia and civil services. One of the main outcomes of the conference was the launch of the Innovative Solutions Scheme. Designed to identify effective and innovative solutions in civil service and public service delivery, the Innovative Solutions Scheme provide grants to disseminate these solutions as case studies and encourage replication in other countries. The first round of the scheme has already been completed with the results being presented to the Hub's participating countries for feedback.

There were also a number of other important developments in 2015. The Hub became a member of the OECD and UNDP-run Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) and initiated piloting on its own platform of the EIP's peer-to-peer learning guide through P2P learning alliances. As a result of a close and expanding partnership with the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence in Singapore, the Hub co-organized an innovative 'foresightXchange' workshop for civil servants and jointly published knowledge products on meritocracy, public administration and the SDGs. Furthermore, the UN Office on South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) praised the Hub with an award for strengthening regional and interregional South-South cooperation in the field of civil ser-



vice. The Hub plans to continue to expand collaboration and experience sharing with the UNOSSC and related partners through various avenues.

Looking forward, the Hub will continue to look for innovative and effective ways to champion civil service excellence, with plans in place for a number of activities, including on-demand innovative trainings and labs on a range of topics, development of case studies and manuals for replication of various cutting-edge solutions and further strengthening of expert networks.

With its membership having now expanded to include 36 countries from around the world, the Hubs activities

Ensuring the provision of relevant and high quality training to civil servants is also a key part of UNDP's work. For example, in Azerbaijan, UNDP assisted the establishment of the Strategy and Training Unit in the Civil Service Commission and supported staff training on a range of topics such as human resource management and communication skills. In Kosovo, in response to a request from the Ministry of Local Government Administration, UNDP facilitated training for government officials on the Stabilisation and Association process and negotiation structures.

UNDP also supports efforts to directly improve public service delivery, particularly for the most vulnerable. In 2015, UNDP's work in Georgia was notable with a newly introduced SMS and video call service that improved the accessibility of emergency services for people with hearing and speaking impairments. The enhanced service has already benefitted 270 people and was nominated by the European Emergency Number Association for the 'Best Innovation in 2015'. UNDP also assisted with the creation of an Innovative Service Lab within the Public Service Development Agency to engage government ministries in using innovation to improve the quality of public services. The Lab has already achieved several notable results, including working with government partners to develop a user-friendly national ID card website, renovating the National Scientific Library, and designing a new strategy for the National Tourism Administration. With innovation being a key focus of UNDP in Armenia, cooperation was extended in 2015 to UNDP offices in Moldova, Belarus, the former Yugoslav

are actively co-organized (and cost-shared) by its partners and participants such as the EU, OECD, Azerbaijan, Thailand, Georgia, China, and the Kyrgyz Republic, amongst others.

For more information, please visit [www.regionalhub.org](http://www.regionalhub.org)

*"... We are delighted to be working closely with Kazakhstan on civil service excellence. Kazakhstan's strong commitment in this area makes it a logical host of the Regional Hub of Civil Service in Astana, in which UNDP is proud to be a partner."*

– Ms. Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator, Speech at the VIII Astana Economic Forum, 21 May 2015



Head of United Nations in Georgia – Niels Scott, the 112 team and information campaign leaders salute the launch of the new service in sign language

Photo by: Vladimer Valishvili/UNDP

Republic of Macedonia, and Georgia, amongst others, to promote social innovation tools in the public sector, environment and social impact investment.

New technology also provides an opportunity for governments to be more transparent, efficient and accessible. As such, UNDP looks to leverage technology to improve the methods governments employ to provide services and the way that civil service and institutions manage their responsibilities. In the Kyrgyz Republic, for example, UNDP supported the development of a web-portal that informs citizens of the ways to receive and claim their rights for public and municipal services. In Turkey, UNDP supported the enhancement and expansion of the e-visa system, significantly improving ease of use and the number of users. In Montenegro, UNDP supported the introduction of the new Social Card – Social Welfare Information System, which allows for better targeting and more efficient delivery of services, and provides a wealth of data for evidence-based planning.

## Highlights



*Assisted the establishment of a Strategy and Training Unit in the Civil Service Commission and supported staff training on a range of topics in Azerbaijan.*



*Improved the accessibility of emergency services for people with hearing and speaking impairments in Georgia with a newly introduced SMS and video call service that was nominated by the European Emergency Number Association for 'Best Innovation in 2015'.*



*Innovation in public service delivery across UNDP in Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova.*



*Supported the development of a web-portal in the Kyrgyz Republic that informs citizens of the ways to receive and claim their rights for public and municipal services.*

### LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

For the vast majority of people in the region, local government remains the most accessible level of government. It is the most direct way for people to access basic services and opportunities to improve their lives, to participate in public processes where decisions affecting their lives are made, and to exercise their rights and obligations. As such, effective local governance is key to inclusive and sustainable development. It is also essential for improving the quality of life of people both in urban and rural settings, reducing inequality across society, and enhancing relations between people and public institutions. For a region like the ECIS with its many ethnically and religiously diverse societies, increased power for local government is also a way to provide a stronger voice for minorities. In light of the above, UNDP works throughout the ECIS region to improve-

local governance and economic development, strengthen local democracy and, where the capacity is in place at the local level, support decentralisation.

Often a first step towards effective decentralization, UNDP supports efforts to build the capacity of local governance units (LGUs), enabling them to better plan and take on more responsibility. An example of this can be seen in Albania, where UNDP supports LGUs, formed as a result of the recent territorial and administrative reform, to develop Local Development Operational Plans, modernize services, and introduce innovative public service models including one-stop shops and e-services, which strengthen local data management. In Montenegro, UNDP has undertaken similar work with several local municipalities to improve their capacity for attracting investment through business zone management plans, promotional materials, and a web portal. In Kosovo, UNDP also

supported the strengthening of local capacities for economic and rural development in several municipalities, and enhanced inter-municipal peer-to-peer knowledge and experience sharing to facilitate local economic empowerment and job creation, particularly for those at risk of economic and social exclusion.

In Tajikistan, strong government commitment for the local development planning process resulted in the planning process becoming a mandatory exercise for all districts as of 2015. Currently, 90 percent of rural districts in the country now have District Development Plans (DDPs), including 13 new DDPs and 15 updated

DDPs in 2015. This was made possible through the provision of training and methodological support by UNDP for 1020 members of DDP working groups. In the Kyrgyz Republic, a new model of one-stop shop service centres established with help of UNDP by local municipalities in 30 rural areas was recognized as successful and has been further replicated in 58 localities. Moreover, UNDP's support to build the capacity of LGUs took on a new level of importance in 2015 due to the refugee and migrant crisis which heavily affected local border communities in Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

## MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT: A RESILIENCE-BASED DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

In its approach to migration and displacement, UNDP focuses on long-term positive impacts and resilience-based development solutions. In Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, the effects of large-scale movements of migrants and refugees provided an important opportunity to evaluate and enhance the resilience of affected municipalities and communities. The large number of people meant many municipalities struggled to provide basic services, including waste management, health care, and security to both migrants and host communities, while also preventing inhumane and degrading treatment, including protection from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). It became evident that contingency planning needed to be improved and recovery planning initiated.

The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RRMRP) built on efforts to increase coordination of an effective national resilience-based response in affected countries, complementing humanitarian efforts led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The aim was to ensure that the response at the municipal level benefited from regional coordination, thus creating the foundations for a sustainable recovery. UNDP's work in the region added value in terms of support for local government response and resilience.

In Serbia, with the support of the regional programme funded by Turkey, UNDP worked to build the capacities of municipalities by focusing on public utilities, particularly water and waste management. In Preševo, continuous water supply for 35,000 people was ensured while simul-

taneously reducing water loss by 20 percent. Support was also provided for planning and organisation of waste management, including an improved waste collection plan, a unified financial system for utility services, and the provision of appropriate equipment to public utility workers, thereby allowing an additional 6,000 citizens to receive services. In Šid, two water wells were renovated to increase yields by up to 50 percent, ensuring uninterrupted water supply. These efforts have continued in 2016 with the support of the Government of Japan.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNDP donated new garbage trucks and containers, and introduced a new waste-management system, including a recycling system in Gevgelija and Kumanovo. Again with support from the Government of Japan, building up the resilience of infrastructure has continued in 2016, with the local water system being updated in Gevgelija and roads reconstructed in Kumanovo.



The challenges of dealing with solid waste were exacerbated by the migrant and refugee crisis

Photo by: Ivan Zverzhanovski

In Turkey, the protracted displacement of over 2 million refugees is causing significant challenges. With more than 85 percent of Syrian refugees living outside camps, local service providers are struggling to meet basic needs, particularly when it comes to education, health and municipal services. Within this context, UNDP has strengthened local service delivery by providing emergency and municipality vehicles, and helped to increase solid waste management capacity.

both in camp and municipal settings. This includes developing waste segregation programmes in six refugee camps and the construction of two waste transfer stations, with support from the EU and US State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. In addition, UNDP is facilitating training that covers vocational skills, employability, life-skills and entrepreneurship to maximise employment opportunities to both refugee and Turkish host populations.

A key aspect of UNDP's local governance programming is support for the effective participation and engagement of civil society and the public in local decision-making processes and accountability mechanisms. Primarily, this involves strengthening the ability of the public to monitor LGUs, as well as to engage with local government to work more closely together. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the introduction of 'My Municipality', a web-based tool for collection and data analysis offered an important alternative channel for citizens, in particular those from marginalized and vulnerable groups, to express their views on local development priorities and take a more active role through real-time tracking of progress and trends. In BiH, the long running Reinforcement of Local Democracy (LOD) project has improved cooperation between local governments and civil society organizations, enhancing the transparency and accountability of public spending at the local level, and allowing for the realization of grass-root initiatives. The success of this innovative approach has led the EU to partner with UNDP to replicate the project throughout the Balkans.

At the policy level, UNDP works with central governments to develop strategies, action plans and laws for devolving power to LGUs. One of the best examples of UNDP's work in this area was in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where UNDP supported the Ministry of Local Self-Government to prepare a new programme and action plan for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization 2015-2020. This was specifically noted as a point of progress in the latest European Commission report. UNDP also assisted the

Parliament in Turkmenistan to conduct a review of the administrative, legal, and financial systems of local governments in order to develop a list of proposals for improvement. The resulting recommendations, if adopted, will provide more independence for local communities and their representative bodies. With UNDP support, Georgia has also been making significant progress in decentralization, passing a number of acts and adopting a new Law on Mountainous Regions Development. This new law will provide LGUs with substantial social, economic and business benefits, and a guarantee of annual funds from the national budget.

The largest decentralization reform process in the region is currently underway in Ukraine. A priority set by the post-Maidan government in 2014, the reforms include a wide range of efforts including constitutional changes, territorial-administrative amalgamation, fiscal decentralization and tax reform. To support Ukraine in these efforts, UNDP held a two-day conference in Kyiv in December 2015 titled 'Making Decentralisation Reform Work: Opportunities and Innovations for Local Governance and Service Delivery'. The conference brought together over 150 local development experts, civil society activists and representatives of national and local governments from over 20 countries to discuss opportunities and innovations for local governance and service delivery. One of the key takeaways of the conference was the importance of transparent and inclusive reform processes. Ensuring transparency and openness are not only crucial for building political consensus for reforms, but also for finding innovative solutions to complex policy and service delivery problems.

## Highlights



*Two-day Making Decentralization Reform Work conference held in Kyiv, bringing together over 150 experts and activists from over 20 countries.*



*Assistance provided to local governments in Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey to help deal with the refugee and migrant crisis, including immediate support and assessments to determine future priorities.*



*Supported the Ministry of Local Self-Government in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to prepare a new programme and action plan for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization 2015-2020.*



*Supported smaller LGUs in Albania formed as a result of the recent territorial and administrative reform programme to develop Local Development Operational Plans, modernize services, create one-stop shops and employ a data management system.*

# INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PROCESSES

## OVERVIEW

Establishing and strengthening inclusive political processes is a broad area of programming that aims to improve the participation and political influence of citizens, make governments and institutions more accountable, and build a stronger and more inclusive social contract. Given the diverse countries of the ECIS region, this work often varies significantly depending on local needs and conditions, and as such, covers a wide range of activities:

- **Parliamentary Development** – building the capacities of Members of Parliament (MPs) and their Secretariats to discharge their constitutional, law-making, oversight and representation mandates, and the skills of civil society actors to act as intermediaries in political advocacy, representation and engagement in political processes.
- **Constitutional Reform Processes** – supporting dialogue and mediation, outreach, public education, and institutional development of constitution-making bodies.

- **The Electoral Cycle** – enhancing the credibility, transparency, effectiveness and sustainability of electoral institutions and processes.
- **Civic Engagement** – strengthening civil society capacities and expanding and protecting spaces for citizen participation in political and public life, with a special focus on groups experiencing discrimination and marginalization.
- **Women's Equal Political Participation** – advocating for and facilitating the involvement of women in political processes, from participation in electoral processes, to the promotion of women into important decision-making positions.

While the activities UNDP undertakes will typically be targeted at one of the above areas, the interrelated nature of the work and UNDP's integrated approach to supporting inclusive political processes ensures all projects address most or all of these areas. These projects also aim to harness UNDP's experience and comparative advantage to ensure more effective, efficient and sustainable interventions.

## KEY TRENDS

### DIVERGING LEVELS OF VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The primary measures of the inclusiveness of political processes, access to fundamental freedoms, openness and accountability, are at the heart of UNDP's programming in this area. UNDP helps countries strengthen democratic processes, increase the political participation of women and other marginalized groups, improve accountability and representation through parliamentary reforms, and create legal frameworks for a fundamentally more open and inclusive society through constitutional reforms.

Although there is significant variation between countries, the levels of political freedom, openness, and accountability in the ECIS region in general remain notably behind the levels typically found in Western Europe. This discrepancy can be observed using the Voice and Accountability

UNDP's *Inclusive Political Processes* work is designed to help countries meet targets under:

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



### GOAL 5 – ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS:

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

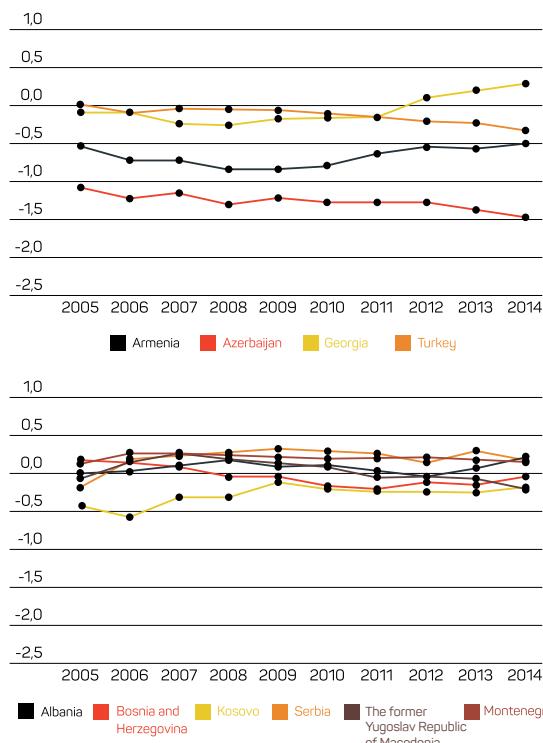


### GOAL 16 – PROMOTE JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES:

- Ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
- By 2030, providing legal identity for all, including birth registration
- Ensuring public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

Worldwide Governance Indicator, which captures citizens' perceptions of their ability to participate in selecting their government, as well as their perceived level of freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.

Despite this, the region overall has seen an improvement in this particular measure. This positive trend is also expected to continue with extensive reforms processes underway in countries such as Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

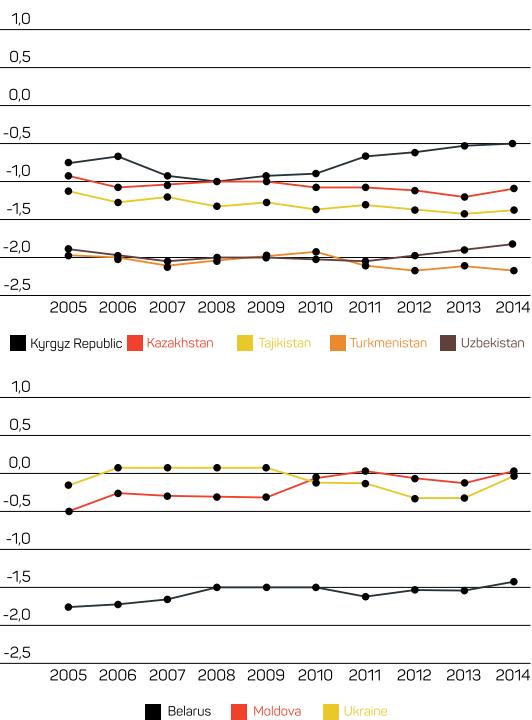


Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators, The World Bank<sup>21</sup>

The divergence in voice and accountability can also be seen in the civil society space. For many countries in the ECIS region, the political and regulatory environment remains difficult for civil society, and in several countries, it is becoming increasingly hostile. This growing hostility, often a result of attempts to restrict the funding of perceived terrorist and extremist groups, can be seen in the legislation being considered and passed in several countries in the region. Although the proposed restrictions vary from country to country, they typically include measures that make it more difficult to establish a civil

society organization, increase requirements to report international funding sources, and require the printing of 'foreign agent' on materials produced by the organization if it receives above a threshold level of foreign funding.

In contrast, in some other countries, political activism and mass protests provide evidence for a level of civil society organizational effectiveness, as well as a level of civic engagement that can be channelled, through organizations, to more pro-



ductive ends. This effect could be seen particularly in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where mass protests in response to revelations of high level corruption in the Government have allowed civil society to lift political engagement among youth, and to unite people from different ethnic groups. Similarly, mass protests in Kosovo, Ukraine, Armenia and Moldova have demonstrated space for civic engagement by organizations and groups representing a clear demand for change.

<sup>21</sup> The World Bank, "Worldwide Governance Indicators".

Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/worldwide-governance-indicators> (accessed 17 June 2016)

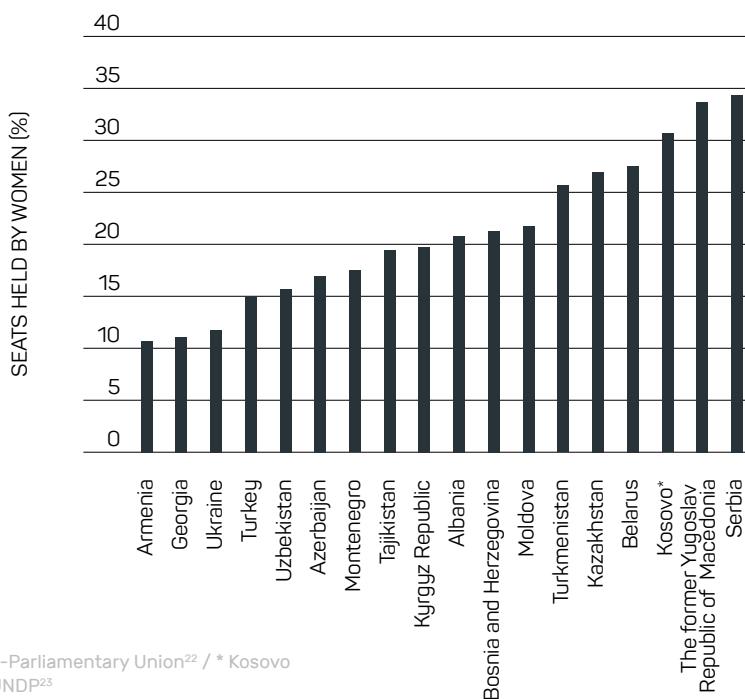
## THE GROWING PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING ROLES

Due to the centrally planned heritage of almost all countries in the ECIS region, the expectation that women will have an active role in the labour force is arguably more accepted than in other lower and middle income countries around the world. This is reflected by UNDP's Gender Development Index, a measure of gender equality, which shows several countries in the region, particularly in the Western CIS, have very high gender equality (higher than the OECD average). That said, several others, such as Turkey and several of the Central Asian nations, lag behind significantly.

Despite generally high levels of women in the workforce and gender equality, women across most of the region continue to be discriminated against in a number of ways, including by being at a higher risk of being subjected to violence and being denied access to positions of power and/or leadership, through both active and passive discrimination. Furthermore, there have been decreases in women's participation in the labour force in several countries, suggesting that gender inclusion inherited from former centrally planned regimes is being lost in some places.

A primary indicator of the level of gender equality is the level of access that women have to positions of leadership and influence. While having women in leadership positions, particularly in parliaments, is a worthy goal in itself, it is also vitally important for ensuring the sustainability of gains and for building momentum for future reforms. By normalizing the presence of women in decision-making and leadership positions, the risk of backsliding greatly diminishes, and remaining barriers to equality are likely to fall more rapidly.

In the ECIS region, significant efforts on the part of UNDP and other organizations have led to notable improvements in the number of women in parliament, particularly in the Western Balkans. However, much remains to be done in the ECIS region to improve on relatively low percentages of women in parliament. In Azerbaijan, women only make up 16.9 percent of parliamentary members and this represents the highest level of representation in the Caucasus region. Moreover, even in the countries and territories with higher percentages of female parliamentarians, the number of women in ministerial and leadership positions remains low.



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union<sup>22</sup> / \* Kosovo figure from UNDP<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in national parliaments". Available from <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed 26 August 2016)

<sup>23</sup> UNDP in Kosovo, "About Kosovo". Available from <http://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/countryinfo.html> (accessed 23 June 2016)

## WHAT WE DO

### PARLIAMENTARY DEVELOPMENT

Effective political institutions, such as parliaments and political parties, are central to advancing strong systems of democratic governance. Parliaments have crucial constitutional mandates in relation to law-making, oversight and representation, and also play a critical role in advancing sustainable development. They provide an important forum for diverse societal groups (including women and minority groups) to engage in policymaking, express their views, voice concerns and demand accountability. Given the importance of parliaments to a functioning democracy, UNDP works in a number of ways to support parliaments throughout the ECIS region.

Often this assistance takes the form of supporting efforts to reform and improve the functioning of parliaments, making them more representative, open, and accountable. In Moldova, for example, UNDP supported the Parliament in conducting an institutional corruption self-assessment and in developing an Anti-Corruption Action Plan and Code of Conduct for MPs. In Serbia, significant work was also undertaken to increase the openness of the political process, including through the launch of a portal that enables MPs to monitor public budget expenditures electronically, and the introduction of public hearings and mobile committee sessions. The success of this work has been recognized by national partners in Serbia as one of the most effective ways to improve transparency and promote public participation in decision-making.

These reform efforts are often coupled with efforts to provide training and capacity building activities for parliamentarians and their secretariats. In Moldova, UNDP supported training for parliamentarians and their staff on proper legislative scrutiny, with a focus on identifying gender equality and conformity with international human rights obligations. In Kosovo, training on research and data collection was provided to the support staff of 12 Parliamentary Committees, and supplemented with an exchange of experience with the Czech Parliament. This was complemented by the drafting and finalization of Strategy 2016–2020 for the Assembly of Kosovo.

Combining both these elements, UNDP's work in Georgia has been one of its biggest parliamentary development initiatives. At the strategic level, UNDP has been actively supporting and facilitating the development of an Open Parliament Action Plan, within the OGP process, through a consultative process involving civil society organizations. The plan includes a number of positive steps, including a commitment to promote public involvement in the legislative process, and the establishment of a permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance. In more practical terms, the adoption of the action plan is already impacting on the Parliament's policymaking and oversight capacities through intensive capacity building activities, including trainings, coaching and study visits. Moreover, successful implementation by the sectoral committees of their action plans has facilitated a structured approach to committee work and assisted in effective and efficient performance of their legislative, oversight and representative functions. For example, the Human Rights Committee organized open hearings on the implementation of the Public Defender's recommendations to the Executive, which were for the first time attended by top management including Ministers and Deputy Ministers. The Agrarian Issues Committee activated its public outreach and engaged different groups of citizens, such as farmers, to inform the law-making process. Budgetary oversight functions of the Healthcare Committee have increased through considering reports of State Audit Office and strengthening cooperation with different government agencies and civil society organizations.

The success of the process to develop an Open Parliament Action Plan in Georgia has also inspired Ukraine to start a process to develop a parliamentary openness action plan.



Photo by: Open Government Partnership @ Twitter

Georgia wins the first OGP  
Government Champions  
Award

## Highlights



*An Anti-Corruption Action Plan and Code of Conduct for MPs developed by the Moldovan Parliament.*



*As an acknowledgement of its commitment to openness and effective cooperation with civil society, the Georgian Parliament was awarded the global OGP Government Champions Award in October 2015.*



*The success of the process to develop a Parliamentary Openness action plan in Georgia has convinced Ukraine to begin a similar process.*

### CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

A constitution provides the overarching legal framework of a country and sets out the basis of the social contract between a state and its people, affecting all aspects of policy and society. It establishes the institutions of government and their powers, and provides the foundations on which governance and peace are built. Therefore, it is essential that all segments of society feel that the constitution is not only legitimate, but represents their interests and protects their rights.

Historically, constitutions were often drafted behind closed doors, on the basis of negotiations between powerbrokers. However, in recent decades, there has been an important shift towards participatory, inclusive and transparent constitutional reform processes, which build consensus around the shared vision to be enshrined in the national constitution. Recognising the centrality of national constitutions to UNDP's work, the UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-17 explicitly includes constitution-making assistance as a key component of UNDP's support for inclusive governance, peacebuilding and sustainable development.

In support of national constitutional reform efforts, UNDP provides support throughout the ECIS region to design and manage inclusive constitutional reform processes. This support includes facilitating the establishment of constitution-making bodies, and providing technical training and advisory services. As part of this process, UNDP often facilitates the provision of high quality technical advice

on substantive constitution issues, such as power-sharing, federalism/decentralization, human rights, gender equality and public accountability. Additionally, with the focus on these constitutional reform processes being participatory, UNDP works with civil society organizations and the public more broadly to ensure they can make meaningful contributions. This includes civic education and public consultation programmes, civil society advocacy and capacity development, and the engagement of women, youth and marginalized groups.

In Turkmenistan, UNDP assisted the Turkmen Government with a constitutional review by engaging international experts to provide information and guidance on the best practices of constitutional democracies. This expert assistance allowed the Turkmen Government to conduct an effective review of the existing constitution, which in turn fed into the drafting of a new constitution. The new draft constitution was then published in the national newspaper to ensure transparency and encourage public discussion. In the Kyrgyz Republic, UNDP supported the operationalization of the Constitutional Chamber, while in Ukraine, UNDP supported various aspects of the ongoing constitutional amendment and reform process.

### ELECTORAL CYCLE SUPPORT

Free and fair elections are a vital precondition for democratic governance, with the integrity and credibility of election processes, in many ways, more important than the actual result. While cred-

## Highlights



*Assisted the Government of Turkmenistan with a constitutional review process, engaging international experts to provide advice and guidance, leading to the production of a new draft constitution.*

ible elections can facilitate smooth transitions of power and reduce the risk of conflict and violence, poorly run, unfair or otherwise tainted elections can undermine the political system, or worse still, serve as a flashpoint, triggering violence and conflict.

In the ECIS region, many countries continue to face challenges related to electoral cycle processes. These challenges vary across the region, but relate to all aspects of the electoral cycle including civic education, voter registration, boundary delimitation, polling and tabulation of results, electoral laws and campaign regulations, and the exclusion of marginalized groups. In addition, Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) are often poorly equipped to address all or any of these issues.

UNDP promotes credible and inclusive elections at all levels by supporting national and territorial efforts to promote legal reform; helping to establish independent management bodies; implementing systems of planning, monitoring, and budgeting; improving voter and civic education; promoting the participation of women as voters, candidates and employees within EMBs; encouraging the political participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups; and preventing electoral conflict and violence.

UNDP's assistance with parliamentary elections in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2015 provides an insight into this approach. With the introduction of a new biometrics based voter identification system, UNDP worked with EMBs to ensure the system functioned effectively, guaranteeing that the people of the Kyrgyz Republic could exercise their right to vote. UNDP also worked to increase the inclusiveness of the election process through voter education and outreach campaigns, with specific activities organized to engage women and youth. In total, approxi-

mately 40,000 people were engaged as a result of these activities, which also resulted in the establishment of a gender rating for the political parties, allowing voters to make a more informed choice.

UNDP also supports electoral administration of local elections. In Albania, for example, leading into the local elections of June 2015, UNDP assisted the Central Election Commission in electoral administration. Focus group discussions identified key voter education issues in the context of territorial reform and amalgamation. In Moldova, the Central Electoral Commission upgraded the e-Elections system to collect and produce multi-dimensional sex-disaggregated data, and strengthened the inclusiveness of electoral processes. UNDP reached more than 20,000 people from 35 district centres with voter education campaigns, including 1,000 young voters and over 7,000 Roma women and men, which resulted in a 60 percent turnout among Roma people at the 2015 elections, compared to the previous 20-25 percent.

### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement is the process through which members of society engage in individual and collective actions aimed at influencing public processes. Opening up political processes, as well as encouraging all of society to participate, allows for grievances to be aired, issues to be identified and addressed, and the risk of conflict and violence to be diminished.

UNDP attaches critical importance to the promotion of civic engagement. At the strategic level, UNDP often promotes normative and regulatory frameworks which are conducive to civic engagement and supportive of the important role to be played by citizens, communities, and civil society organizations. In Moldova, UNDP

supported the holding of public parliamentary hearings, something that became standard practice in 2016. The Moldovan Parliament is now publicly broadcasting all sessions and some Committee meetings.

A key aspect of UNDP's work to increase civic engagement is its support in establishing and maintaining meaningful dialogue and platforms. In Uzbekistan, UNDP achieved a significant increase in the public's engagement with the legislative process through the launch, promotion, and enhancement of a public consultations platform, provided in both Uzbek and Russian. By the end of 2015, almost 300 draft laws and regulations

ful participation in political and public life of groups experiencing significant exclusion, including religious and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and the LGBTI community. In Moldova, UNDP provided training to minority candidates and supported voter outreach campaigns, resulting in the election of two Roma women as local councillors for the first time. Moreover, the campaigns of Roma candidates, in combination with the voter education campaigns, saw huge increases in voter turnout amongst Roma, including a 98 percent turnout rate in Chetrosu. In Armenia, UNDP supported the increased inclusion of people with disabilities in the political process by facilitating discussions between 280 people in 11 communities (130 of which were people with disabilities) and their respective local government representatives.

Civil society is a key player in efforts to ensure civic engagement. For this reason, UNDP collaborates with and seeks to advance the capacities of all forms of civil society, including social movements, volunteer organizations, membership organizations, NGOs, and community-based organizations. In 2015, UNDP in Azerbaijan supported civil society organizations working on democracy and human rights under the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Similar work was also undertaken in Turkey, where UNDP worked to enhance the ability of civil society to support the effective implementation of gender related policies at the local level.

The 'Let's Vote' campaign promoting more informed voting within Roma communities in Moldova



Photo by: UNDP Eurasia

had been put on the platform and over 500 comments and proposals on the draft laws received from citizens and experts. Similar work was also carried out in Belarus, with the introduction of an innovative prototype public e-feedback mechanism.

UNDP also promotes the full and meaning-

## Highlights



*Worked with EMBs in the Kyrgyz Republic to ensure effective functioning of new biometrics based voter identification system.*



*Established a gender rating for each political party in the Kyrgyz parliamentary elections.*

## Highlights



*Boosted public engagement with the legislative process in Uzbekistan through the launch, promotion and enhancement of a public consultations platform, provided in both Uzbek and Russian.*

*Provided training and supported voter outreach campaigns in Moldova, resulting in the election of two Roma women as local councillors for the first time ever and large increases in voter turnout in Roma communities.*

*Support provided to civil society organizations working on democracy and human rights in Azerbaijan in the face of increasing restrictions*

### WOMEN'S EQUAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Ensuring the ability of women to participate equally in governance processes and decision-making is vital for achieving inclusive and effective governance. With women's equal political participation being a precursor for achieving equality more broadly, this is viewed as one of the primary challenges facing the region as a whole.

Accordingly, a key pillar of UNDP's inclusive political processes programming is advocating for women's political rights, improving policy formulation and supporting countries to implement international, regional and national commitments on women's participation in decision-making. This is in line with UNDP's broader strategic direction, as outlined in the UNDP Strategic Plan and the Gender Equality Strategy 2014-17, both of which prioritize women's participation in decision-making and leadership.

UNDP aims to improve women's participation by encouraging women to become more politically active, both as voters and candidates, through candidate training and awareness campaigns. In Armenia, UNDP supported women's political participation at the local level by implement-

ing capacity development programmes for 490 women. As a result, 20 women ran for election in 37 communities, with 19 being elected. To enlarge the pool of women running for seats in the local elections in 2016, an additional 204 women were trained on leadership, community development, local governance, gender equality and participatory democracy. Similarly, in Moldova, UNDP provided robust capacity development support to 21 newly elected women parliamentarians and over 100 women local councillors at first mandate on inclusive governance, gender-responsive policy making and budgeting, public communications and media skills, partnership building, and fundraising.

UNDP also undertakes efforts to reform political institutions to ensure more women are employed and are promoted into decision-making positions. The institutions targeted often include EMBs, candidate lists, and parliaments, while the reform efforts often include the introduction of gender quotas, a useful tool for normalizing the presence of women in positions of authority. In Albania, UNDP facilitated the passing of a 50 percent women's quota for the candidates in the June 2015 local elections. The end result was a milestone achievement, with women being elected in approximately 35 percent of contests. In the former Yugoslav

## Highlights



*Implemented a capacity development programme for 490 women in Armenia, resulting in 19 being elected to local councils in 37 communities.*



*Helped to secure an increase in the candidate list quotas for women from 32.5 percent to 40 percent in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which as a result is likely to have one of the highest shares of female representation in the world after the next elections.*



*Helped to establish a cross-party Women Caucus in the Moldovan Parliament, which immediately engaged with five regional policy forums to discuss a policy and reform agenda, and completed a gender audit of the parliament.*

Republic of Macedonia, UNDP advocacy also helped to secure an increase in the candidate list quotas for women. As a result, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is likely to have one of the highest shares of female representation in parliament in the world after the next elections.

Strong, effective networks are often one of the keys to success for politicians, as they can provide advice, fundraising, and promotion possibilities. For female politicians, it is often the lack of effective networks that serves as one of the major impediments to progressing political careers. As such, another important aspect of

UNDP's programming is the promotion of coalition building and networking among women representatives and decision makers to strengthen women's influence across the decision-making chain. An example of this type of work is seen in Moldova where UNDP supported the establishment of a cross-party Women Caucus in the Parliament and a gender audit of the Parliament. The benefits of this were seen almost immediately as the Caucus engaged with five regional policy forums, meeting with women representing grass-roots organizations and vulnerable groups to discuss a policy and reform agenda.



Attendees at the 2-day 'Gender and Elections' seminar in Tirana discussing the challenges facing women and girls during elections

Photo by: UNDP Albania

## WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING - INCREASING THE PROPORTION OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

Women's equal representation in elected institutions is key to the legitimacy of parliaments and assemblies. Yet across the ECIS region, women's representation remains at 17.7 percent, below the global average of 22.5 percent.<sup>24</sup> Figures at the local and municipal level are lower still, with women representing just 15 percent of mayors or heads of municipal councils.<sup>25</sup> Although elected positions are open to women, established structures and strategic plans are needed to improve women's political participation and attain gender equality.

While the region has made progress towards gender equality in political participation, achieving a gender balance of elected representatives requires concerted effort. UNDP is focused on equal participation and empowerment of women as elected representatives, which involves the proportion of female representatives in parliament, as well as fostering the empowerment and substantive representation of women, particularly in increasing participation in decision-making bodies and developing the capacities of women as elected representatives.

By furthering gender balance in parliamentary representation, legislative programming aims to support the empowerment of women in political decision-making and foster the adoption of specific gender equality frameworks, while progressively mainstreaming a gender-based approach in all policymaking. This includes gender-sensitive rules and procedures in parliament covering institutional procedures, as well as formal and informal parliamentary practices, which contribute to the creation of 'gender-sensitive parliaments', and it includes the discussion of the groups and that facilitate said practices.

Another key aim is the adoption of legal frameworks for promoting gender equality in society which includes dedicated gender equality laws and policies, gender-sensitive and inclusive national development, and establishing and monitoring the implementation of legislative frameworks for gender equality.

To improve gender equality in political representation and policymaking, UNDP programming aims to increase women's participation in elected office at all levels of leadership. In the past decade, parliamentary and party gender quotas and the strengthening of capacity building of parliamentarians has improved substantially.

For example:

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with UNDP support, the Macedonian Women's Lobby collaborated with members of the Women Parliamentarians' Club to increase the gender quota applicable to political party candidate lists from 32.5 percent to 40 percent. This quota was incorporated into the new electoral code, further securing representation of women at both the central and local level.

In Ukraine, UNDP support for legislative drafting and advocacy resulted in the 2014 amendments to the Law on Local Elections, requiring a minimum of 30 representatives of each gender on candidate lists for local elections. This quota was applied during the October 2015 local elections. For the most part, political parties complied with the quotas for the oblast and city council candidate lists - women's presence on candidate lists increased to 29.6 percent for oblasts and to 32.1 percent for city councils. Following the elections, this translated into an increase in representation from 10 to 15 percent in oblasts, and from 14 to 18 percent in city councils. Importantly, the introduction of the quota also contributed to the opening of public debate of women's political participation.

In Kazakhstan, in collaboration with UN Women, UNDP organized a roundtable on gender quotas featuring representatives of both the Parliament and civil society. Participants discussed different quota systems, agreeing on a system of minimum representation on candidate lists as more effective. The event provided the opportunity for gender activists at parliamentary and civil society level to discuss this issue on an equal basis, and demonstrated a growing solidarity on gender equality within the Parliament itself.

<sup>24</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Women in National Parliaments*, data as of November 11, 2015. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

<sup>25</sup> European Commission, DG Justice, "Women and men in decision making", available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/municipal-councils/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/municipal-councils/index_en.htm). The database calculates the number and percentage of women and men in the lowest levels of sub-national, elected administrative office in 34 European countries (EU-28 plus Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Turkey).

# RULE OF LAW, JUSTICE, SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

## OVERVIEW

Promoting human rights and strengthening the rule of law are essential to achieving sustainable development, strengthening democratic governance, and preventing crisis. UNDP's work in this area takes a number of forms, including:

- **Strengthening National Systems of Human Rights Protection** – Strengthening the capacities of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)

to fulfil their mandate of oversight, protection, and promotion of human rights including in conflict situations, and the role of national and civil society actors in the development and implementation of National Human Rights Actions Plans.

- **Legislative Reform and Effective Justice Systems** – Supporting legislative and judicial authorities in legal reforms for sustainable justice systems, and enhancing public engagement with the legislative process.

- **Improving Access to Justice** – Supporting the development of legal frameworks and the establishment of free legal aid institutions to expand access to information and legal redress, with a focus on disadvantaged and marginalised populations.
- **Anti-Discrimination and Rights of People with Disabilities** – Advocating for and facilitating the involvement of minority groups in reform efforts, from the promotion of the rights of vulnerable communities to the representation of minority groups in civil service.
- **Torture Prevention and Improvement of Conditions of Detention** – Building the capacities of law enforcement bodies to identify, investigate, and prosecute cases of torture and ill-treatment in detention, and support national monitoring and preventive mechanisms.
- **Community Security and Armed Violence Reduction** – Supporting security and police institutions to manage and reduce weapons and ammunition, and build sub-regional border-management capabilities.
- **Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence** – Building the capacities of the justice and security sector to strengthen victim protection frameworks, and enhancing the role of civil society in awareness-raising and prevention activities.
- **Transitional Justice and Dealing with the Legacy of Conflict** – Supporting national actors to increase dialogue, strengthen trust, and establish the conditions for reconciliation and accountability with transitional justice mechanisms.

UNDP's *Rule of Law, Justice, Security and Human Rights* work is designed to help countries meet targets:

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



### GOAL 5 – ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

### GOAL 16 – PROMOTE JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

- Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
- Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

## KEY TRENDS

### VARIABLE CONDITIONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS AND THE RULE OF LAW

In 2015, the protection of human rights and respect for rule of law in the ECIS region was impacted by several developments, including the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, ongoing and protracted conflict situations, allegations of large-scale corruption as well as political instability and shrinking democratic space in some countries.

The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is highly variable across the region and in many countries, effective rule of law remains one of the primary deficiencies. While in the Western Balkans, most countries and territories have relatively stable democracies, several countries in the ECIS remain highly restrictive politically. The most significant challenges include weak national human rights protection systems, lack of democratic policing, politically compromised judicial systems, and a general lack of access to justice.

Effective human rights protection for vulnerable and marginalized groups is an area of continued focus. Vulnerable and marginalised groups continue to have difficulty accessing public services, including education, health, employment and legal services, and being integrated in society. Difficulty in social integration partly stems from active and passive discrimination, and structural divisions; important information is often not available in minority languages, services are located too far away to be practicable, there are difficulties accessing education and employment opportunities are limited. In light of the 2015 mixed migration flows affecting Europe, emphasis has been made on the need for effective human rights protection of migrants and refugees in both host and transit countries of the ECIS.

## CONTINUING SECURITY THREATS

Armed violence and insecurity continues to represent a challenge to stable development in 2015. A high number of available and untracked weapons remain in circulation in the ECIS, including small arms and military equipment from ongoing and protracted conflicts. Currently, gun ownership is highest in the Western Balkans and Ukraine.<sup>26</sup> With long periods of instability and the legacy of armed conflict in the region, high rates of gun ownership present an inherent risk to regional security and stability.

SGBV, including domestic violence, remains an issue in the region. Rates of violence against women remain high, and effective options for accessing immediate protection are often lacking. However, progress has been made towards strengthening gender equality in political affairs which might help to bring legislative and policy focus on better preventing and combatting such violence. There is fertile ground for more progress in the coming years, as many countries have high levels of female participation in the workforce<sup>27</sup> and growing female participation in politics.<sup>28</sup>

## WHAT WE DO

### STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SYSTEMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION

An important element of UNDP's support to governments has been geared towards strengthening national systems of human rights protection to ensure that existing frameworks protect even the most disadvantaged people. During 2015, UNDP's work in the region focused on support and development of NHRIs. UNDP supports the capacity and independence of these institutions, to enhance their role as cornerstones of national human rights system. In Turkmenistan, in partnership with OHCHR, UNDP provided expertise and assistance in drafting insti-

<sup>26</sup> Data compiled by The Guardian, "Gun homicides and gun ownership listed by country", 22 July 2012. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/jul/22/gun-homicides-ownership-world-list>

<sup>27</sup> The World Bank, "Labor force participation rate, female". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS> (accessed 30 August 2016)

<sup>28</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in national parliaments". Available from <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed 26 August 2016)

tutional legislation and establishing an Ombudsper-son's office. In the Kyrgyz Republic and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, support was pro-vided to Ombudsman Institutions in order to further their alignment with the *Paris Principles*,<sup>29</sup> including support for capacity assessments of these institutions to identify areas for improvement. In Tur-key, UNDP assisted in the development of the first strategic plan for the Ombudsman Institution. In Moldova, assistance was provided to the Ombuds-man Office and the Equality Council in developing a methodology to analyse policies and legislation from a human rights and equality perspective. In the Kyrgyz Republic, UNDP and the Ombudsperson's Office partnered with law students to perform public trial

monitoring alongside Ombudsman officers, report their findings, and improve the accountability of the judiciary to the people.

In late 2015, UNDP and the Ukrainian Parliament's Commissioner for Human Rights co-organized an international conference on the role of NHRIs for the protection and promotion of human rights in conflict and post-conflict settings. This confer-ence resulted in the adoption of the Kyiv Declara-tion on the Role of NHRIs in Conflict and Post-Con-flict Situations,<sup>30</sup> which reaffirms and calls for a stronger role of NHRIs in preventing conflict, and ensuring respect for human rights and their pro-tection in conflict-affected and fragile settings.

## NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS: KEY HUMAN RIGHTS ACTORS IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS

In conflict and post-conflict contexts, NHRIs can play a key role in ensuring the respect and protection of human rights. As neutral actors, NHRIs are also well positioned to monitor compliance, document human rights violations, and facilitate dialogue between actors and stakeholders to prevent further conflict. NHRIs have a unique legitimacy to educate state and non-state actors on human rights and promote rights-based policies. From the outset, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights has been actively engaged in responding to human rights violations resulting from the conflict in the east of the country.

With the aim of building on this experience, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights and UNDP organized the '2015 International Conference on the Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Conflict and Post-conflict Situations' in Kyiv, Ukraine. The con-ference brought together representatives from 18 NHRIs from countries in conflict or post-conflict situations, in-ternational organisations, human rights experts, and civil society to exchange experiences and lessons learned, and identify recommendations on the role of NHRIs in conflict-affected and fragile settings. Specific topics ad-dressed included the documentation of human rights violations, national and international legal frameworks, reconciliation and peacebuilding, interactions between NHRIs and civil society, and the protection of IDPs and



Representatives from NHRIs, leaders, human rights experts, and civic activists came together to sign and adopt the Kyiv Declaration

Photo by: Eugene Zelenko/UNDP Ukraine

vulnerable groups. Important recommendations for NHRIs and governments were elaborated during the conference on I) enhancing the role of NHRIs in conflict prevention through guidance and education; II) doc-u-menting human rights violations; III) supporting IDPs and vulnerable groups/persons; and IV) enhancing clos-er collaboration with civil society.

<sup>29</sup> A set of international standards which frame and guide the work of National Human Rights Institutions

<sup>30</sup> UNDP, "National Human Rights Institutions Adopt Joint Declaration in Kyiv", 23 October 2015. Available from <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2015/10/23/national-human-rights-institutions-adopt-joint-declaration-in-kyi.html>



The conference concluded with the adoption of the 'Kyiv Declaration on the Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations' (the Kyiv Declaration), which calls for an active and systematic role for NHRIs in conflict-affected settings. The Kyiv Declaration is a key regional achievement in promoting international human rights standards. Several countries in the region have started implementing the Kyiv Declaration, which is promoted at the regional level through the European Network of NHRIs and at a global level at the General Assembly of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

The Declaration has been referred to and built-upon by GANHRI,<sup>31</sup> thus becoming a global reference in this area.

UNDP also provided technical expertise for the design of National Human Rights Action Plans in Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Turkmenistan, including the establishment of a implementation and monitoring system for the plans. In Turkmenistan, the National Institute of Democracy and Human Rights and the Inter-Ministerial Commission finalized the '2016-2020 National Human Rights Action Plan' with the support of UNDP. The Plan represents a comprehensive roadmap on the implementation of recommendations of the 2013 UPR and other treaty bodies. UNDP will support selected ministries and the Institute of Democracy and Human Rights on its implementation. In Armenia, UNDP ensured broader involvement of government agencies and civil society in the follow up and monitoring of implementation of the UPR recommendations and its alignment with the National Human Rights Action Plan. In Ukraine, the first National Human Rights

In Ukraine, UNDP support following the Kyiv Declaration includes strengthening the capacity of the Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights in addressing the rights of IDPs, including with the development of methodology for monitoring violations of the rights of IDPs and assisting their integration into society.

"We are here at a pivotal time for development. Yet the recently adopted SDGs cannot be fully achieved without the involvement of NHRIs."

– **Mr. Neal Walker**, Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative at UNDP Ukraine

Strategy and Action Plan was adopted following an inclusive process involving civil society, the Government and a number of development partners.

UNDP in partnership with OHCHR also worked to support government engagement with international human rights bodies and mechanisms. By taking a role as a trusted partner, UNDP is able to encourage the participation of governments, and ensure follow-through on the resulting recommendations to improve human rights. In 2015, Belarus, Georgia, and Turkey appeared before the Human Rights Council for the UPR. UNDP provided assistance in developing strategies to implement recommendations of the UPR process. One of UNDP's primary partners in human rights based initiatives, OHCHR is critical to moving forward the promotion and protection of human rights in the region, in particular in supporting efforts to develop and implement National Human Rights Actions Plans, and preparing the UPR in several countries in the region. Since 2011, UNDP, OHCHR and GANHRI has enjoyed a strategic three-way part-

*"OHCHR has a long-standing strategic partnership with UNDP. Collaboration between the two continued in the areas of the rule of law, democracy, good governance and human rights, resulting in strengthened engagement at country and regional levels with international human rights mechanisms, as well as more shared analysis, joint advocacy and programmatic activities. Through this partnership, the two parties have been cooperating at the field level in building and strengthening NHRIs' capacity. In this regard, they have developed, in 2010, the "Toolkit for the collaboration with National Human Rights Institutions" for UN*

*staff members and, in 2016, the "Global Principles for Capacity Assessment of NHRIs". In 2011, OHCHR, UNDP and the Global Alliance of NHRIs established a strategic tri-partite partnership, which aims at increasing cooperation among the three parties towards better coordinating and leveraging knowledge, expertise and capacity to strengthen NHRIs. The three parties hold regular annual meetings, hosted by UNDP in New York."*

– **Mr. Vladlen Stefanov**, Chief, National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

<sup>31</sup> Formerly known as the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC)

## Highlights



*In Moldova, the first Strategic Development Plan of the Office of the Ombudsman was adopted.*



*In Ukraine, the 'Kyiv Declaration on the Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations' was adopted, becoming a global reference for international human rights standards on the role of NHRIs in conflict.*



*In Turkmenistan, the '2016-2020 National Human Rights Action Plan' was adopted.*



*In Ukraine, the first National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan was adopted, following an inclusive process involving civil society, government representatives and development partners.*

nership at the global level aimed at a more strategic and holistic approach for dedicated support to NHRIs.

The Council of Europe (CoE) has been also partnering with UNDP in providing assistance to member states in the region in protecting and promoting human rights, democracy, justice and rule of law. This work, amongst many projects, includes monitoring the implementation of the new Criminal Procedure Code in Ukraine, and supporting civic partnerships that documented human rights violation cases that were filed with the European Court of Human Rights.

### **LEGISLATIVE REFORM AND EFFECTIVE JUSTICE SYSTEMS**

In the ECIS region, UNDP works with national partners to strengthen and build the capacity of institutions to develop and implement legal reforms furthering equality and the rule of law. UNDP

assists national authorities, including the legislature, the judiciary, prosecutors, lawyers, and police, to identify and implement specific measures to ensure stable and sustainable justice. In Tajikistan, UNDP supported Tajikistan's National Rule of Law Policy Dialogue, which brought together government officials, civil society, lawyers and academics, to discuss key issues relating to the rule of law and concrete recommendations for law and policy changes. To boost public engagement with the legislative process and enhance the quality of legislation, UNDP in Uzbekistan launched an online public consultations platform in both Uzbek and Russian, for citizens to provide comments to draft legislation. By the end of 2015, over 500 comments were input for approximately 300 draft laws and regulations. In the Kyrgyz Republic, UNDP assisted the Parliament in drafting six new judicial reform laws, incorporating civil society and expert advice, and aligning with human rights standards.

## Highlights

UNDP also provides support and technical expertise to strengthen the knowledge and skills of judges, prosecutors, lawyers, ministries, civil society and the security forces. In Montenegro for example, training curricula were created and adopted by the Judicial Training Centre. The curricula covered a range of both criminal and civil matters including European arrest warrant and surrender procedures, custodial sentences including deprivation of liberty, decisions imposing probation measures and alternative sanctions, as well as decisions on supervision measures. In BiH, UNDP provided support to build the capacity of the judiciary, the police and the media to prosecute and report on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). In partnership with IOM, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women, UNDP is implementing a joint programme to address the legacy of CRSV. This programme, amongst other things, will provide training to representatives of the judiciary, police and media on survivors' rights and standards for processing of war crimes cases involving sexual violence. Additionally, UNDP provided support to the implementation of the Justice Sector Reform and National War Crimes Prosecution Strategy and facilitated cooperation among war crimes prosecution offices in the region to speed up the processing of war crimes cases with a regional dimension. In this vein, UNDP provided support to the continuing expansion of

the Victim-Witness Support Programme, now featuring 16 fully operational offices. In 2015, this programme provided assistance to over 1,600 individuals.

### IMPROVING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

UNDP provides support to governments to improve justice services and their capacity, and increase access to justice and peaceful resolution of disputes for all.

Poor and disadvantaged groups, including rural populations, IDPs, migrants and refugees, face multiple obstacles in accessing information on legal procedures and seeking legal redress. UNDP seeks to improve access to justice by supporting the provision of free legal aid and legal awareness programmes. In Albania, BiH, Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan, UNDP helped to establish and expand legal services with a focus on vulnerable groups. To ensure the sustainability of these services, UNDP works with and supports governments to develop legal frameworks for free legal aid, establish national free legal aid institutions, and plan for specific budget allocation to free legal services.

In BiH, UNDP supported the establishment of a free legal aid agency in coordination with the Ministry of Justice of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, thus increasing the number of agencies to 16 throughout BiH.



*In Uzbekistan, an online public consultations platform was launched in Uzbek and Russian for citizens to provide comments to draft legislation, resulting in over 500 comments input for 300 draft laws and regulations.*



*In BiH, the Victim-Witness Support Programme was expanded to feature 16 fully operational offices, and provided assistance to over 1,600 individuals.*



*In Tajikistan, the Government adopted the concept on state-guaranteed legal aid, while UNDP-supported free legal aid services reached 11,206 people, including 7,021 women and 865 people with disabilities.*

## Highlights



*In BiH, a free legal aid agency was established in coordination with the Ministry of Justice of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, increasing the total number of agencies to 16 and enabling access to free legal aid to more than 800,000 citizens.*



*In Georgia, the mandate for legal aid services was broadened to include civil and administrative cases in addition to criminal cases, with legal aid capacities able to service 30,000 disadvantaged citizens.*



*In the Kyrgyz Republic, the capacity of free legal aid providers, selected municipalities, and state registration services were enhanced; the number of people accessing free legal aid tripling to 14,654.*



*In Ukraine, 6,900 IDPs received legal aid, and a case management system to keep track of legal assistance was introduced, extending support to a further 1,700 people.*

These agencies provide access to free legal aid services and information for more than 800,000 citizens, particularly to vulnerable groups such as women and persons with disabilities. In Georgia, access to justice was increased by extending the mandate for the Legal Aid Service to selected civil and administrative cases, in addition to criminal cases. UNDP also supported access to free legal aid to over 30,000 disadvantaged citizens by facilitating and agreement between the Legal Aid Service and the Public Service Development Agency. In the Kyrgyz Republic, UNDP worked to enhance the capacity of free legal aid providers, select municipalities, and the State Registration Service to provide access to justice, legal identity and peaceful dispute resolution. As a result, the number of people accessing legal aid services almost tripled to 14,654 in 2015.

In Tajikistan, UNDP continued to support increased access to justice. In 2015, UNDP-supported free legal aid services reached 11,206 people, including 7,021 women and 865 people with disabilities. Most com-

mon services provided to women pertained to family law issues, followed by civil law issues and property disputes. The great majority of cases (approximately 92 percent) had a positive outcome for the client. To ensure the sustainability of legal aid services, UNDP facilitated a policy dialogue on the rule of law between the Government and civil society, resulting in the adoption of the concept of state guaranteed legal aid. This adoption means the state will now begin the process to undertake full responsibility for the provision of free legal aid, providing a solid and sustainable basis.

Complementing this, UNDP promotes community security and access to justice in conflict-affected areas. Regional and domestic conflicts have created specific access to justice needs for IDPs and refugees. In Turkey, a large-scale project supporting legal aid services targeting disadvantaged groups such as women, children and Syrian refugees was launched late 2015. The project aims to design and implement specific legal aid approaches based on the gender, age and location of applicants, starting with a detailed

assessment of the legal needs of Syrians in five provinces in southern Turkey. In Ukraine, UNDP provided support to civil society organizations in providing legal aid to 6,900 IDPs. A case management system used to keep track of IDPs assistance was introduced, allowing assistance to be extended to around 1,700 people.

### **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

UNDP seeks to further human rights by addressing discrimination and social exclusion. In many ECIS countries, vulnerable groups include ethnic minorities, the LGBTI community, people with disabilities, and women and children. In a number of countries, co-existence remains challenging for minorities, who still face discrimination in political, social, and economic spheres. Discrimination against persons with disabilities also remains problematic across the region. In line with the UNDP Strategic Plan 2014–2017, UNDP and national partners across the region collaborate to ensure the protection and the promotion of the rights of marginalised communities.

When supporting legislative reforms and implementing core human rights conventions, UNDP works to ensure that specific considerations and targets for vulnerable populations are included in reform efforts. In Turkey, as a result of UNDP's impact assessment on the judicial reform process in 2014, a specific target for access to justice for disadvantaged groups was integrated in the Judicial Reform Strategy in 2015. In Georgia, following the adoption of the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in 2015, UNDP facilitated the translation of government websites and other resources into the Abkhaz language, and provided support to Georgian language classes for rural national and ethnic minorities to promote societal integration. In Moldova, UNDP provided support to build the capacity of the Ombudsperson Office and the Equality Council to elaborate a methodology to analyse policies and legislation from a human rights and equality perspective, and promote the implementation of international standards. 23 decisions of the Equality Council were translated into Russian and made publicly available online, thus ensuring access to information to linguistic minorities. In Albania, free

legal aid was provided to 165 Roma and Egyptian families in three different municipalities. UNDP also provided support to local activists by facilitating forums for Roma and Egyptian women to discuss how to advocate for their rights. Efforts culminated in the finalisation of the 'Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016–2020', adopted through a participatory process involving civil society, municipalities, and line ministries.

To ensure the rights of persons with disabilities, several countries have taken steps towards adopting the protections provided in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). With UNDP support and advocacy, Belarus acceded to the CRPD in September 2015. Similar advocacy was conducted in the Kyrgyz Republic, where UNDP assisted the Government and civil society in planning and costing the ratification of the CRPD and conducted analysis on the legal framework regulating representation of women and ethnic minorities in the civil service. UNDP has been also assisting Tajikistan in acceding to the CRPD by supporting an analysis on the legal, economic and functional implications of acceding, providing advocacy, and organising study tours. As part of the UPR process in May 2016, Tajikistan committed itself to join the CRPD. Finally, in Armenia, UNDP supported a comprehensive government reform to change the disability classification model from a medical to a bio-psychosocial model, aligning it with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health and the CRPD. Assessment tools have already been developed and piloted with 1,200 people.

## Highlights



*In Georgia, the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination was adopted, resulting in the translation of government websites into the Abkhaz language to provide access to information for linguistic minorities.*



*In Albania, the Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016–2020 was adopted, through a participatory process involving civil society, municipalities, and line ministries.*



*In Belarus, the CRPD was ratified following a sustained campaign by UNDP.*



*In Armenia, the disability classification model was reformed to align with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, and the CRPD, new assessment tools benefiting 1,200 people.*

### TORTURE PREVENTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF DETENTION CONDITIONS

Important efforts have been taken to prevent torture and ill-treatment in the region, and have been directed at the improvement of detention centres and psychiatric institutions. In Moldova, the Patient's Advocate, a successful UNDP pilot, enabled 1,465 complaints of individuals held in psychiatric institutions to be processed. This resulted in approximately one hundred cases of forced hospitalisation being resolved at the administrative level, with as many people being either released

or transferred to adequate accommodations. In parallel, UNDP provided support to improve the capacity of law enforcement bodies to identify, investigate, and prosecute cases of torture in psychiatric institutions. As such, gender sensitive guidelines for prosecutors on the investigation of cases of torture and other ill-treatment in mental health facilities were finalized and adopted by the General Prosecutor. In Ukraine, UNDP has been providing support to the National Preventive Mechanism with the Office of the Ombudsperson to carry out detention monitoring, including in conflict-affected areas.

## Highlights



*In Moldova, the Patient's Advocate enabled the processing of 1,465 complaints of individuals held in psychiatric institutions, resulting in one hundred cases of release or transfer of individuals to adequate accommodations.*



*In Ukraine, the Parliament's Commissioner for Human Rights through the National Preventive Mechanism carried out 95 monitoring visits to places of detention, including in conflict-affected areas.*

### **COMMUNITY SECURITY AND REDUCTION OF ARMED VIOLENCE**

Insecurity and the prevalence of violence in a society are often the symptoms of other underlying issues such as a lack of trust in government, tension between different communities, and weak rule of law. For many countries in the ECIS region, it is often also a legacy of recent conflicts that have resulted in the large-scale accumulation and availability of weapons, as well as explosive remnants of war. In Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) remains a serious problem undermining crime prevention and post conflict peacebuilding, and posing a serious constraint on the long-term economic and social development in Southeastern and Eastern Europe.

To address these challenges, UNDP works, mainly through a joint initiative with the RCC called the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearing-house for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC). As the successor to the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, RCC provides SEESAC with the political mandate for its work and co-chairs the Regional Steering Group on Small Arms and Light Weapons with UNDP. SEESAC's work focuses on working with governments and communities to identify the causes of violence and insecurity, designing practical measures to address these, and supporting their implementation. As a result,

significant time and effort has been invested in curbing the proliferation and availability of these weapons, using tools such as the Regional Micro Disarmament Standards and Guidelines and the International Small Arms Control Standards. The uniqueness of UNDP's approach is the implementation of regional cooperation initiatives and activities, increasing information sharing, enhancing knowledge exchange and improving cross-border coordination. In 2015 for example, SEESAC convened several regional meetings of Small Arms Commissions, Regional Information Exchange Process on Arms Transfers and the South East Europe Firearms Experts Network (SEEFEN), significantly increasing coordination among relevant institutions. A regionally coordinated SALW disposal action marking International Gun Destruction Day (9th of July) resulted in the disposal of 2,600 weapons. Similarly, UNDP worked with the Ministry of Defence in BiH to dispose of 2,452 tonnes of unsafe ammunition as well as facilitating the upgrade of five weapons storage facilities. In Kosovo, UNDP's support has seen community safety improved through the better regulation of civilian weapon possession in line with EU legislation, and a campaign against the use of fireworks. In Belarus, Montenegro and Serbia, UNDP partnered with the OSCE to implement wide-ranging stockpile security and reduction projects.

Weapons being destroyed in Kosovo



Photo by: UNDP Kosovo

Tajik Border Guards at the Tajik-Afghan Border



Photo by: BOMCA/UNDP Brussels

In some cases, the sources of insecurity and violence can be external to the country. In these cases, the improvement of border management capabilities is often an important priority. This is particularly true in Central Asia and Turkey where there are active conflict zones in neighbouring countries (Afghanistan and Syria respectively). In 2015, UNDP's work in this area focused on Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, in attempts to ensure borders with Afghanistan were effectively managed. In Tajikistan for example, UNDP provided training on integrated border management for 322 Tajik and Afghan border and customs officials, a programme that will be expanded going forward due to its initial successes.

More broadly, UNDP also works to assist national governments strengthen the delivery of professional security and policing services orientated towards making communities safer. This often also involves improving leadership, decision-making, and strategic planning capacities, as well as specialized training. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a course on physical security and stockpile management was delivered to the Ministry of Defence and later integrated into the curricula of the Military Academy, ensuring sustainability of efforts to improve the management of weapons and ammunition. In Kosovo, training and the provision of advanced forensics equipment to the Forensics

## Highlights



*In BiH, the Ministry of Defence disposed of 2,452 tonnes of unsafe ammunition, and the safety and security of five weapons storage facilities were upgraded.*



*In Serbia, national collection and awareness-raising campaigns resulted in 2,138 SALW, 1,107 pieces of explosive ordnances, and 160,434 pieces of ammunition turned over for destruction, and 4,300 registration requests submitted for SALW.*



*As a result of regional coordinated destructions on International Gun Destruction Day, 1,799 SALW and 1,854 parts and components were destroyed in Kosovo, and 857 SALW and 194 parts and components were destroyed in Montenegro.*

Agency of Kosovo has doubled the rate at which crimes are solved. In Moldova, UNDP provided training to crime scene investigators on modern tools and techniques, and police on community policing

principles. As a result, not only was the effectiveness of the police improved, but there was also a large improvement in how police were perceived in the community.

## SUPPORT FOR SMALL ARMS CONTROL IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE – TRANSPARENCY, CAPACITY, MANAGEMENT

In order to support national and international stakeholders in their efforts to practically implement SALW control measures, UNDP's partnership with RCC and the formation of SEESAC joint initiative have been vital. SEESAC is working to strengthen the capacities of national and regional stakeholders to advance Security Sector Reform and thus contribute to enhanced stability, security and development in Southeast Europe. With over 14 years of experience in the practical implementation of SALW control measures, SEESAC's

work has been widely recognized and is based on fostering regional cooperation, facilitating knowledge exchange and enabling information sharing.

Since its inception, SEESAC has served as the executive arm of the **Regional Implementation Plan on Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeast Europe**. In this role, SEESAC has implemented approximately US\$17.5 million worth of projects in Albania, BiH, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In line with Goal 16 of the SDGs which focuses on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, new and ongoing regional initiatives run by SEESAC in 2015 featured EU support for SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in Southeast Europe, support for an arms control programme in the Western Balkans, the Capacity Development Programme for Conventional Ammunition Stockpile Management, and the Regional Security Sector Reform Platform.

**The Regional Security Sector Reform Platform** (RSSRP) established in 2015 is an innovative mechanism established to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise on niche security sector reform themes from Southeast Europe to the rest of the ECIS region and further afield. The RSSRP blends SEESAC's practical project development and implementation capacity with the regional Roster of Experts, approved by the participating states, and selected for their proven track-record and current hands-on experience in national policy design and implementation coupled with participation in SEESAC regional projects and initiatives. Currently, the roster features 73 experts, including 36 women and 37 men, with 43 gender experts, 27 SALW experts, and 3 Security Sector Reform experts, further divided into 14 different areas of expertise. The first deployment through the RSSRP took place in September 2015 when Lieutenant Colonel Strašo Stojčevski from the Ministry of Defence of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Captain Predrag Lučić from the Armed Forces of Montenegro supported as instructors the Nordic Centre in Military Operations in conducting the 'Gender Training of Trainers' course organized at the Ministry of Defence in Georgia from 15 to 24 September. The course was organized at the National Defence Academy in Gori, Georgia for 13 participants from Armenia, Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, Denmark and Georgia. For more information, please visit <http://www.seesac.org/RSSRP>

*"The most important part of the process has been the information exchange process on arms exports control among countries in the region. ... I can proudly say that this project demonstrated that countries of this region, which has until recently been known for lack of mutual understanding, tensions and instability, have become an example of successful and open cooperation that is based on friendly relations of mutual understanding and trust."*

– **Mr. Stevan Nikčević**, State Secretary, Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, Republic of Serbia,  
30 October 2015, during the conference Arms Transfers Control Achievements in the Western Balkans

## Highlights



*In BiH, the Victim-Witness Support Programme was expanded to 16 fully operational offices, providing assistance to over 1,600 people.*



*In Montenegro and Serbia, a national SOS helpline for victims of violence was introduced, resulting in a significant increase in reports of domestic violence.*



*In Albania, a coordinated community response mechanism for awareness-raising and prevention of SGBV was established in four municipalities and expanded in two municipalities, resulting in a 30 percent increase in reported cases and a 24 percent increase in arrests for family crimes.*

### PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

SGBV has devastating, long-term effects on the lives of victims, their families and communities, and also impedes development progress. Furthermore, levels of SGBV often rise in crisis and conflict settings, where systems of protection, security and justice break down, creating a vicious cycle.

UNDP supports efforts to prevent and reduce SGBV, and assist victims and their families. At the highest level, UNDP works with governments and institutions to implement reforms aimed to protect women from violence and ensure their ongoing protection. In October 2015, the UNDP 'Regional Conference on Effective Programming for Preventing and Combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence' brought together more than 50 government officials, including representatives of justice and security institutions, experts and civil society representatives in Belgrade, Serbia. Experts from 14 countries in the region discussed the international, regional, and national legal and policy frameworks, and the role of justice and security institutions in preventing and combating SGBV, as well as supporting victims and survivors in conflict-affected settings.

The capacity of public servants and professionals in the justice system such as the police, prosecutors and judges, is an important element in the fight against impunity for SGBV and support for victims. Unfortunately, in many cases, cultural norms, the non-recognition of the situation, and/or a lack of awareness of potential solutions, mean the opportunity for a successful intervention is missed. As a result, building the capacity of officials addressing SGBV cases is typically an effective way to strengthen the protection of women. To achieve this, UNDP works with officials in the justice and security sector to provide training on how to recognize risk factors, how to better protect victims and how to more effectively deal with perpetrators. In Albania for example, UNDP helped the State Police Academy assess and upgrade its training curricula on SGBV and trained 220 police staff in seven regions to implement a new anti-harassment policy. In Montenegro, in response to the findings of UNDP supported research on perceptions of the judiciary on gender-based violence, 14 representatives of judiciary were trained by UNDP to become peer educators on this topic, while 76 took part in tailored educational workshops.

Complementing this, UNDP also works with national and local partners to improve the availability of services for survivors. This includes medical, psychosocial, family, legal and economic assistance.

## REFORM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – GENDER EQUALITY IN THE MILITARY

Despite improvements in women's equality in the countries of the Western Balkans, the military remains a domain dominated by men. Statistics from SEESAC show that women only make up between 5.7 and 9.0 percent of the armed forces in the Western Balkans,<sup>32</sup> with women in management and command positions even rarer. Although military careers are open to women, a systematic approach is needed to attract and retain them in the defence and armed forces.

With the aim of addressing this challenge, **Gender Equality in the Military in the Western Balkans** is a regional project being run by UNDP's SEESAC initiative with the financial support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Armed Forces and UNDP. Initiated in 2012, the project has been implemented in close cooperation with the Ministries of Defence of BiH, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The project has two primary goals. The first is to boost gender equality in the military. This is being done in a range of ways which include increasing gender awareness, strengthening gender-responsive human resource policies, and capacitating gender equality mechanisms in the Ministries of Defence and Armed Forces throughout the region. The project has supported the establishment of a regional network of military gender trainers in the armed forces. This network serves as an important gender awareness mechanism and has trained more than 4,500 military and civilian personnel on gender perspectives in the security sector in 2015 and 2016.

The second goal of the project has been to boost regional coordination and create new relationships and networks. In addition to allowing for more effective sharing of knowledge, information and best practices, the partnerships and relationships established help to increase regional cooperation, contributing to the reconciliation process and increased security and stability in the Western Balkans.



Trainers during an outdoor exercise as part of the Gender Training of Trainers Course in Belgrade, Serbia

Photo by: UNDP in Europe and Central Asia

*"Thanks to the project but also other implemented activities general climate has changed significantly in the Ministry. The intensity and scope of the project enabled the integration of gender perspective in different aspects in HR policies and practice. Women [from the Armed Forces] are also providing evidences of the changed institutional climate, infrastructure better fits women's needs, internal regulation and procedures are modified, uniforms are accustomed which has altogether led towards the improvement of position of women and their higher share in Armed Forces of Montenegro."*

– Ms. Slobodanka Doderović, Head of Human Resources Management Department, Ministry of Defence Montenegro

For example, in Montenegro and Serbia, UNDP supported the introduction of the national SOS helpline for victims of violence. Statistics from Montenegro showed a significant increase in reports of domestic violence as a result. In the case of Serbia, UNDP also supported a programme that provides individual and group therapy sessions for perpetrators in order to reduce the recidivism rate.

Local communities are often the first source of support for victims of SGBV. As such, UNDP works at the community level in awareness-raising and prevention activities. In Albania, UNDP helped to establish coordinated community response mechanisms in four municipalities while also expanding existing mechanisms in two other municipalities. This has led to significant increases not only in the number of reports being made, but also an increase in the number of perpetrators arrested.

<sup>32</sup> SEESAC, "The Position of Women in the Armed Forces in the Western Balkans", 2014.  
Available from <http://www.seesac.org/res/files/publication/877.pdf>

# Highlights

## TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Societies must be enabled to address large-scale violence resulting from conflict, political upheaval, or authoritarian regimes. Nationally-led transitional justice processes contribute to atonement for past violence and human rights violations and help societies guard against a relapse into systematic discrimination or violence, fostering reconciliation. Building the role and capacities of national justice institutions in transitional justice can also strengthen their independence.

To support redress for past violence and human rights violations, and to enable societies to recover from the legacy of violence, many of UNDP's initiatives focus on supporting dialogue processes and providing advice to governments and communities on measures of transitional justice, including establishing truth commissions and prosecuting conflict-related crimes. In BiH, Dialogue for the Future, a large project

involving multiple UN agencies funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund and supported by the Presidency of BiH, continues to focus on trust building and the promotion of diversity. To date, Dialogue for the Future has directly engaged over 54,000 citizens through two Dialogue Platform Conferences, 26 youth forums, trainings, and 40 grants facility projects, which has resulted in the creation of a formal process that enables citizens and decision makers to interact and discuss peacebuilding and trust-building. In Ukraine, UNDP supported civic human rights monitors and investigators in launching a database to document evidence on human rights violations in the east of the country. The gathered evidence is to be used before national and international justice mechanisms. Thus far, 120 individual and group cases obtained from 15 localities were filed. Based on this evidence, eight monitoring reports were prepared, five criminal investigations launched and three claims to the European Court of Human Rights were filed.



*In BiH, Dialogue for the Future engaged over 54,000 citizens through two Dialogue Platform Conferences, 26 youth forums, trainings, and 40 grants facility projects, which has resulted in the creation of a formal process that enables citizens and decision makers to interact and discuss peacebuilding and trust-building.*



*In Ukraine, a database to be used by civic human rights monitors and investigators to document evidence on human rights violations in the east of the country was launched. Based on the evidence gathered, 120 individual and group cases were filed, 8 monitoring reports were drafted, 5 criminal investigations launched, and 3 claims to the European Court of Human Rights were filed.*



# PART II



# ALBANIA

## BACKGROUND

Since the end of communist rule in 1991, Albania has strengthened democracy and developed a market economy, while confronting multiple challenges including relatively high levels of poverty, unemployment, and corruption. In recent years, Albania has suffered from an economic slowdown, with growth falling to an estimated 2.6 percent in 2015,<sup>33</sup> unemployment increasing to 17.3 percent, and youth unemployment rising sharply to 32.1 percent.<sup>34</sup>

Despite this, there were some positive developments in 2015. In May, an overwhelming major-

ity of the parliament approved a resolution recommending legal reform based on the 'National Plan of Measures on the Protection of LGBTI People (2012-2014)' launched by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth as a step toward EU accession. The parliament passed controversial legislation to open the files of the Sigurimi ('secret') police who are believed to have killed and deported thousands of Albanians during the communist period. Steps were also taken to prevent violent extremism, particularly amongst youth, and highlight Albania's history of religious tolerance, with a strategy on Countering Violent Extremism adopted and a Balkans Regional Summit held.

<sup>33</sup> The World Bank, "Albania Overview". Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/albania/overview> [accessed 10 June 2016]

<sup>34</sup> The World Bank, "Albania Overview". Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/albania/overview> [accessed 10 June 2016]

Albania held local elections in June 2015, completing a radical overhaul to local governance structures that resulted in 61 new consolidated municipalities. The elections were generally seen to be free and fair, with the participation of 63 political parties, 158 candidates for mayor and 36,341 candidates for local councils. All parties also met the new requirement for local council candidate lists to include equal numbers of men and women. However, the elections were not without issues, with OSCE election monitors noting “politicization of state institutions” and “many cases of group voting and some important procedural irregularities.”

A number of other challenges also remain. Corruption persists in many sectors, as is reflected by a score of 36/100 on the Corruption Perceptions Index.<sup>35</sup> To combat domestic violence and human trafficking, the Government has developed a number of initiatives and strategies, but implementation remains incomplete. Implementation of social policies for the inclusion of vulnerable groups, particularly the Roma and Egyptian communities, and people with disabilities, has also been inadequate. Finally, UNDP-supported Trust in Government surveys show very low levels of public confidence in many governmental institutions, including the Parliament, the judiciary and political parties.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

The successful local elections in 2015 were a milestone in the territorial and administrative reform process that was heavily supported through the flagship Support to Territorial and Administrative Reform (STAR) programme. In 2015, this programme focused on building the capacity of the new LGUs to ensure a smooth transition after the elections. Training was provided to 244 local professionals from 61 municipal working groups on how to perform municipal due diligence and engage in the amalgamation/consolidation processes for the new municipalities. A practical guide, tailored for each new LGu in accordance with their specific needs and characteristics, was provided to the new

mayors' cabinets. These guides include detailed instructions for a smooth transfer of functions and responsibilities from the former LGUs. Support was also provided to 26 smaller LGUs in designing their short-term Local Development Operational Plans, which will serve as blue-prints for the new municipalities for the next 2-3 years. Furthermore, the changeover is being used as an opportunity to modernize services, with one-stop shops offering services through a single desk piloted in two LGUs, and one LGu also piloting a new data management system and the digitization of their archives.



A man saves time and avoids costly travel by getting a document approved at a one-stop shop

Photo by: UNDP Albania

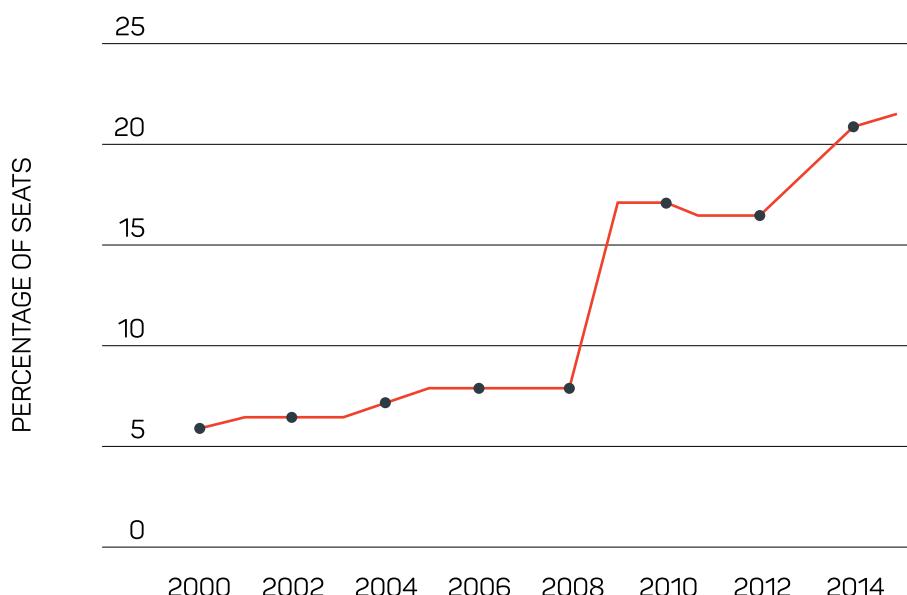
In a significant gain for gender equality, the Albanian Parliament legislated a 50 percent women's quota for the candidates for the June 2015 local elections. UNDP's support in this initiative included the development of the legislation, and the creation of advocacy and lobbying partnerships such as women's organizations, parliamentary commissions and the women parliamentary caucus. The end result was a milestone achievement of women being elected in approximately 35 percent of all positions across the 61 municipal councils, as compared to around 12 percent in 2011. Female representation in the national parliament has also seen large improvements.

To assess the state of gender inequality in the court system, UNDP supported a review by a local NGO of 655 divorce case decisions from the Tirana District Court. The review showed that in

<sup>35</sup> Transparency International, “Corruption Perceptions Index 2015”. Available from <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2015/#results-table> (accessed 21 June 2016)

Voting in the June 2015 local elections

Photo by: UNDP Albania



Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank<sup>36</sup>

82.9 percent of cases there was no enforcement of court orders on child alimony and no alternative support provided by law enforcement agencies. This often placed an additional burden on women who were typically already in a difficult socio-economic situation. The analysis also provided important insights into the unequal distribution of assets amongst men and women in divorce cases.

UNDP has also been active in the fight against domestic and gender-based violence, estab-

lishing coordinated community response mechanisms in four municipalities, with a focus on preventive action and systems of protection. In addition, existing mechanisms were expanded in two additional municipalities to cover a larger area due to the amalgamation of government units. As a result, in 2015 there was a 30 percent increase in reported cases, a 35 percent increase in requests for the State Police to issue Protection Orders from 2013, and a 24 percent increase in arrests for family crimes from 2014. Complementing this work, UNDP has also helped victims with rehabilitation and reintegration,

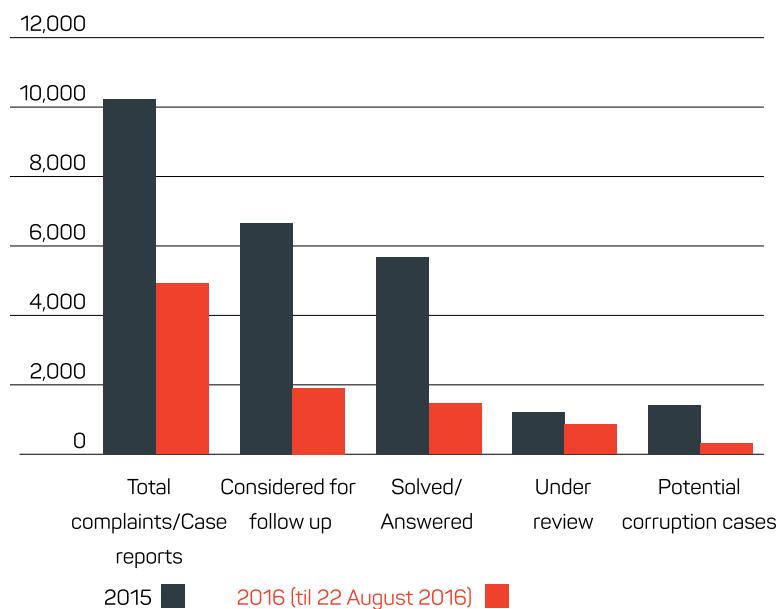
leading to 47 percent of victims being successfully employed as compared to 38 percent in 2014. Furthermore, UNDP supported NGOs and volunteers in the 16 days of activism campaign against gender-based violence. As a result, leaders of the five main religious communities signed cooperation agreements with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth to advocate for gender equality, fight against gender-based violence, and implement the national action plan to involve men and boys in these issues.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The World Bank, "Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)." Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARLZS?locations=AL> (accessed 1 September 2016)

<sup>37</sup> National Action Plan on Involvement of Men and Boys as Partners to Women and Girls in Challenging Gender Stereotypes and Combating Gender Based Violence

UNDP supported Roma and Egyptian communities and civil society organizations to help improve human rights and social inclusion. This included encouraging participation in local planning processes, the prioritization local infrastructure development, and, in partnership with NGOs, providing free legal aid to 165 Roma and Egyptians families in three municipalities. Activists were also supported within their communities to en-

izens to report corruption and service delivery failures. As a result, 10,214 reports were made using the portal in 2015, with 6,527 of these cases were referred for further action. An initial survey was also carried out to gauge public awareness of the portal and the level of confidence in these tools. The portal software was further enhanced in 2016 to further strengthen the function of the National Coordinator on Anti-Corruption.



Source: Ministry of State on Local Issues<sup>38</sup> and StopKorrupsionin<sup>39</sup>

gage women in social change activities, such as UNDP facilitated forums for Roma and Egyptian women to discuss how to better advocate for their rights. Furthermore, a separate initiative provided job training and assistance to 341 people from the Roma and Egyptian communities in Korca, Berat and Vlora. All of these initiatives were complemented by a participatory process involving civil society, municipalities and line ministries which led to the finalization of the 'Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020'.

Finally, in efforts to combat corruption, UNDP assisted the National Coordinator for Anti-Corruption in setting-up a public portal for cit-

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

The reform of the justice sector remains one of the main challenges facing Albania. Despite progress, the functioning of the justice system continues to be affected by politicization, limited accountability, a lack of cooperation between institutions, and corruption. These shortcomings are also reflected in the legal aid system where there are significant procedural, economic and physical barriers preventing vulnerable communities from securing access to justice.

Vulnerable communities also continue to face obstacles, such as finding housing solutions,

<sup>38</sup> Ministèr Shteti për Çeshtjet Vendore, "Portali antikorrupsion".

Available from <http://www.ceshtjetvendore.gov.al/programi-transparencies/portal-antikorrupsion> (accessed 1 September 2016)

<sup>39</sup> StopKorrupsionin, "StopKorrupsionin". Available from <http://stat.stopkorrupsionital> (accessed 1 September 2016)

## Key results

employment and social inclusion, as well as accessing welfare and government services. Gender inequality, women's rights and domestic violence also remain significant issues, although it is hoped that a larger female representation in local councils and expansion of Coordinated Community Response Systems in the new amalgamated municipalities will help efforts to address these issues going forward.

UNDP will work with justice institutions to implement reforms and improve access to justice. With the results of the review of gender inequality in the justice system now completed, UNDP hopes to push for several reforms including alternative solutions for state compensation of child alimony in divorce cases, especially for victims of domestic violence.

UNDP also plans to continue supporting the increased effectiveness of municipal governance by working both at the local and national level. With the formation of the new larger municipalities,

these efforts will include expanded and improved initiatives to provide training, assist the development of operational plans, and modernize service provision. Going forward, UNDP and key partners will also increase assistance to local governance through measures aimed at strengthening local democracy and improving service delivery re-organization and efficiency of LGUs in reaching citizens. Partnerships with and training for civil society organizations will enable participation in decision-making processes and service delivery, as well as the assessment of the performance of service delivery, public administration, and anti-corruption and integrity initiatives. Anti-corruption work is also expected to be expanded, with citizen feedback to be used to push for meaningful reforms to address corruption and service delivery failures. Further research will be undertaken to see how UNDP can support the continued transition from the communist era, particularly with the opening of the Sigurimi files, as well as on how UNDP can support community efforts to prevent any emergence of violent extremism.



*Assistance provided to new LGUs, including training for 244 local professionals on how to perform due diligence and how to self-assess performance*

*10,214 reports of corruption and service delivery failures were made through a newly established public portal*

*June 2015 local government elections result in 35 percent of elected representatives being female in local municipal councils*

*Job training and assistance provided to 341 people from the Roma and Egyptian communities*



# ARMENIA

## BACKGROUND

Formerly part of the Soviet Union, Armenia has undergone broad political, economic and social transformations. Since 2003, the country has experienced steady development, despite the impact of the 2009 financial crisis and the unresolved conflict with Azerbaijan. Armenia has implemented a number of EU-inspired reforms and maintains a relationship with the EU, as well as economic ties with the Russian Federation and other countries in the region. In 2015, Armenia became a member of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Armenia is making efforts to establish a functional democracy and good governance by improving its legal and regulatory mechanisms. The Strategy for Legal and Judicial Reforms (2012-2016) aims to improve the legal framework, increase access to justice and strengthen the independence of the judiciary. Yet, corruption remains a serious issue in Armenia, with the 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index showing that Armenia scored 35/100, and that it had regressed from 2014.<sup>40</sup> Public mistrust of the justice system and its integrity remain especially high,<sup>41</sup> with further reforms necessary to strengthen the rule of law.

<sup>40</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2015".

Available from <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2015/#results-table> (accessed 21 June 2016)

<sup>41</sup> CRRC Armenia, "Caucasus Barometer (CB) - Public Perceptions on Political, Social, and Economic issues in the South Caucasus Countries", 15 June 2015.

There were several important reviews and events in 2015. In January, Armenia underwent its second UPR. 189 recommendations were received as a result of this process, 155 of which were fully accepted. In May, Armenia received the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, whose initial comments indicate certain gaps in the current institutional child protection framework. This was followed by a visit from the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe in October, with the Commissioner noting “persisting reports of torture and ill-treatment by the police and other law enforcement agencies, often with a view to obtaining confessions, are of major concern.”

Finally, in December, a referendum was held on constitutional amendments proposed by the ruling party that would move Armenia from a presidential to a parliamentary system. The proposed amendments passed with a reported 63.5 percent of the vote.<sup>42</sup>

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

With the protection and promotion of human rights being a key focus in Armenia, one of UNDP's priorities in 2015 was ensuring the involvement of government agencies and civil society in following-up and monitoring the implementation of the UPR recommendations, and its alignment with the National Human Rights Action Plan. This was complemented by a series of advocacy events and technical discussions at the national and local levels, involving both government and civil society, to help bring attention to human rights issues.

The border with Georgia remains of crucial importance for Armenian exporters and importers as the port of Poti, and to an extent a highway that connects Georgia with Russia, are the major gateways to external markets. To help address this longstanding concern, UNDP supported an upgrade of border infrastructure, including construction on three border crossing points. This construction included the provision of equipment, power supply, fibre optic network, and IT systems. During this process, the fibre optic and gas network was also extended to seven neighbouring communities, providing access to the fibre optic network for 56,000 people, and to the gas network for 1,200 households. UNDP also contributed to the drafting of the Standard Operating Procedures for the Bagratashen border crossing point and developed protocols for the implementation of an advanced online customs data exchange between customs authorities of both countries. Finally, UNDP also finalized a draft agreement on border delegates between Georgia and Armenia, which is currently with the respective foreign ministries for clearance.

In efforts to boost innovation in governance, UNDP helped establish an innovation hub within the Government. Using expertise from UK-based specialists FutureGov, and a study tour for the Government to the Danish organization, MindLab, UNDP supported the co-design of a new Open Governance Centre concept and a TEDx event on public sector innovation.<sup>43</sup>

Innovation also played an important role as UNDP's Kolba Lab led an initiative to increase public engagement with government. Through crowdsourcing, social innovation camps and hackathons, 20 citizen-led projects in local governance, human rights, and the green economy were generated. These projects are currently at various stages of prototyping and have involved around 350 active citizens, civil servants and members of civil society organizations.



Kolba Labs: Encouraging social business idea development through teamwork

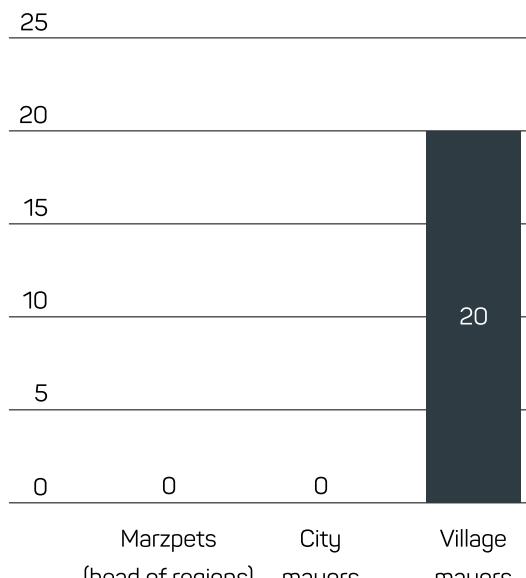
Photo by: UNDP Armenia

<sup>42</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, "Armenia, Constitutional Referendum, 6 December 2015: Final Report", 5 February 2016. Available from <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/220656>

<sup>43</sup> OneArmenia, "A politician, a UN rep and a comedian walk into a bar....", 2 February 2016. Available from [https://onearmenia.org/blog\\_post/a-politician-a-un-rep-and-a-comedian-walk-into-a-bar/](https://onearmenia.org/blog_post/a-politician-a-un-rep-and-a-comedian-walk-into-a-bar/)

Kolba also lent support to Armenia's OGP engagement, using crowdsourcing<sup>44</sup> to encourage citizen inputs for the national OGP strategy for 2016–2018. UNDP has also been working to combat one of the primary drivers of disengagement – corruption. Bolstered by the formation of a new Anti-Corruption Council chaired by the Prime Minister, UNDP contributed to the development of a new anti-corruption strategy for 2015–2018. Now formally adopted by the Government, the strategy will target four main areas – healthcare, education, revenue collection and the police.

To advance women's rights and empowerment, UNDP supported the political participation of women at the local level by implementing capacity development programmes for 490 women. As a result, 20 women ran for election in 37 communities, with 19 being elected. To enlarge the pool of women vying for seats in the local elections in 2016, an additional 204 women were trained on leadership, community development, local governance, gender equality and participatory democracy. Furthermore, UNDP's Women in Local Democracy programme code-designed, prototyped and tested 'women-to-women' mentorship schemes and 'I am the Community'



Source: National Statistical Service RA, 2012



At the Women Leadership School organized by the UNDP 'Women in Local Democracy' project

Photo by: UNDP Armenia

leadership camps. The latter resulted in 26 self-sustaining community initiatives in 21 communities.

In a positive development for the rights of people with disabilities, UNDP supported a comprehensive government reform to change the disability classification model from a medical to a biopsychosocial model,<sup>45</sup> a move supported by the UN Partnership for the Rights of People with Disabilities. This brings it into line with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, and the CRPD. With joint support from UNDP and UNICEF, 300 medical experts, social workers and other respective personnel were trained to carry out the reform in the initial phase. Armenia is one of the leading countries in this initiative, with assessment tools already developed and piloted with 1,200 people. Complementing this, UNDP supported increased political inclusion of people with disabilities by facilitating discussions between 280 people in 11 communities (130 of which were people with disabilities) and their respective local government representatives.

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

A range of issues confront Armenia going forward. Despite the progress to date, improvements are necessary in areas such as non-discrimination, freedom from torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement, and the rights of persons with disabilities. A key step is for Armenia to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, and

<sup>44</sup> Open Government Partnership, "Armenia uses "Crowdsourcing" to design a government action plan", 22 April 2016. Available from <http://www.ogp.am/en/news/item/2016/04/22/3rdAPmeetings/>

<sup>45</sup> The new model shifts viewing disability as a static medical condition towards understanding it as a life experience, and designing interventions that reduce activity limitations and increase participation in all aspects of life.

ensure accountability for attacks and threats against vulnerable groups. Due to the prevalence of violence against women, there is also an urgent need for a law on domestic violence. For UNDP, improving border management will remain a high priority going forward, with a new programme expected to be launched. In addition to investigating innovative solutions, this programme will research the economic benefits of more effective border management.

In support of a more open society grounded on human rights, UNDP will continue and expand efforts to monitor and coordinate responses to the UPR recommendations and launch a programme to extend OGP principles into the justice sector. Further support will also be provided to boost innovation in

the public sector, with Kolba Lab helping to generate innovative solutions to public sector challenges. UNDP will also continue to help tackle corruption and abuse of power through supporting efforts to introduce more transparency and accountability into institutions. A key priority in this area will be helping with the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy 2015-2018.

Going forward, UNDP plans to continue to increase the electability of women, and foster an enabling environment for women to participate – particularly through the introduction of gender quotas at the local level, and practical schemes for women's leadership and engagement at all levels.

## Key results



*Significant upgrade of border infrastructure at three border crossing points between Georgia and Armenia*



*20 citizen-led projects from UNDP's Kolba Lab in various stages of prototyping with the involvement of 350 citizens*



*19 women elected to local government positions after UNDP-run capacity development programmes*



*Disability classification model reformed to align with International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, and the CRPD*



# AZERBAIJAN

## BACKGROUND

Fuelled by oil and gas exports, the Azerbaijan economy was one of the fastest growing economies in the world in the 2000s, with GDP per capita increasing over 1,000 percent between 2001 and 2011. Combined with low unemployment, particularly when compared to neighbouring countries in the region, Azerbaijan saw a rapid improvement in living standards. However, in recent years this explosive growth has fallen away, with low oil prices in 2015 lowering export incomes. What impact this will have on development efforts and the political climate remains to be seen.

With support from the international community, Azerbaijan has launched a number of

programmes on judicial and legal reforms to strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights. To date, the Government has improved the infrastructure of the justice sector, which includes construction of over 20 court buildings and facilities, as well technical renovations and the refurbishment of many others. The improvements to physical infrastructure are yet to be matched by improvements in the judicial system itself.

During 2015, Azerbaijan continued to build on its successful 'ASAN Service Centre' model for service delivery using one-stop shops. The ASAN Service Centres functioning in Baku and four other cities have dramatically reduced bureaucracy, waiting times and opportunities for rent-seeking. A mobile service is also provided

for citizens in rural areas. In recognition of these efforts, ASAN received the 2015 UN Public Service Award.

Despite these successes, major challenges remain for Azerbaijan. Human rights organizations and civil society activists continue to report restrictions on their activity, with media outlets and political opposition facing similar challenges. Corruption also continues to be perceived as an issue, with Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index placing Azerbaijan significantly behind other countries with similar levels of income, even though reports in 2016 pointed to some improvements in the area of customs and public service delivery.

*"Our priority is educated youth able to represent the country with dignity and contribute to further development and progress at local, national and international levels"*

– Mr. Azad Rahimov, Minister of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan at a Model UN opening ceremony

Resource Centres in the regions of Neftchala and Masalli. Serving as platforms for the economic and social empowerment of rural women, the centres were used to train women on basic professional skills, how to start a business, and how to write a business plan based on the International Labour Organization's methodology.



Opening of the Women's Resource Centre in Neftchala

Photo by: UNDP Azerbaijan

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

In efforts to build civic engagement and inclusiveness, in 2015 UNDP focused on working with youth and women as active members of civil society. One of UNDP's key results was the involvement of 300 young people in policy debates on the Sustainable Development Agenda using Model UN clubs established in six Universities. After attending a summer school, the youths debated a broad range of topics such as natural resource management, social inclusion, and gender equality.



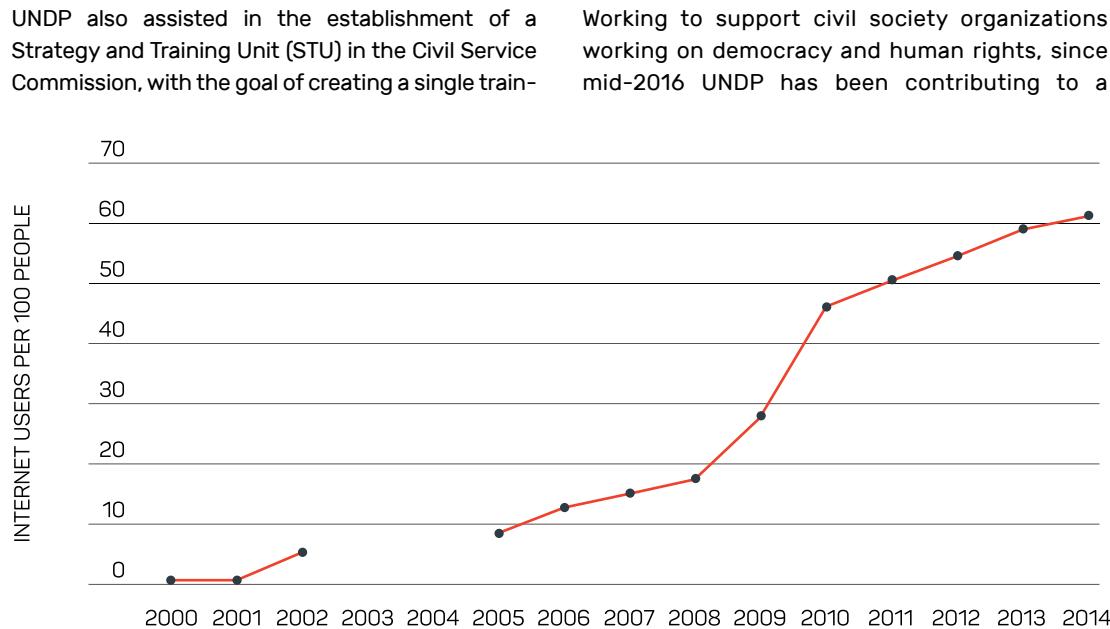
The Model UN in action

Photo by: UNDP Azerbaijan

Improving gender equality was also a goal as UNDP established two additional pilot Women's

In efforts to boost the capacity of public institutions, UNDP supported implementation of the National ICT Strategy that was adopted in 2014. This included awareness programmes for over 600 civil servants on e-Governance solutions for public administration, and training on topics such as e-participation and open data. In addition, over 450 students, staff of high-tech parks, and start-up employees were trained on how to use and benefit from the e-Government portal. This work, in combination with large increases in the number of internet users, has contributed to a large rise in the number of users of e-Government services from 1 million in 2014 to 2.5 million in 2015.

## INTERNET PENETRATION IN AZERBAIJAN - 2000 TO 2014



Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank<sup>46</sup>

ing centre for civil servants. UNDP supported trainings for STU staff on a range of topics, including human resource management and communication skills. This training was enhanced through the exposure of STU staff to similar institutions in Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Ireland. With the abolishment of the Civil Service Commission in early 2016, work to establish the Civil Service Training Centre will be continued by the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Azerbaijan.

Working to support civil society organizations working on democracy and human rights, since mid-2016 UNDP has been contributing to a

EU-initiated programme under the framework of the Eastern Partnership. This programme will help to build the capacity of these organizations and strengthen their role in promoting socio-economic rights of vulnerable populations by supporting a range of activities, including training programmes, seminars, conferences, advocacy, legal aid, analysis, research, monitoring and reporting.

## Key results



*300 young people engaged in Model UN policy debates on resource management, social inclusion, and gender equality*



*Over 600 civil servants educated on innovative solutions for public administration*



*2.5 million users of the e-Government services in 2015*

<sup>46</sup> The World Bank, "Internet users (per 100 people)". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2?locations=AZ> (accessed 1 September 2016)

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Due to the impact of low oil prices, 2016 was a difficult year for Azerbaijan's economy, as for the first time in almost two decades the country is expected to record negative GDP growth (-1.9 percent).<sup>47</sup>

UNDP's main focus in 2016 is to continue implementing the new Country Programme that was approved for the period 2016-2020, as well as to encourage the inclusion of targets and indicators from the SDGs in national development planning.

With civil society continuing to operate in a restricted space in Azerbaijan, UNDP will continue support for increasing civil society engagement, and for the EU-initiated capacity building programme to strengthen organizations working on democracy and human rights. Specific focus will also be provided to help civil society organizations develop skills in addressing needs of vulnerable and socially-excluded groups including women, youth, people with disabilities, and former prisoners.

To continue building responsive and accountable institutions, UNDP is planning several initiatives. This includes advisory support in developing a new economic roadmap, reforming vocational

education and building the capacity of the national statistical office. UNDP is also planning to partner with ASAN to organize an international conference on public service delivery solutions that will serve as a basis for the sharing of the successes of the programme with other countries in the region.

Finally, in continued efforts to promote the economic and social participation of women – particularly in rural areas – the successful Women's Resource Centre pilot will be replicated in additional regions due to the positive response and interest from new partners willing to support the project.

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<sup>47</sup> The World Bank, "Azerbaijan". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/azerbaijan> (accessed 7 October 2016)



# BELARUS

## BACKGROUND

Taking a different path than many of the ex-Soviet republics, Belarus has stayed closer to its centrally planned heritage with government maintaining control of large sectors of the economy. While questions remain about the sustainability of this form of government, Belarus has also developed one of the highest standards of living among the former republics of the Soviet Union.

The major event in 2015 was the presidential election in October, which resulted in President Alexander Lukashenko winning his fifth term in office with over 83 percent of the vote.<sup>48</sup> This

win continues his run of winning every presidential election since independence in 1991. In a positive step, the election was immediately preceded by the release of six opposition figures on humanitarian grounds. This gesture, along with the relative lack of violence during the election, was enough to convince EU foreign ministers to lift sanctions that had been in place since 2004, ending asset freezes and travel bans against 170 individuals, including Lukashenko himself.

In another positive development, the Government adopted the 'National Sustainable Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2030', which includes a commitment to transparen-

<sup>48</sup> BBC News, "Belarus vote: Lukashenko re-elected president by landslide", 12 October 2015. Available from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34499387>

cy and openness in public administration. The first phase aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of governance, expand the roles and areas of responsibility of local governance and self-governance, as well as modernizing and professionalizing the civil service at central and local levels. These have been identified as the primary targets to improve the quality and accessibility of public services.

At the same time, the Government has shown a strong commitment to the UPR process and has engaged with the UN and civil society organizations in the country to ensure follow-up on the accepted recommendations. Despite these positive signs and some improvements, the human rights situation in Belarus remains under close scrutiny from international organizations, including OHCHR and OSCE. Belarus also continues to rank poorly in international ratings and reports on civic and political freedoms.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

Since 2014, UNDP has been running a large-scale local development programme in all six regions in Belarus, with the purpose of facilitating citizen engagement in planning and development at the local and regional level. In 2015, this project started yielding results with UNDP supporting the drafting of participatory development documents for all 118 districts. These documents identify unique challenges and opportunities for each district, and provide guidelines for engaging public, private and civil society organizations to address them. The next phase of the project will see UNDP providing grants to local organizations and individuals for initiatives to address the identified challenges and opportunities. In preparation for this next stage, UNDP helped train local organizations on the grant application process and project management best practices.

To improve public administration performance, following on from the adoption of the 'National Sustainable Socio Economic Development Strategy 2030', the Government sought UNDP assistance to deliver more inclusive and responsive public services. As a first step, UNDP coordinated an international conference on the central role of transparent, inclusive and

responsive institutions, both in delivering on the SDG agenda, and in ensuring inclusive and accessible quality services are provided to all citizens. The conference resulted in commitments from the authorities at central and regional levels, and all stakeholders to work together towards enhancing the capacity of civil servants and improving the opportunities for citizens to influence the delivery of public services.

The new SDG agenda was also the main focus of a massive one-week partnership building, communication and advocacy campaign. Led by UNDP in partnership with a number of UN agencies, the main feature was a train caravan, the UN70 Express, that travelled across Belarus in October, bringing on board hundreds of people representing public, private and civil society partners, donors, international organizations, and vulnerable groups. Stopping in all six regional capitals and Minsk to discuss issues around the SDGs and their relevance for Belarus, the campaign drew over 30,000 participants to more than 250 events. In addition, the Governors of the six regions and Minsk signed declarations committing to the new agenda.



UN70 Express:  
Sustainable  
development, creative  
economy and a big fair  
of initiatives

Photo by: Ariel Rubin/UNDP Eurasia



CITIES VISITED  
BY THE UN70 EXPRESS

*"The Belarusian society followed the media and kept a close eye on the journey the Train took across Belarus. This initiative got the world's attention. It aimed at getting the residents of Belarus to know better the SDGs. They are our goals and we will do our best to achieve them"*

– Ms. Valentin Rybakov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, ceremony of signing the Declaration of Commitment to the SDGs

In the security sector, UNDP supported the State Border Committee with its conversion from a military body to a law enforcement agency, with reforms focusing on both infrastructure and capacity building. Two buildings of the Border Training Institute went through significant physical improvements, including the reconstruction of a three-storey dormitory and one-storey training facility. The Strategy on Psychological Support Service Development was also approved as a guiding framework for work with vulnerable groups of migrants, and as a general resource for

State Border Committee personnel. In addition, a State Border Committee Human Resources Development and Training Strategy was developed in line with EU best practices and officially approved by the Committee in April 2016. UNDP played a leading role coordinating key all stakeholders to ensure they are responsive to the needs of vulnerable migrants and victims of human trafficking.



Psychologists of the State Border Committee learn to work with domestic violence cases among migrants

Photo by: UNDP Belarus

Although human rights remain a sensitive area in Belarus, UNDP was able to advance the human rights agenda in 2015. Firstly, with UNDP assistance, the dialogue between the Government and civil society was expanded to include a number of key issues, including the death penalty, creation of a NHRI, and the drafting of a National Human

## Key results

Rights Action Plan. Following a sustained campaign by UNDP, Belarus signed the CRPD in September. UNDP also supported the follow up on the 2nd cycle UPR in May and organized a successful visit of Belarusian officials to Washington, DC in December with a series of meetings on human rights and rule of law issues with the US State Department.

UNDP has also been expanding the use of innovation and technology to address existing challenges, including citizen based approaches such as social innovation labs. UNDP developed with the National Centre of Legislation and Legal Research an innovative prototype public e-feedback mechanism. The existing system of citizen feedback to public authorities, based on citizen appeals, was reviewed together with the best practices from the country and the region, and used to develop a new online system that is user-friendly for people with disabilities and can be adapted for all government websites.

The use of innovation and technology has also resulted in a shift in the way that UNDP and the authorities are working to combat corruption and the informal economy. In an initiative expected to generate ongoing dividends, UNDP facilitated the visit of the Behavioural Insight Team from the UK government to work with the Ministry of Finance and tax officers in Minsk. During this visit, interventions were designed to facilitate informal workers being reintegrated back into the formal economy.



*Participatory development documents drafted for all 118 districts in Belarus*



*Tripartite dialogue between government, civil society and UN is sustained on key human rights issues as part of the UPR follow-up process*

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Like many countries in the region, Belarus is expected to experience worsening economic conditions. Despite these expected fiscal pressures, UNDP will continue working closely with the Government, civil society organizations and private sector partners to continue on the path to a fairer and more open society.

Planned work includes the rolling out of a long-term comprehensive rule of law and access to justice programme, continuing advocacy for the establishment of a NHRI, and implementation of a National Human Rights Action Plan as part of the UPR follow-up process. In addition, UNDP will proceed with publication of materials from the International Conference 'Death Penalty: Transcending the Divide' held in March 2016 and will continue the dialogue on the death penalty with the Parliament.

Efforts are planned to support the rights of people with disabilities. With the ratification of the CRPD in late 2016, UNDP plans to work closely with other UN agencies and national partners on the implementation of needed reforms. This will be complemented by a nationwide two-month advocacy and awareness raising campaign: 'Inclusive Belarus'. UNDP will also work to



*State Border Committee Human Resources Development and Training Strategy developed in line with EU best practices and officially approved*



*CRPD signed*

boost national gender equality mechanisms and to support an assessment of where inequality continues to have the most significant impacts.

UNDP will also continue providing support and assistance to the Government's planned changes to improve the performance of public administration. In early 2016, UNDP launched a 3-year project to support public administration in building the capacities of civil servants, and making local governance and public service delivery more responsive to citizens. The project will improve the selection, training and performance assessment of civil servants at all levels, strengthen public engagement in planning and implementation processes, and boost the ability of the public and civil society to conduct monitoring of public services and provide feedback. In order to achieve these goals, the project will test a range of initiatives and will pilot two integrated customer service centres.

Finally, UNDP will continue to use innovation to enhance the influence and reach of its efforts. After the positive response to the pilot e-feedback system in 2015, further testing and development of the system will be undertaken as it moves towards a full rollout. UNDP's anti-corruption work will also continue, with the interventions designed in partnership with the UK Government's Behavioural Insight Team expected to begin implementation. As a result of this work, a team of tax officers from Moldova that participated in the event is also expected to launch its own initiative.



# BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## BACKGROUND

During the 20 years since the end of the war in BiH, steps have been taken to rebuild democratic institutions, provide remedies for conflict-related injustice, promote peacebuilding and move the country along the EU integration path. However, in many cases progress has been slow due to political deadlocks, and accompanying economic and financial difficulties.

The governance structure of BiH is unique in the region as a result of the complex peace negotiation process in 1995 and the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords (which includes the BiH Constitution). This structure means the state is assigned with limited responsibilities, with most of the political and financial power resting with two

entities and a district (the Republika Srpska, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Brcko District). This has led to a high level of political polarization, as evidenced by the challenges from the Republika Srpska authorities to the legitimacy of state-level authorities and BiH sovereignty, unresolved issues in the education sector such as two schools under one roof, and the unresolved status of the city of Mostar, where failure to reach an agreement on the administrative structure led to exclusion from another local elections cycle.

The overall socio-economic and political situation, including high rates of unemployment (specifically among youth) and a sense of social apathy, is also believed to be a driver of a number of citizens becoming foreign fighters in Syria, Ukraine, and other conflict-affected countries. With concerns over the con-

sequences of these fighters returning home, as well as the large quantities of weapons remaining from the war in the 1990s, the BiH Council of Ministers released the 'Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Prevention and Combating Terrorism' in 2015. BiH has also outlawed participation in foreign conflicts (either as a fighter or recruiter)<sup>49</sup> and jailed the first people under this law,<sup>50</sup> with more arrests and convictions occurring through late 2015 and early 2016.

In 2015, BiH placed greater emphasis on reform processes through the adoption of the Reform Agenda and official submission of the EU application. In efforts to sustain peace, events such as the visit of Pope Francis and the reopening of the National Museum after three years provided an important boost to the campaign to promote coexistence and diversity throughout the country. This came on top of the solidarity seen in the immediate response to the May 2014 floods (the most devastating that the country has seen in decades)<sup>51</sup> and the continuing flood-recovery efforts.

views, and 3,680 social platform users. In total, it is estimated that 1,138,084 persons, or close to 30 percent of the population, have been engaged in peacebuilding issues.

To improve access to justice, in coordination with the Ministry of Justice of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, UNDP established a new free legal aid agency to ensure access to free legal aid services and information for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and women.



Taking Dialogue for the Future to the streets

Photo by: UNDP BiH

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

Dialogue for the Future, a project involving multiple UN agencies and funded by the UN agencies funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund, continued the focus on trust building and the promotion of diversity. In an important milestone, the Presidency of BiH signed the 'Dialogue Platform Declaration', which facilitates the engagement of decision makers from all jurisdictional levels of the country at Dialogue for the Future events, including the flagship Dialogue Platform Conferences. Dialogue for the Future has directly engaged over 54,000 citizens through two Dialogue Platform Conferences, 26 youth forums, and 40 grants facility projects, which has resulted in a formal process that enables citizens and decision makers to interact and discuss peace- and trust-building. Dialogue for the Future has also reached a huge audience, including over 1,350 positive stories, 20 televised reports with an estimated 890,560 viewers, 27,494 YouTube and 135,419 Facebook

With this addition, the total number of free legal aid agencies now stands at 16, enabling access to free legal aid services for more than 800,000 citizens. Implementation of small grants programmes also significantly increased the territorial coverage and access to free legal aid in rural and remote areas. During 2015, 11,637 women and 10,332 men received free legal aid services in all types of cases and court proceedings.

UNDP also supported the implementation of the Justice Sector Reform and National War Crimes Prosecution Strategies by facilitating better co-operation among war crimes prosecution offices in the region, speeding up the processing of war crimes cases that have a regional dimension. UNDP further supported the continued expansion and improvement of the Victim-Witness Support programme to 16 fully operational offices. These offices assisted over 1,600 people in 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Reuters, "Bosnia introduces jail terms to curb recruitment for Syria", 29 April 2014.

Available from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-bosnia-idUSBREA3SOPN20140429>

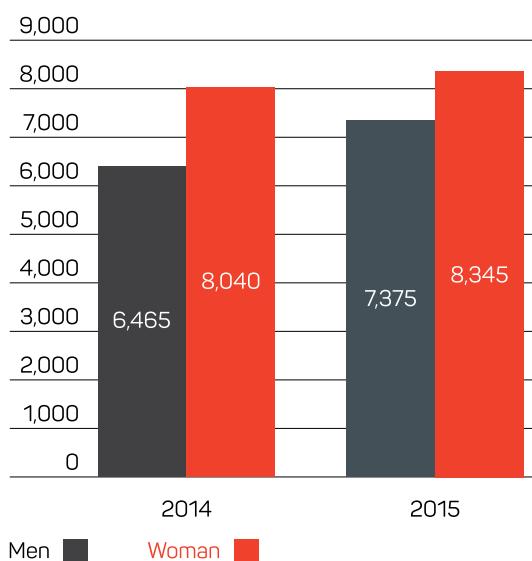
<sup>50</sup> Balkan Insight, "Bosnia Court Jails Middle Eastern Fighters", 6 October 2015. Available from <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-s-court-delivers-first-ever-sentence-against-foreign-fighters-10-06-2015>

<sup>51</sup> BBC News, "Bosnia and Serbisa emergency after 'worst ever' floods", 16 May 2014.  
Available from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27439139>

*"Peacebuilding [reconciliation, "pomirenje"] process within the BiH society is the most important one, on which all other positive processes in the society and the state are based. This process is moving spontaneously. We have seen in the misfortune that fell upon us through the floods and landslides some time ago [May 2014] positive moves in the right direction. People helped each other, entire villages helped others with no regard on whether the citizens were of their ethnicity, religion or nation."*

**- Mr. Bakir Izetbegović**, Chairman of the BiH Presidency following official signing of the Dialogue for the Future Project

## LEGAL AID RECIPIENTS - 2014 AND 2015



Source: UNDP

UNDP is also working on a joint UN project in partnership with IOM, UNFPA and UN Women to strengthen the ability of the judiciary, the police and the media to prosecute and report on CRSV in BiH. This joint programme, amongst other things, has provided training to representatives of the judiciary, police and media on survivors' rights and standards for processing of war crimes cases involving sexual violence.



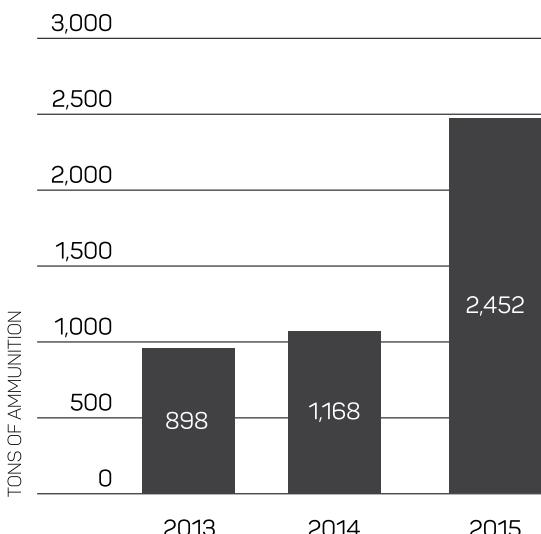
Opening of a Victim and Witness Support Office in Zenica

Photo by: Ismar Sačak/UNDP BiH

Initiated in 2009, LOD (Reinforcement of Local Democracy) is a project which aims to improve cooperation between local governments and civil society organizations, contributing to better service delivery for excluded and vulnerable population groups. The project focuses on enhancing transparency and accountability of public spending at the local level, strengthening partnerships between local governments and civil society organizations, the realization of grass-root initiatives and increasing the capacities of civil society organizations. Implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and various associations of municipalities and cities, LOD has worked in partnership with 50 partner local governments and 243 civil society organizations to support the implementation of 289 projects based on the needs of local communities. To date, this project has benefitted over 81,000 people.

To combat corruption, in 2015, UNDP trained key law enforcement agencies and created a governance model for improved coordination among stakeholders involved in the fight against corruption in order to enable more efficient and effective identification and prosecution of corruption cases going forward.

In work to diminish the legacy of the war, UNDP in coordination with the Ministry of Defence, contributed to the disposal of 2,452 tons of unsafe ammunition, reducing the quantity of remaining ammunition surpluses to 12,000 tons. Due to the optimization of ammunition disposal processes, the overall rate of disposal was increased almost threefold, thus reducing the overall expected time of completion of addressing the issue of unsafe stockpile ammunition to five years. Five out of seven ammunition and weapons storage sites were also upgraded through the reconstruction of facilities, drainage, and ventilation systems as part of this process.



Source: SEESAC

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Progress has been made in the EU integration process through the implementation of the Reform Agenda. However, the further implementation of the Reform Agenda and the EU accession process will face complexities, such as the upcoming elections. Elections typically intensify the political and ethnic dynamics in the country, limiting the capacity for political compromises and agreements. The next steps in the complex EU integration process for BiH

involves the submission of an application for membership and the presentation of and response to the questionnaire. Progress on these steps will depend on political stability and effective coordination in the implementation of the Reform Agenda.

Economically, significant challenges also lie ahead. With unemployment over 25 percent<sup>52</sup> and estimated GDP growth of 2 percent in 2014,<sup>53</sup> there is frustration, particularly among youth, at the lack of opportunities and slow economic growth. A new International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan agreement is necessary to ensure fiscal stability. With clear linkages between these economic challenges and the political and ethnic polarization, expectations of the BiH Reform Agenda are high, not only as an indication of the maturity of the EU integration process, but also as a way to improve socio-economic conditions and defuse political tensions.

Along with framing assistance in line with the priorities of the Reform Agenda and the necessities that arise in the EU integration process, UNDP is focused on several key priorities targeting peace-building and social cohesion.

Further improvements of free legal aid services are planned, with a focus on enhancing access to justice for survivors of CRSV, and improving the quality of services through institutional referral networks. Work on the regional dimension of war crimes cases will also be continued. Furthermore, UNDP plans to develop action plans to improve human rights and gender equality in order to better support state institutions.

Building on and scaling up the successful results of the LOD project, UNDP will support a new Regional Local Democracy Project (ReLoD), expanding the methodology to other countries in the Western Balkans. ReLoD aims to strengthen partnerships between local governments and civil society by scaling-up a successful model of transparent and project-based civil society organization funding from local governments' budgets, with a goal of encouraging greater civic engagement in decision-making and improvement of local service delivery.

<sup>52</sup> The World Bank, "Databank – World Development Indicators". Available from <http://databank.worldbank.org/> (accessed 22 June 2016)

<sup>53</sup> The World Bank, "Bosnia Overview".

Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bosniaandherzegovina/overview> (accessed 22 June 2016)

## Key results

Finally, to improve community safety, UNDP plans to support programmes to remove ammunition and weapons from communities, as well as explore interventions to strengthen border management and

prevent violent extremism. In continued partnership with the BiH Presidency, engagement in peacebuilding activities will continue with a strong focus on engaging youth through social entrepreneurship.



*Over 1,138,084 people engaged (directly and indirectly) as part of Dialogue for the Future*

*Free legal aid provided to 11,637 women and 10,332 men*

*16 free legal aid agencies now in operation*

*Disposal of 2,452 tons of unsafe ammunition*



# GEORGIA

## BACKGROUND

Since the Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgia has made notable progress in improving democracy and human development, and has become an established regional leader in governance reforms. In particular, the peaceful transition of power following the parliamentary elections in 2012 showed the maturity of democracy and rule of law. However, since winning that election, the Georgian Dream party has seen two Prime Ministers resign, most recently when Irakli Garibashvili resigned in December 2015, less than a year ahead of the 2016 parliamentary elections.

In the last 10 years, Georgia has undertaken a number of reforms in the areas of human

rights and rule of law, including the adoption of a Criminal Justice Reform Strategy, a Civic Integration Strategy, a National Human Rights Strategy and Personal Data Protection and Anti-discrimination legislation. It has also adopted new legislation that increases the independence of the judiciary, the establishment of an independent legal aid service, and the improvement of prison conditions. Georgia is also undertaking significant reforms to decentralize power to the regions. All of these reforms require further support to ensure adequate implementation.

Georgia has long prioritized integration into the EU and Euro-Atlantic structures, and in June 2014, took a significant step by signing an Association Agreement with the EU. This

agreement, which includes joining the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, significantly deepens political and economic ties with Europe. Georgia has also acceded to a number of international treaties on human rights, including the CRPD.

Despite the progress to date though, several challenges remain in Georgia. Most prominently, inequality and unemployment remain high, and the protracted conflicts in the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are still unresolved.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

The continued improvement of human rights is a key priority for UNDP in Georgia. UNDP's focus has been to support the National Human Rights Strategy and the implementation of the Action Plan adopted in 2014, as well as the formulation of a new 2016-2017 Action Plan. Reforms to the criminal justice system, judiciary, penitentiary system and personal data protection are to be implemented by the National Human Rights Council. As a member (without voting power) of this National Council, UNDP contributed directly to monitoring the implementation of the action plan and confirming progress against benchmarks.

Steps are also being taken towards greater transparency, with the Georgian Parliament engaging in the OGP Initiative and adopting a Parliamentary Openness Action Plan in July 2015, one of the first parliaments in the world to do so. With UNDP actively supporting and facilitating, the Parliament developed the plan through a consultative process involving civil society organizations, and it includes commitments to promote public involvement in the legislative process, access to information, as well as new technologies and innovation to reform Parliament's web services and accountability. The Georgian Parliament has already started to implement up to 18 openness commitments by establishing the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance to monitor the implementation of the commitments and ensure sustainability and local ownership of the process. A number of web innovations were also introduced and legislative amendments prepared to advance transparency and citizen engagement. As an acknowledgement of its commitment to openness and effective co-



Youth for Open Parliament - Winners of the ideas contest receive gifts and certificates

Photo by: Daro Sulakauri/UNDP

*"Parliament is the democratic institution closest to the people. In Georgia, we formed an Inter-Factional Working Group that worked closely with civil society leaders to develop a concrete plan for increasing parliamentary openness, with specific, objective milestones, to make sure we are on track. We are pleased that this work is recognized internationally and we are honoured to host this meeting of the Legislative Openness Working Group"*

**- Mr. Davit Usupashvili**, Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, opening remarks at the 'Committing to Openness: Parliamentary Action Plans, Standards and Tools' conference

operation with civil society, the Georgian parliament was awarded the global OGP Government Champions Award in October 2015. Building on recent decentralization reforms, UNDP assisted national, regional and local authorities to continue with the reform process. In a significant step, a new Law on Mountainous Regions Development was adopted in July 2015, after intensive policy consultations involving the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, other Ministries and the Parliament. This law is designed to provide substantial social, economic and business ben-

efits, together with a guarantee of annual funds from the national budget reserved for mountain development. UNDP also supported the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure to reach agreement with other ministries on 30 separate amendments promoting the decentralization of power to municipalities, adding to the four acts<sup>54</sup> and four competencies<sup>55</sup> agreed upon in 2014.

With continuing protracted conflicts, UNDP is working to increase both the number and capacity of civil society organizations by providing training to improve the implementation of conflict-sensitive interventions at the grassroots level, and enhancing the sustainability of the organizations themselves. The provision of grants to help address shared challenges across the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian ethnic communities is resulting in improved intercommunity relationships, and improvement in well-being and livelihoods. An example is the support to Georgian and Abkhaz ethnic communities to collect anonymized personal stories (micronarratives), in addition to more traditional survey data. This information is used to identify issues of concern across these communities, with a focus on those concerning women and youth. Overall, these grants have seen the number of projects involving people from two or more of the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian ethnic communities increase to 73 percent, or 55 out of a total of 75 projects, and have positively affected over 90,000 conflict-affected people.

Confidence-building among ethnic communities in Georgia is being complemented with more systematic attempts to remove ethnic discrimination. Following on from the adoption of the Law on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, in 2015, UNDP supported efforts to promote equal access to government services for linguistic minorities. This involved UNDP and the Ministry of Justice facilitating the translation of a number of government websites and other resources into the Abkhaz language. Georgian language classes are also being provided for national and ethnic minorities in remote rural destinations to promote their integration into society.

In efforts to improve access to justice, advocacy from UNDP, USAID and the EU led to an extension of the Legal Aid Service mandate from April 2015. As a result, the Legal Aid Service now provides services in selected civil and administrative cases, in addition to those of criminal nature. UNDP also brokered an agreement between the Legal Aid Service and the Public Service Development Agency for working space to be provided for Legal Aid Service lawyers at Public Service Development Agency Community Centres in six rural locations. The Legal Aid Service delivered services to over 30,000 disadvantaged citizens in 2015.



10 years of legal aid in Georgia – Niels Scott, head of UNDP Georgia, congratulates the Legal Aid Service

Photo by: Vladimer Valishvili/UNDP

This expansion of legal aid to regional and rural areas was one of several efforts to improve the livelihoods of people outside the major administrative centres. Following up on the Regional Development Strategies and Action Plans approved in 2014, UNDP support for regional and municipal-level strategic planning in six target regions resulted in the implementation of 600 proposed projects. Accordingly, the annual State budget for these regional infrastructure projects has increased from approximately US\$63 million in 2014 to US\$79 million.<sup>56</sup> UNDP also supported 22 pilot municipalities in drafting development plans, and is expected to be followed-up with strategic planning support for all 42 municipalities in the six target regions.

In efforts to promote gender equality, UNDP facilitated a micro-grants programme for rural women's groups to complete small priority proj-

<sup>54</sup> Public school infrastructure maintenance, stray animals care, cultural heritage monuments upkeep and maintenance, and parking regulations

<sup>55</sup> Potable water supply, irrigation water supply, waste management, and transportation service provision

<sup>56</sup> Based on an exchange rate of 1 US dollar to 2.21 Georgian Lari

## Key results

*Adoption of a highly ambitious Parliamentary Openness Action Plan within the OGP framework with 18 solid commitments*



*90,000 people benefitted from 75 projects to improve relationships between Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian ethnic communities.*



With these economic and political pressures, there is also a risk that potentially less popular reforms, such as implementing existing human rights and gender equality policies, and honouring commitments for increased legislative openness and transparency will become more difficult. To mitigate this, UNDP will work with candidates and parliamentarians from all ma-



*Legal Aid Service expanded, providing access to free legal aid to more than 30,000 disadvantaged citizens*



*Adoption of new Law on Mountainous Regions Development, guaranteeing annual funds from the national budget for mountain development*

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

One of the primary challenges facing Georgia going forward is the regional economic slowdown. Already, falls in export revenues and flows of remittances have resulted in GDP growth slowing from 4.6 percent in 2014 to 2.8 percent in 2015.<sup>57</sup> The risk is that this slowdown will exacerbate existing socio-economic disparities and divides between ethnic groups. In response, a key priority for UNDP will be promoting inclusive growth and continued support for democratic reforms, with the Sustainable Development Agenda particularly central to policy formulation.

Major parties to ensure they remain committed to reform. UNDP will also work with the EU to encourage a credible and fair election process, in particular by pushing for unbiased and balanced media coverage.

Decentralization also remains an ongoing priority. UNDP plans to continue supporting local self-governance reform with, amongst other things, capacity building of institutions and civil servants (at both the local and national level), to ensure all levels of government are able to manage and facilitate the decentralization process and provide better services to citizens. This will become particularly important with the Government indicating its commitment to fiscal decentralization to municipalities.

<sup>57</sup> The World Bank, "Georgia Overview". Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/georgia/overview#1> (accessed 3 June 2016)

UNDP also plans to continue supporting the Georgian Parliament in developing its institutional capabilities, policy-making ability and oversight functions.

Finally, UNDP will be working to improve social cohesion across Georgia. By supporting civil society organizations, UNDP will look to scale-up

conflict prevention projects and initiatives that address shared challenges and improve livelihoods across ethnic divides. Continued work will be also carried out in Abkhazia to enhance social inclusion through interventions to improve the quality of life and income generation for rural communities.



# KAZAKHSTAN

## BACKGROUND

An ethnically diverse nation with large oil, gas and mineral reserves, Kazakhstan has experienced rapid economic growth since the turn of the century and has become the dominant economy in Central Asia. However, with oil and other petroleum products making up over 60 percent of exports, the fall in prices for many commodities in 2015 had a significant impact on the Kazakh economy.

In April 2015, Nursultan Nazarbaev won the latest presidential election with a reported 97.7 percent of the vote.<sup>58</sup> His re-election coincided with the launch of an important reform process,

entitled '100 Concrete Steps to Implement Five Institutional Reforms', which is anticipated to strongly impact on institutional efficiency, government openness and long-term economic development. Furthermore, the President has made a commitment to reforms encouraging a multi-party system, while the country has also been exploring ways to decentralize power to the local level, with several initiatives from the Government in this area. To date, however, there is still significant potential for the further decentralization of power to local executive bodies.

Over the past two decades, Kazakhstan has implemented significant public administra-

<sup>58</sup> BBC News, "Kazakh leader gains crushing election victory", 27 April 2015. Available from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32471428>

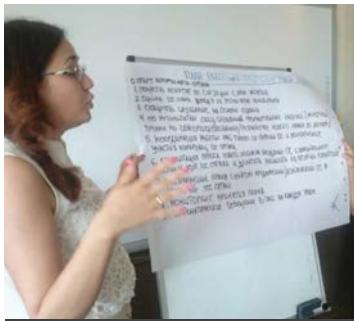
tion and civil service reforms to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of government. Nonetheless, more progress is needed in addressing the development challenges facing Kazakhstan. Restrictions on freedom of expression remain, with newspapers and other media outlets presenting dissenting views still subject to closure by authorities. Further improvement is also required to reduce discrimination against ethnic minorities, the LGBTI community and some religious groups.

More recently, Kazakhstan has been playing an active role in attempts to counter violent extremism in Central Asia. In June 2015, Kazakhstan hosted the two-day Central and South Asia Regional Conference on Countering Violent Extremism. Co-organized by the Kazakh and US governments, the event was attended by 200 high-level government officials, representatives of the private sector and civil society activists from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. As a result of the conference, a set of recommendations were adopted and concrete steps proposed to enhance national and regional efforts.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

A major development in 2015 was the adoption of the Law on Access to Information in November. UNDP has been involved with this new law in several ways, including participating in the working group to discuss and draft the law, providing expert recommendations and advice, and the provision of suggestions and comments collected at Regulatory Impact Analysis and capacity building events in the regions. Following the drafting process, UNESCO and UNDP also initiated a preliminary evaluation of the draft law to assess compliance with the Global Right to Information index. The results of this evaluation were presented in September by the UN common group at the 'Access to Information and Public Participation' conference organized by the Parliament, OSCE, UNDP and a number of NGO partners. UNDP also continued its support for the Regional Hub for Civil Service in Astana (the Hub). Established in 2013, the Hub's goal is to promote civil service excellence and facilitate the ex-

change of knowledge and best practices among the countries of the region and beyond. The Hub has a range of strategies, including capacity build-



Discussing the effectiveness of public councils, the involvement of civil society in decision making and access to information

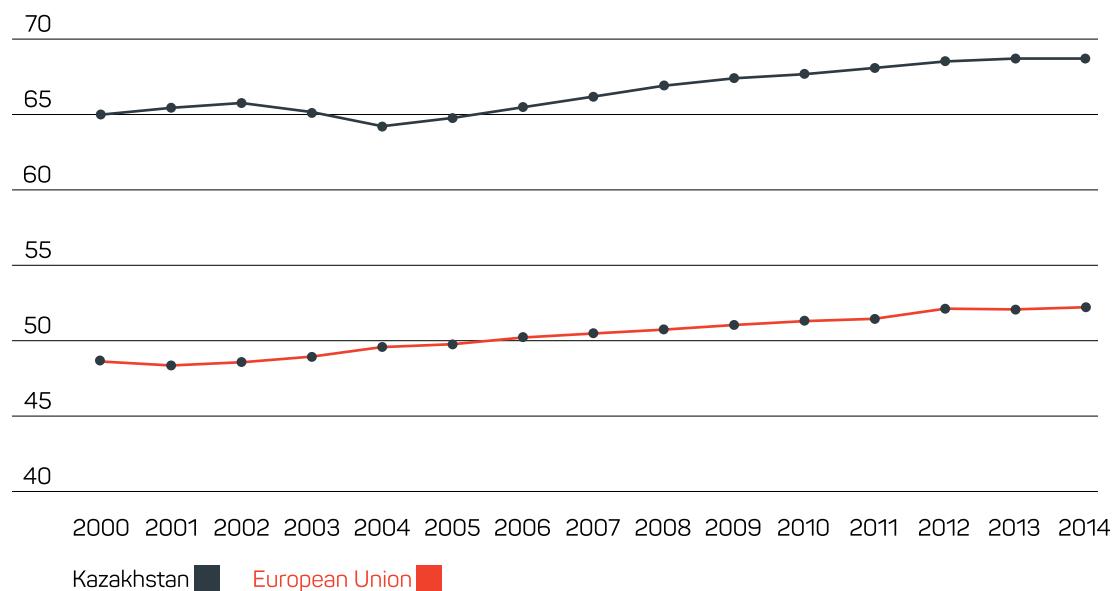
Photo by: UNDP Kazakhstan

*"Since its establishment, the hub has become a recognized multi-institutional platform for the incessant exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of civil service, aimed at stimulating the transformation of civil service in the region through capacity building and dissemination of innovative approaches in the field of civil service"*

– **Mr. Rolf Alter**, OECD Director for Public Governance and Territorial Development at the 'Partnership for Civil Service Excellence' conference

ing for people and institutions, building partnerships and networks across borders, and assisting with research and knowledge management. As part of this support, in 2015, UNDP assisted with the launch of the Innovative Solutions Scheme, a grants scheme that supports innovative reforms and solutions in civil service and public administration that have the potential to be replicated in other countries. UNDP also sits on the independent selection committee that selects the most innovative proposals. Membership of the Hub currently includes 36 countries globally.

## FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION, KAZAKHSTAN VS. THE EU - 2000 TO 2014



Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> The World Bank, "Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) [modeled ILO estimate]". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS> (accessed 1 September 2016)



Workshop organized by the UNDP in cooperation with the Supreme Court targeting rule of law principles and citizens' access to justice

Photo by: UNDP Kazakhstan

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

While Kazakhstan continues to make improvements in the field of civil service reform and public services delivery, several challenges remain.

## Key results



*12,206 people surveyed to assess the effectiveness of the judicial system*



*New laws on Access to Information, Public Councils, Civil Service, and Prevention of Corruption passed with UNDP assistance and input*



*Concept of Family and Gender Policy in Kazakhstan for 2017-2030 drafted with support of UNDP*



*Innovative Solutions Scheme launched at the Regional Hub for Civil Service, which also had the number of participating countries grow to 36*

Despite the Government's willingness to promote state transparency and accountability, the implementation of the new laws on Access to Information and Public Councils have so far proven difficult, with a lack of supplementary regulations for the practical application of laws, and some government officials yet to be convinced of the benefits. The successful implementation of these laws is expected to require significant capacity building and experience before yielding results. Going forward, this work to improve transparency and accountability of civil servants and government bodies will be coordinated with the lower house of Parliament (the Majilis) and OSCE to ensure continued respect for the constitutional rights of people to obtain and disseminate information, and take part in decision-making processes.

UNDP's work with the Hub will continue. In particular, UNDP will support the development of a long-term strategy for the Hub, factoring in the needs of the participating countries. The results of this process will be recorded in operational and strategy documents. With a long-term strategy in place, support and training will be provided on how to best develop the Hub's facilities and resources in line with that strategy.

Work to improve public administration will also be taken to the regions, where UNDP will support efforts to improve the capacities of public councils. Specifically, UNDP will be working with members of public councils, NGOs, the media and representatives of local executive bodies to support the effective use of public hearings, public expertise,

public monitoring and reporting of executives at public councils' meetings. UNDP will also look to build on the recent events around countering violent extremism to encourage proactive measures to reduce extremism that do not negatively impact on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, UNDP will continue supporting the efforts of the Government in development of local governance, with a law on local governance expected to be passed in the near future.

Finally, UNDP will continue assisting the Government in its efforts to improve and implement human rights legislation, taking on board the recommendations provided through the UN treaty bodies' mechanisms. This will include the development of indicators to enable effective monitoring of the implementation of the new legislation, as well as capacity building workshops for law enforcement bodies and NGOs to increase awareness on the specifics of international commitments and mechanisms. Public discussion of human rights issues through public councils at the regional level are also planned to increase awareness on existing problems amongst LGUs and civil society.



# KOSOVO

## BACKGROUND

The 16 years since the end of the conflict in Kosovo have seen considerable progress, with significant infrastructure investment, the promulgation of a constitution and a new legal framework, and the creation of central and municipal institutions. However, challenges remain in regard to the effectiveness and efficiency of many institutions, the effectiveness of rule of law, gender equality, and corruption, which continues to be one of the more significant obstacles to the implementation of reforms. Kosovo has seen progress on inter-ethnic relations since the end of the conflict with a decline

of ethnically motivated incidents. Nevertheless, the level of trust between communities remains low, particularly in the four northern municipalities.

The signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Kosovo in November 2015 marked a milestone in Kosovo's European integration path. During 2015, Kosovo took steps to address the apparent high level of recruitment of Kosovars as foreign fighters,<sup>60</sup> with new anti-terror laws that allow for the arrest and conviction of those who participate in foreign conflicts. Kosovo has also developed a strategy and action plan for the prevention of vi

<sup>60</sup> Kosovar Center for Security Studies, "Report inquiring into the causes and consequences of Kosovo citizens' involvement as foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq", April 2015. Available from [http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Report\\_inquiring\\_into\\_the\\_causes\\_and\\_consequences\\_of\\_Kosovo\\_citizens%27\\_involvement\\_as\\_foreign\\_fighters\\_in\\_Syria\\_and\\_Iraq\\_307708.pdf](http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Report_inquiring_into_the_causes_and_consequences_of_Kosovo_citizens%27_involvement_as_foreign_fighters_in_Syria_and_Iraq_307708.pdf)

olent extremism. As of 2016, the number of foreign fighters in Syria from Kosovo is believed to have fallen significantly.<sup>61</sup>

In 2015, Kosovo witnessed a series of mass protests, both inside and outside the Assembly, primarily driven by political differences between the Government and opposition parties on plans to establish a separate association of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo, and the proposed solution to a border demarcation dispute with Montenegro.

Exacerbating the scale and intensity of the protests is the poor state of the economy. A period of relatively rapid economic growth in the 2000s has been followed by slower growth, and has been accompanied by high levels of unemployment, currently over 35 percent<sup>62</sup>. Labour force participation for women in Kosovo is one of the lowest in the region, with just 21.4 percent of women working or actively seeking work<sup>63</sup>. This lack of meaningful work for large sections of the population feeds into disillusionment with the political system and the rule of law, which in turn negatively impacts foreign investment.

Despite a strategic framework to combat organized crime, amongst other things, the informal economy, corruption, money laundering and human trafficking, also still remain issues of concern.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

Improving the accountability and transparency of the Kosovo authorities is a key focus for UNDP. Taking a sectoral approach, UNDP helped to increase transparency and minimize corruption in the energy, mining, and extractive industries by mapping corruption risks. This risk assessment was then provided to the central institutions to enable a better understanding of those risks and possible mitigation approaches. The benefits of technology in anti-corruption also continue to

be utilized. Created in 2012 with UNDP support, the online platform, [kallxo.com](#) continues to help fight corruption by engaging citizens and improving the accountability of institutions. In 2015, approximately 5,000 cases of corruption were reported by citizens through the platform, 300 of which were referred to rule of law institutions. This level of participation is evidence of the determination of the local community to reduce corruption.

UNDP continues to support the strengthening of the rule of law, including the development and establishment of a formal policy coordination and strategic planning process for the four key justice institutions: The Ministry of Justice, Kosovo Judicial Council, Kosovo Prosecutorial Council and Kosovo Judicial Institute. UNDP also helped the Basic and Appeal Courts in the uni-



Participants in Week of Women 2015 discuss the role of women in the fight against corruption

Photo by: UNDP Kosovo

cation of decision and sentencing practices, and by supporting training for judges, prosecutors, and others involved in the legal system on the application of human rights conventions. In efforts to reduce the court and prosecution backlog, UNDP supported the referral of 714 cases to mediation, and invested in the Judicial Institute's Initial Education Training Programme that resulted in 16 new judges and prosecutors being appointed. Lastly, following the Pristina-Belgrade agreement for the integration of the judiciary in the northern municipalities, UNDP is supporting the integration of the Kosovo Serb judges and prosecutors into the judicial system.

<sup>61</sup> Official website of the Office of the Prime Minister, "Prime Minister Isa Mustafa opened the third international conference", 2 February 2016. Available from <http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/?page=2,9,5554>

<sup>62</sup> Kosovo Agency of Statistics, "Results of the Kosovo 2014 Labour Force Survey", June 2015. Available from <https://ask.rks-gov.net/en/lm?download=7:results-of-the-Kosovo-2014-labour-force-survey> [accessed June 24 2016]

<sup>63</sup> Kosovo Agency of Statistics, "Results of the Kosovo 2014 Labour Force Survey", June 2015. Available from <https://ask.rks-gov.net/en/lm?download=7:results-of-the-Kosovo-2014-labour-force-survey> [accessed June 24 2016]

UNDP is also working to improve the capacities of civil servants for better public service delivery, supporting the drafting and finalization of the Civil Service Training Strategy 2016-2020 and Action Plan 2016-2018 intended to benefit over 20,000 civil servants. UNDP also provided assistance to the Department for Standardization,

*"UNDP must be commended for its support to the Coordination Mechanism, which is an important tool for reinforcing the Rule of Law in Kosovo and guaranteeing the independence, impartiality and integrity of the justice institutions"*

- **Professor Hajredin Kuçi**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, at the Roundtable on the Coordination Mechanism

Approximation and Legal Harmonization with training on research and data collection for the support staff of 12 Parliamentary Committees, as well as facilitating an exchange of experience with the Czech Parliament. Furthermore, UNDP contributed to the drafting and finalization of Strategy 2016-2020 for the Assembly of Kosovo. The strategy was drafted to be both gender inclusive and to comply with human rights obligations.

To facilitate better targeting of public administration reform going forward, the 5th triennial Kosovo Mosaic survey was conducted in 2015 by UNDP, in combination with USAID and the Ministry of Local Government Administration. The survey collects the views of 6,700 citizens on the quality of public services and performance of local authorities with respect to service delivery, with [the results](#) released in 2016.

In efforts to prevent the radicalization of Kosovars and reduce violence, UNDP supported two important initiatives in 2015. The first was the provision of support and expert advice to assist Kosovo institutions as they drafted and finalized the 'Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020' and a corresponding action plan. The strategy aims to address the push and pull factors that influence the radicalization of the population, with special emphasis on youth, and will serve as a guiding document for UNDP and Kosovo institutions to better coordinate efforts in this important area.

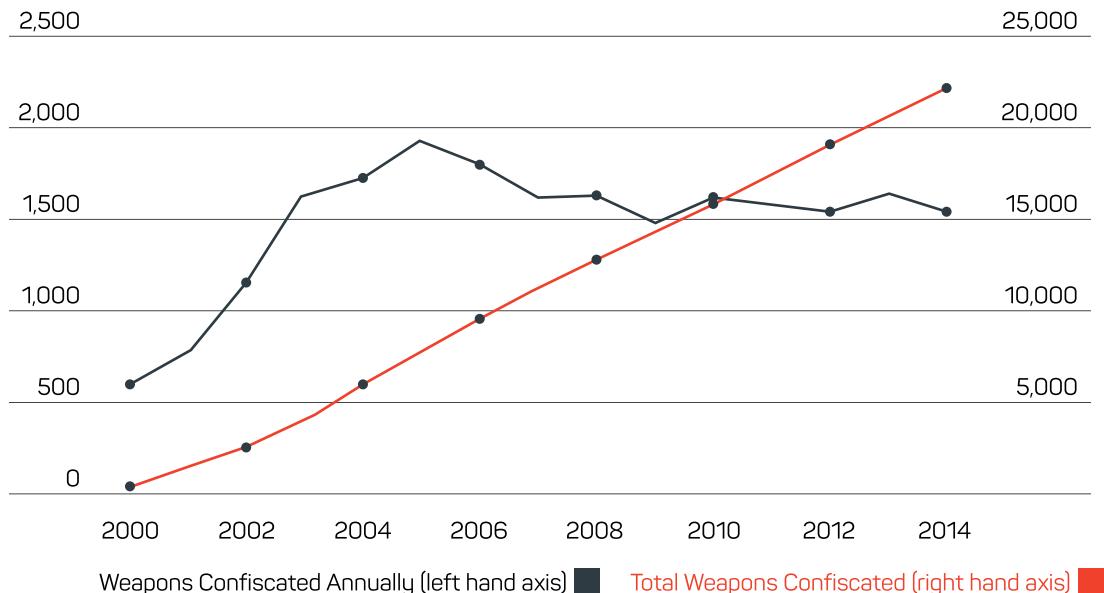
Complementing this, the second initiative saw UNDP working with the authorities to restrict illicit arms trafficking. In addition to the destruction of 4,000 weapons and 160,000 rounds of ammunition in 2015 alone, Kosovo introduced new regulations in line with EU legislation that govern the possession of weapons by civilians. Kosovo also continues to participate in several regional initiatives such as SEE芬, the regional SALW commissions, the Europol European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) project, and FRONTEX.



Reviewing a range of confiscated weapons to be destroyed

Photo by: UNDP Kosovo

## CONFISCATED ILLEGAL WEAPONS IN KOSOVO - 2000 TO 2014



Source: SEESAC

## Key results



*Reduced the court and prosecution backlog by referring 714 cases to mediation*

*16 new judges and prosecutors (including five women) appointed*

*5,000 reported cases of corruption made by citizens through online portal kallxo.com*

*20,000 public servants to benefit from improved training and strategic clarity*

*Destroyed 4,000 weapons and 160,000 rounds of ammunition*

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

The timely implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement and compliance with the requirements and rules for visa-free travel are of crucial importance and a political priority. However, significant challenges lie ahead in the alignment of the legislation with EU requirements in a broad range of sectors, including the modernisation of the rule of law and governance institutional setup.

Kosovo continues to face problems with its high rate of unemployment, particularly among youth. This, in combination with poor economic growth and a low women's labour participation rate, feeds into general dissatisfaction with the political process in Kosovo, religious extremism, tension between the different communities, and brain drain as educated and ambitious Kosovars leave for better opportunities in Europe and the US. For this reason, supporting Kosovo's European integration efforts, particularly meeting the requirements for visa-free travel, will be a high priority going forward.

UNDP also plans to continue working on improving inter-institutional communication and coordination to implement the 'Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020' and action plan, one of the first of its type in the region. It will also pilot a project with four municipalities to increase community resilience towards radicalization, including initiatives to de-radicalize and the reintegrate ex-foreign fighters. The data collected and analysis conducted as part of these efforts will feed into institutional work to prevent violent extremism. Law enforcement bodies will also benefit from expert support to improve capacities and address radicalization in Kosovo.

Efforts to strengthen transparency, integrity and accountability will be expanded. UNDP will assist with the drafting, adoption and monitoring of Integrity Plans in cooperation with 15 municipalities and five central institutions. Support will also be provided to initiatives to corruption-proof legislation, engage the Assembly of Kosovo on the introduction of a Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC) Chapter in Kosovo, and to expand the digitalization of public services to include additional services and beneficiaries.

UNDP also plans to expand its work with open data by engaging young people and civil society to facilitate the opening of municipal data across Kosovo, much of which is still not publicly available or is not provided in user-friendly formats. Practical training and exchange of experience on the use of data will be an integral part of this work, as well as facilitating the development of new apps based on the data and the needs of Kosovars.

Finally, in efforts to improve rule of law, UNDP will continue to provide strategic and expert advice to several institutions including the Ministry of Justice, Kosovo Judicial Council, Kosovo Prosecutorial Council and Kosovo Judicial Institute. This work has several goals including institutionalising the policy coordination and strategic planning process established in 2015, reviewing and updating the bar exam, increasing access to justice through mediation processes, and the integration of Kosovo Serb judges and prosecutors into Kosovo's legal system.



# KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

## BACKGROUND

The only parliamentary democracy in Central Asia continues to consolidate its democratic system of governance and market economy after the instability that marked the early years of independence and the ethnic conflict in June 2010. The tensions in 2010 immediately preceded a successful referendum on a new Constitution, which increased the powers of the Parliament (the *Jogorku Kenesh*) and reduced the power of the President. Within this new framework, parliamentary elections were held in 2015 with the participation of 14 political parties, six of which gained seats. Overall, inter-

national observers found the election process to be open, transparent and conforming with national and international standards.

Establishment of democratic governance, including the fight against corruption, is high on the Government's priority agenda. The Public Sector Reform Roadmap<sup>64</sup> is the pillar of the strategic framework that is used to pursue governance related initiatives and reforms, with the country remaining committed to continuing the implementation of a number of priorities, including: anti-corruption, the financial mechanism of the judiciary, public finance management, civil service, public administration, energy and elec-

<sup>64</sup> The Government's official approval of the Public Sector Reform Roadmap on 20 May 2014 meant that it superseded previous strategic documents.

tricity, and mining. Still, the establishment of democratic governance in the Kyrgyz Republic faces a number of challenges and problems, as is indicated by low scores on all Worldwide Governance Indicators.<sup>65</sup>

The Kyrgyz Republic is now entering a critical period for the country's governance and the need to strengthen public faith in the state institutions, fight corruption and uphold the rule of law remains, as well as the need to support peace, stability and sustainable development.

The Presidential elections scheduled for October 2017 will represent a milestone and an opportunity to take stock of the achieved progress, and direct the country towards a more prosperous future that is less impacted by instability and conflicts.

For this reason, it is crucial that institutions entrench democratic governance in order to show how an inclusive parliamentary system based on the rule of law can benefit all citizens, as well as strengthen the social contract. Additionally, in order to meet the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 16, significant efforts will have to be concentrated on continuing support for civil society and improving media freedom, both of which are key requirements for a peaceful, just and accountable state.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

With the parliamentary elections occurring in 2015, supporting a credible election was a key priority for UNDP. EMBs were assisted to automate voters' identification based on biometrics data, and provide voter education and outreach. State authorities, civil society and communities were supported in using risk management tools, including Electoral Risk Management, ensuring timely monitoring of the risks of conflict, as well as the development of recommendations for authorities to take preventive action. Increasing the inclusiveness of the election process was also a priority, with UNDP supporting a number of local women's and youth NGOs in advocating the positive image of women in decision-making roles. This programme facilitated meetings with approximately 40,000 people, and resulted in the establishment of a gender rating for the political parties, allowing voters to make a more informed choice.

In efforts to strengthen the rule of law, UNDP assisted the Parliament to draft a package of six new judicial reform laws,<sup>66</sup> that are largely in line with human rights standards. UNDP also assisted state authorities to prepare implementation plans and financial assessments for those laws, with civil society contributing to the establishment of formalized plans for cooperation between state authorities. Furthermore, support to the key democratic institutions of the parliament and Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court continued.

<sup>65</sup> The World Bank, "Worldwide Governance Indicators".

Available from <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#countryReports> (accessed 4 October 2016)

<sup>66</sup> Criminal and Misdemeanor Codes, as well as laws on the Responsibility of Judges, Executing Proceedings, the Bar Association, and the Free Legal Aid Law

## ESTIMATED COST OF THE JUDICIAL REFORM LAWS<sup>67</sup>



Source: British Embassy Bishkek and UNDP

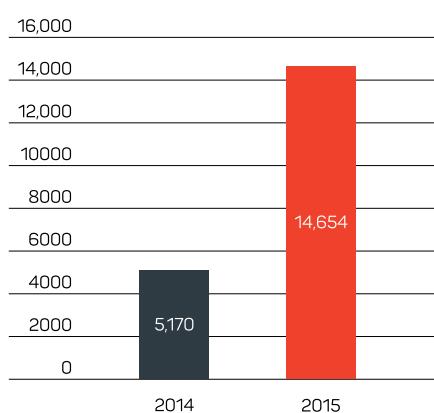
Complementing this, UNDP worked to enhance the capacity of free legal aid providers, selected municipalities and the State Registration Service to provide access to justice, legal identity and peaceful dispute resolution. As a result, the number of people who accessed legal aid almost tripled to 14,654 in 2015.

In addition to legal aid provision, UNDP helped improve delivery of a range of public and municipal services. This included elaborating standards for 196 public services, contributing to the implementation of a new e-Governance strategy, and encouraging several public institutions to open

public datasets. On the latter, the establishment of an open data portal was a notable achievement, along with the development of user-friendly mobile applications to allow citizens to access the Central Data Bank of legal information maintained by the Ministry of Justice, a free database of more than 79,000 legal documents.

Creating a more inclusive political process, strengthening the rule of law and improving access to justice are seen as keys to reducing violence and tension, but this work was also complemented by a number of conflict prevention and peacebuilding projects. These projects targeted local governance, youth and women's empowerment, promoting peacebuilding efforts in the me-

## RECIPIENTS OF LEGAL AID 2014-15



Source: UNDP



A new model of public service delivery to people in rural areas – a woman receives assistance in a community service room

Photo by: Sharabidin Tairov/UNDP Kyrgyzstan

dia, and strengthening cross-border cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. One notable achievement was the development of an action plan for religious policy, containing measures to promote religious tolerance and encourage dialogue at the national and local levels, with the aim of preventing religious radicalization and violent extremism. Complementing this, 11 youth action plans were drafted to target one of the key groups at risk of succumbing to extremism and participation in conflicts – vulnerable youth in disadvantaged and conflict-prone communities. These plans contain measures for bringing at-risk youth together and empowering them to address conflicts, social and economic issues in their communities.

The reconstruction and concreting of a cross-border water channel near Samarkandyk village benefits both Tajik and Kyrgyz communities in the area

Photo by: UNDP Kyrgyzstan



UNDP also established another monitoring mechanism to analyse the causes and effects of border conflicts between neighbouring communities of the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, and offer a response to prevent their reoccurrence. Promoting cross-border cooperation and trust with the aim of mitigating of tensions in cross-border areas contributed to a decrease in the number of border incidents at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border from 33 incidents in 2014 to merely 9 incidents in 2015.<sup>68</sup>

*"The Conflict Monitoring Centre will accumulate current information used by law enforcement bodies, which will be analysed by an expert group based on indicators. Currently, it is carrying out preliminary work with people and local self-governments in the regions, so that they are able to fill out simple questionnaires and organize discussions to identify areas of tensions in a certain area"*

– Ms. Mira Karybaeva, Head of the Department on Ethnic, Religious Policies and Civil Society Relations under the President's Office

UNDP worked to promote dialogue and collaboration between the State Agency for Local Self-Governance and Inter-Ethnic Relations (GAMSUMO), local development committees, and communities in at-risk areas. This collaboration focused on conflict analysis and monitoring, inclusive planning of local development, and ensuring the inclusion of marginalized women, youth and minorities. This was complemented by the establishment of a UNDP-supported GAMSUMO Monitoring Centre for Interethnic Relations and 20 regional public reception centres. These centres help to improve monitoring of conflicts, mobilize officials at both local and national levels, and facilitate quicker responses to potential conflicts.

<sup>68</sup> UNDP, "Briefing Package – Kyrgyz Republic 2-7 May 2016". Available from <https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Briefing-Package-for-EB-Mission-to-Kyrgyz-Republic-28-April-2016.docx> (accessed 5 August 2016)

## Key results



*Six new judicial reform laws drafted with implementation and financial plans*



*People accessing legal aid tripled from 5,170 in 2014 to 14,654 in 2015*



*Elections to the Parliament held with increased transparency and credibility through the use of new ICT tools (biometric data)*

### CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Despite the positive steps in 2015, significant challenges remain. Over 30 percent of the population lives below the poverty line,<sup>69</sup> while the high level of corruption present in the country was reflected by a score of 28/100 on the 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index.<sup>70</sup> In addition, recession and sluggish growth in the economies of major trading partners are weighing on economic growth, with GDP growth declining to 3.5 percent in 2015.<sup>71</sup> However, as a now full member of the Eurasian Economic Union, the free movement of goods, services and capital across borders is expected to boost trade and economic growth in the future.

Looking forward, UNDP will look to increase its support for legislative reform processes to strengthen the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Previous success has shown the importance of this support extending beyond the drafting stage to assist with the implementation of reforms. UNDP will also continue supporting state institutions and civil society networks to expand access to free legal for citizens and vulnerable populations.

With a focus on improving accountability and trans-

parency, UNDP will increase support for the Parliament to encourage reforms and initiatives that open up decision-making processes to the public. These types of reforms should help not only to make the Parliament more responsive, but also to reduce corruption and encourage politically active citizens. This will be achieved in part through the provision of support to further institutionalize the role of Public Councils within government institutions, and to the Defence Council Secretariat to help identify and combat corruption in various sectors. Furthermore, ongoing support will be provided for voter education and outreach programmes, with a goal of reinforcing the positive changes in electoral system in 2015, and in anticipation of the 2017 presidential elections.

Peacebuilding will also continue be a priority with support provided to ease socio-economic and inter-ethnic tensions, build tolerance, promote reconciliation, and avert radicalization and marginalization. In particular, support for the flagship cross-border co-operation with Tajikistan peacebuilding programme will be increased, focusing on conflict monitoring, encouraging communication between communities, building local infrastructure and fostering local development in the most conflict-prone areas.

Finally, gender inequalities, particularly domes-

<sup>69</sup> The World Bank, "Kyrgyz Republic Data". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/kyrgyz-republic> (accessed 14 June 2016)

<sup>70</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption by Country/Territory". Available from <https://www.transparency.org/country/#KGZ> (accessed 14 June 2016)

<sup>71</sup> Asian Development Bank, "Kyrgyz Republic: Economy". Available from <http://www.adb.org/countries/kyrgyz-republic/economy> (accessed 14 June 2016)

tic violence against women and girls remains all too common. Despite a 2003 domestic violence law and a new stronger law in the process of being drafted, many barriers still prevent survivors from accessing help or justice. Raising aware-

ness of these issues and building capacity for an effective responsive will be an important step supported by UNDP.



# MOLDOVA

## BACKGROUND

In the decades since independence, Moldova's democratization and development efforts have been slowed by political instability and serious economic challenges, with recent years being no exception.

With the revelation in 2015 of the theft of more than US\$1 billion from the country's three major banks, Moldova was thrown into a series of political crises, with increasingly vocal opposition from across the political spectrum and repeated mass protests against what was perceived to be corruption at the highest levels of government.<sup>72</sup> In September 2015, Vlad Filat, at the time the lead-

er of one of the parties in the ruling coalition, was arrested in connection with the fraud, causing a collapse in support for the coalition. With the latest coalition government under the pro-European "Alliance for European Integration" – led by the Liberal Democrats – falling after a vote of no-confidence in Parliament in October 2015, a new coalition government led by Pavel Filip of the Democratic Party was sworn in at the end of January 2016.

This political crisis was compounded when the Moldovan economy, already one of the poorest in the ECIS region, went into recession in the second half of 2015. Although this was due in part to a particularly harsh drought causing

<sup>72</sup> Equivalent to 12 percent of the country's GDP, but the indirect costs – e.g. reduced appeal for foreign investment – are likely far higher.

significant declines in agricultural output – a primary source of export revenue for Moldova – it was not helped by the continued political impasse that has prevented the country from implementing effective measures to tackle the economic problems. These recent events have generated significant public distrust for governmental institutions.

Deep political divisions also remain in Moldovan society. In particular, the issue of Transnistria, which declared independence from Moldova after a short but bloody conflict in 1992, remains unresolved. Despite lacking international recognition, a relatively small contingent of Russian peacekeepers remains stationed in the *de facto* republic.

Despite the challenges, there have been positive developments in recent years, notably the signing of an Association Agreement with the EU in June 2014 and its ratification in 2016, which includes access to the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. Moldova also continues to be party to the main human rights treaties and has made efforts to implement its human rights commitments, including the adoption of anti-discrimination legislation and steps taken to prevent torture and ill-treatment.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

With improving public trust in public institutions a high priority, UNDP supported the Parliament in conducting an institutional corruption self-assessment and developed an Anti-Corruption Action Plan and Code of Conduct for MPs. Furthermore, to ensure an inclusive process to evaluate the National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2011–2015, key representatives from civil society organizations were included in the public hearings. UNDP also supported trainings for 85 parliamentarians and their staff on the proper scrutiny of legislation, with a focus on identifying gender equality considerations and conformity with international human rights obligations.

Significant progress was also made in improving openness and transparency by involving the public and civil society in the parliamentary



The Anti-Corruption Action Plan and the Code of Conduct and Ethics being presented to MPs

Photo by: UNDP Moldova

process. Steps taken included 20 parliamentary public hearings held based on a UNDP pilot, with plans in place to institutionalize the practice; five fact-finding visits to civil society organisations to consult on important policies in the areas of public finance, social protection, human rights, and education; 67 meetings between MPs and citizens were held in the four Parliamentary Constituency Offices established in 2014, resulting in more than 2,000 policy requests and comments; and the Parliament now publically broadcasting all sessions and some Committee meetings.

Jointly with the e-Governance Centre, UNDP is also supporting the Government's efforts to reform public administration and service provision through citizen engagement. In 2015, the Moldova Innovation Lab (MiLab) was established, with the goal of deploying user-centred design and policy impact evaluations. Efforts were also focused on developing the capacity of the Central Elections Commission (CEC). With the goal of improving electoral systems and processes, this work resulted in the smooth operation of the IT-based State Register of Voters in the 2015 local elections, contributing to more accurate voter lists. In addition, the newly developed State Automated Information System Elections allowed for real-time monitoring of the voting process and the prevention of attempts of multiple voting. It also reduced the time for preliminary results from 24 hours to 3–4 hours and allowed automated display of results on the official website of the CEC. The capacity development was also extended to CEC staff, where a tailored curriculum was used to train 10,000 elections officials and staff on gender responsive election management and on ensuring access for voters with visual impairments and/or locomotive disabilities.

Moldovan NHRI's were also recipients of capacity development programmes, with UNDP helping the People's Advocate Office and the Equality Council to improve the quality of their reporting and strengthen their ability to identify and address human rights violations and discrimination cases. The Equality Council was also supported in carrying out the Equality Perceptions Study that provides the baseline level of discrimination and social exclusion of vulnerable groups to serve as the evidence for policy making and targeted service provision. Furthermore, the National Anticorruption Centre was supported in performing a corruption risk assessment of the public procurement system. This assessment aims to identify gaps where corruption can occur and provide recommendations for increasing the transparency and accountability of the public procurement process.

The fiscal decentralization system, previously piloted in 74 localities, was introduced to all first-level local governments across Moldova. It was designed to increase the autonomy and accountability of local authorities in relation to budget management, with supplemental training provided for accountants and mayors on performance budgeting methodology. Furthermore, support for inter-municipal cooperation, led to the establishment of 10 service operators and better services for 60 communities. As a result, more than 10 illegal landfills were cleaned up, over 40,000 people from rural Moldova obtained access to waste management services, 10,000 were provided with street lighting, and over 50,000 will benefit from road maintenance services.

In 2015, the Patients' Advocate, institutionalized by the Ministry of Health with UNDP support in 2014, processed 1,465 complaints from people held in psychiatric institutions, interviewed patients, and provided information and legal advice. As a result, about 100 cases of forced hospitalization were resolved at the administrative level, with approximately the same number of people released from the institutions or moved to more suitable accommodation. The Patients' Advocate also brought 29 cases either to court or to the relevant psychiatric institution's management.

UNDP has also been working to build confidence between communities on both banks of the Dniester river, including in the Transnistria region. The implementation of an EU-funded programme has

resulted in improved services and opportunities for more than 120,000 people by rebuilding schools, medical centres and other facilities, developing business cooperation, and providing grants to civil society. Initiatives also focused on the inclusion of people with disabilities, providing assistance with finding employment, and improving building accessibility. As noted in an external impact assessment "UNDP's excellent performance in developmental results, with 41 community infrastructure projects reaching the entire population of the target region (500,000 people), 14,500 beneficiaries in 45 civil society initiatives, over 3,000 graduates of business education in Transnistria, and numerous participants in study tours, international fairs and start-up entrepreneurship." The intervention strategy focused on an integrated cycle of infrastructure rehabilitation, business development and civil society engagement, supplemented by focused initiatives in healthcare and environment. These measures have enabled the expansion of a pro-integration constituency, empowered local actors, and provided greater acceptance of their legitimacy by policy makers, thus creating greater confidence between institutions and citizens' groups, and more trust among individuals.

One of UNDP's major success stories has been working to improve the participation of women in the political process. At a national level, a cross-party Women Caucus in the Parliament was established and immediately engaged with five regional policy forums, where they met with women representing grass-roots organizations and vulnerable groups, and discussed the policy and reform agenda in the context of the SDGs. UNDP also worked directly with nearly 1,000 women candidates to strengthen their political and campaigning skills, contributing to a notable increase in the number and placement of candidates, and the number of women in decision-making positions. Women won 20.6 percent of mayoral elections – more than doubling the number of female mayors – and secured 30.0 percent of the seats in local councils and 18.6 percent in district councils.

Moreover, two Roma women of the seven Roma women registered were elected as local councillors for the first time in the history of Moldova. The increase in Roma candidates, in combination with UNDP voter

The national 'Let's vote' caravan advocated for the importance of women's participation in elections, not only as voters, but also as candidates



Photo by: UNDP Moldova

education campaigns, also contributed to increased voter turnout amongst Roma, for example, in Chetrosu, 98 percent of Roma people voted, compared to approximately 35 percent in the previous election. In the other seven targeted communities, the turnout of Roma voters increased, on average, to 60 percent from 20-25 percent previously.<sup>73</sup>

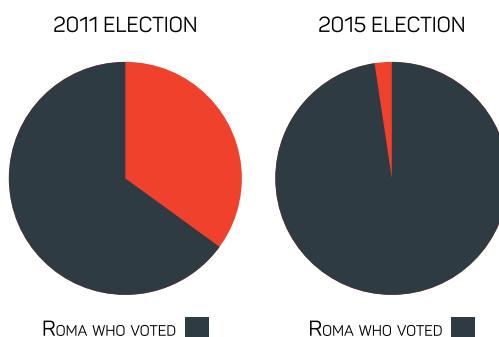
expected to continue. With the first direct presidential elections held in October 2016, it remains to be seen whether this change will help to bridge political divisions. Social cohesion, recovery of public trust, and the ability of the Government to manage fiscal pressure while enacting structural reforms will be key factors for the country getting back on track to European integration and modernization.

The political and economic instability is of particular concern to UNDP due to the impact on development efforts. In 2015, several projects had both their scope and success limited, with the prevention of a planned review of the electoral code, and the postponement of the approval of the Parliament's Strategic Development Plan two notable setbacks. These will be pushed forward, along with further advocacy efforts for the formal approval of the Code of Conduct and Ethics for MPs.

Looking forward, public sector and civil service reform, as well as a comprehensive reform of the justice system, are some of the most complex and strategically important priorities, particularly given its importance for the goal of joining the EU. As such, UNDP, in collaboration with other UN agencies and partners, will continue to support the implementation of reforms. This will also include assistance to the National Anticorruption Centre to improve its corruption prevention and analysis capabilities, and support for planned police reforms, where the concept of community policing is to be re-conceptualized.

Improving the transparency of the Parliament will also continue to be a key focus, with support planned for the implementation of an e-parliament system and engagement with the Open Parliament initiative. Anticorruption will again be a focus, but in addition, UNDP will support the Parliament to increase engagement with civil society and the public through regional offices. Moreover, UNDP will work to further position the MiLab as a key driver of a new governance model, leading to effective reform of the public administration and gender sensitive public services design.

## ROMA VOTER TURNOUT IN CHETROSU LOCAL ELECTION - 2011 AND 2015



## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

After recession in 2015, economic conditions are expected to remain poor, putting budgetary pressure on development efforts and increasing the risk that recent reductions in poverty will be reversed. Meanwhile the political instability is also

<sup>73</sup> UNDP, "Let's vote: Roma communities take the lead", 2015. Available from [http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/our-work/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding/successstories/let\\_s-vote--roma-communities-take-the-lead.html](http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/our-work/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding/successstories/let_s-vote--roma-communities-take-the-lead.html)

To assist the Government to meet its human rights commitments, UNDP will support the Ombudsperson's Office and the Equality Council to contribute more effectively to the protection and promotion of human rights, and to address inequalities and discrimination, focusing on the rights of women, minorities, and marginalized groups. Progress will need to be complemented with improvements in monitoring capacity.

Finally, work to rebuild confidence, trust and co-operation between communities on both banks of the Dniester river remains a priority. UNDP

also intends to focus on better integrating the Gagauz Autonomous Region in the reform process across Moldova. This work will target boosting economic development in the region, supporting small and medium entrepreneurs and strengthening local governments' capacity to deliver efficient, equitable and accessible local public services.

## Key results



*Four Parliamentary Constituency Offices facilitated 67 meetings between citizens and MPs*



*898 first-level local governments moved onto decentralized fiscal system*



*Women are elected mayors in 20.6 percent of local elections, more than double the result at the previous election*



*Two Roma women elected as local councillors for the first time in the history of Moldova*



# MONTE NEGRO

## BACKGROUND

Since independence in 2006, Montenegro has made steady progress improving human development, democratic governance, and European integration, which is a stated objective of the Government. In recognition of this progress, in 2012 Montenegro received EU candidate status and accession negotiations are underway. By the end of 2015<sup>74</sup>, 22 chapters were open for negotiations, including those on the rule of law. In December 2015, Montenegro also received an official invitation to join NATO.

To strengthen rule of law, Montenegro has been implementing constitutional and legislative reforms to

enhance the independence of the judiciary through more transparent and merit-based appointment procedures. Specifically, amendments to laws regarding the role of the Ombudsman were adopted in August 2014, with the goal of providing greater independence and strengthening the institution's role in combating discrimination. However, despite national legislation concerning human rights being considered up to European standards, further improvements in implementation are required.

While positive political, economic, and social developments are notable, challenges remain in several areas. Specifically, more efforts are needed to fight corruption, reduce inequality and social exclusion,

<sup>74</sup> Government of Montenegro, "Montenegro opens two more chapters in EU membership negotiations", 21 December 2015. Available from <http://www.gov.me/en/News/156237/Montenegro-opens-two-more-chapters-in-EU-membership-negotiations.html>

increase civic engagement, and address cases of ill-treatment in police custody and some alleged cases of human rights violations from the 1990s conflict. Further steps also need to be taken to reduce gender inequality and violence against women, and to address discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Reforms are also needed in the area of public administration. Finally, coalitions led by the Democratic Party of Socialists having remained in power since independence, suggesting a significant test for Montenegro's democracy will arise when a transition of power is required.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

With the goal of assisting Montenegro in EU accession, many of the projects undertaken by UNDP in 2015 had a focus on helping the Government meet required standards and navigate the accession process. In work to improve rule of law consistency and standards, UNDP provided technical support to the Ministry of Justice to align various frameworks with the Judicial Reform Strategy 2014-2018. This technical support, including an action plan for implementation, should ensure a more consistent and focused approach for the reform efforts going forward. UNDP also provided assistance to the Ministry of Justice in drafting the ICT Strategy for the Justice System 2016-2020, ensuring technology will play an important role in improving justice for all.

Combining efforts to improve rule of law and the protection of human rights, UNDP also facilitated initiatives to address gaps in the legal framework to increase the protection of vulnerable groups. This primarily focused on assessing and strengthening the capabilities of the Ombudsman, and improving the provision and availability of mediation and legal aid.

Reducing gender inequality and preventing gender-based violence is another high priority in Montenegro. In partnership with the Government and civil society organizations, UNDP developed an accredited education programme for judges and prosecutors on domestic violence the protection of women's rights.

*"Full implementation of the law, constant training of judicial officials, respect for human rights and international standards are the guiding principles of our work. We are aware that this is the only correct way to establish the rule of law and legal certainty, and that is our contribution to the building of Montenegro as a modern democracy"*

– **Ms. Vesna Medenica**, President of the Supreme Court of Montenegro

This was part of a broader effort to establish a more coordinated response to combat domestic violence, which resulted in reported cases increasing by 12.5 percent for criminal offences and 22 percent for misdemeanour cases when compared to 2014. In addition, a National SOS help line for victims of domestic violence was introduced in September. Within two months of the launch, more than 750 phone calls were received, nearly half the total number of reported cases (1,347) in the whole of 2014. UNDP has been credited by all its partners in Montenegro for its work on gender issues and was awarded the UNDP Gold Gender Equality Seal for delivering tangible improvements in gender equality.

Montenegro introduces a national, toll-free, anonymous SOS helpline for victims of domestic violence

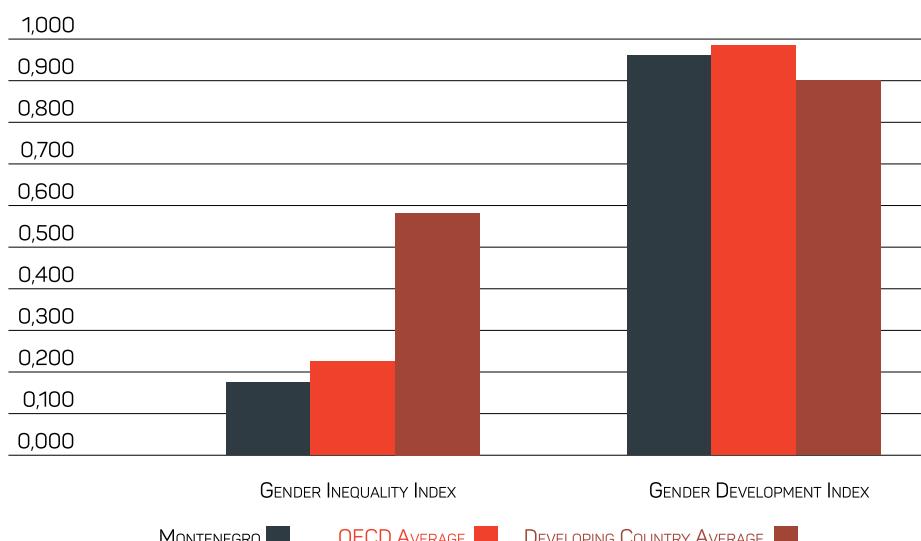


Photo by: Milos Vujovic/UNDP Montenegro



Social Welfare Reform – establishing new social services at the local level

Photo by: Milos Vujovic/UNDP Montenegro



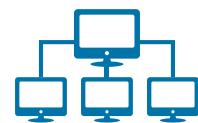
Source: UNDP<sup>75</sup>

Strengthening national and local governance systems to deliver better social services and to generate increased local development are an integral part of UNDP's efforts in Montenegro. A structural reform of the social welfare system through introduction of new legislation, the development of social inclusion plans for 21 out of 23 municipalities, the establishment of new social services, and the upgrading of facilities for the provision of social services were some of the key successes in 2015. In addition, the Government's new Social Card – Social Welfare Information System, supported by UNDP, integrates with 11 other national systems to deliver a range of benefits, including enabling better targeting and more efficient delivery of services and benefits or transfers, and providing a wealth of data for evidence-based planning.

To improve local governance, UNDP has been working with several municipalities to improve their capacity for attracting investment. This work included helping to develop business zone management plans, promotional materials, and a web portal ([www.bizniszona.me](http://www.bizniszona.me)). In October, these efforts were presented to 80 investors from 23 countries gathered at the International Investment Conference organized in Podgorica and Kolasin, resulting in investment commitments of €21 million with around 300 jobs expected to be created. In addition, a Study on Identification of Business Zones of Strategic Interest and five pre-investment studies were prepared and finalized, forming the basis for further development of the business zones policy in Montenegro. This was complemented by capacity building activities for seven newly established clusters, with more than 10 cluster project proposals prepared and submitted for funding.

<sup>75</sup> UNDP, "Human Development Data (1980-2015)". Available from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data> (accessed 1 September 2016)

## Key results



*Implemented the Social Card – Social Welfare Information system, allowing better targeting and more efficient delivery of services and benefits/transfers*



*National SOS help line for victims of domestic violence created, receiving 750 phone calls in the first two months*



*UNDP awarded the Gold Gender Equality Seal, recognizing the strong performance of delivering tangible improvements in gender equality*

A second initiative focused on reducing and removing barriers for business through the 'No Barriers! So Business Doesn't Wait' Campaign. As part of this project an online platform ([www.bezbarijera.me](http://www.bezbarijera.me)) was established with the aim of identifying and eliminating cumbersome and time-consuming public administration procedures and requirements, particularly at the local level. The platform allows those launching and/or operating a business to report issues and difficulties they encounter, providing vital information to policy makers to allow them to effectively streamline these processes to encourage further investment.

### CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Continued progress in the EU ascension process, as well as becoming a full member of NATO remain the main priorities going forward. In order to assist in this process, UNDP will continue to collaborate with the Government on needed reforms, as well as on initiatives that aim to strengthen the accountability of the judiciary. In addition, support will be provided to the Ministry of Justice to upgrade the existing Judicial Information System. In line with government priorities, UNDP will continue to champion technology-based solutions to improve accountability, accessibility and responsiveness of state institutions and the justice system.

Montenegro has made advances in the respect and protection of human rights, including in matters related to the Roma community, the provision of legal aid, and gender equality. However, further steps are needed to fully comply with international obligations and recommendations of human rights bodies. In particular, the current role of the Ombudsperson in dealing with anti-discrimination cases still remains a matter of concern. The establishment of a free legal aid system, which UNDP has supported in previous years, has improved access to justice, but the system still needs to be strengthened technically and financially, as well as ensuring access to justice countrywide. In other efforts to improve social inclusion, UNDP will assist with the implementation of the second phase of the Social Welfare Information System, allowing for the addition of new benefits, improved targeting and more comprehensive coverage. This will be complemented by continued work with the relevant institutions to build capacities and improve cooperation.

Finally, UNDP will continue working to improve political engagement, particularly for women. This will be done primarily through assessments of political parties, trainings on gender sensitivities, and support for the implementation of election related laws such as quotas for female candidates.



# SERBIA

## BACKGROUND

Since beginning its transition to democracy at the end of the Yugoslav conflicts, Serbia has made important progress in strengthening democratic freedoms and improving human development. Although tensions remain between Serbia and several countries in the region, Serbia is making efforts to normalize relationships, as evidenced by its continued cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). In recognition of Serbia's progress, and the continued commitment to the normalization of its relations with Kosovo, the EU opened negotiations for membership in 2014.

In 2015, Serbia was one of the main countries affected by the refugee and migrant crisis, as hundreds

of thousands of refugees and migrants, primarily from Syria, made their way to Western Europe. In a development that could potentially jeopardize the visa-free regime granted to Serbia in 2009, there was also an increase in applications for asylum from Serbian citizens in this period, despite only 1 percent of requests submitted so far in Germany and other EU countries being considered admissible.

2015 was also the first year of an IMF guided programme to improve economic conditions. In recent years, the impact of the international financial crisis and numerous rounds of elections have slowed down necessary structural reforms in the country. However, this programme, which includes measures to reduce the deficit, reform public institutions and improve the business environment, appears to be

producing results. In 2015, the deficit almost halved to 3.7 percent and unemployment fell significantly.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, the economy is expected to return to positive growth after going backwards in 2014.<sup>77</sup> Although poverty and unemployment are still prevalent, particularly in the South and Southwest regions which have large minority populations, sustained growth in Serbia would be expected to provide an economic boost to the entire Western Balkans.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

2015 saw several notable projects to improve transparency and accountability come to fruition. In efforts to improve budget accountability, UNDP supported the launch of a portal that enables MPs to monitor public budget expenditures electronically, replacing the current practice of circulating monthly paper reports produced by the Ministry of Finance. This portal should enable the Parliament and the Committee on Finance, State Budget and Control of Public Spending to subject the Government to additional scrutiny on budgetary issues.

Efforts were also undertaken to increase the openness of the political process, with UNDP supporting 34 public hearings in the Parliament and 18 mobile committee sessions of MPs. The success of this programme has been recognized by national partners as one of the most effective ways to improve transparency and promote public participation in decision-making. It was piloted at the local level.

In another push for increased transparency, UNDP also began the process of introducing open data in Serbia. This included the completion of an Open Data Readiness Assessment with the World Bank, inclusion of the open data standard in the e-Government Strategy, and the publishing of previously unavailable datasets relating to public procurement, education, environmental protection, interior affairs and health. In November, UNDP supported Serbia's first Open Data Hackathon, that developed numerous open data enabled applications.

The lack of accountability in the management of public finances is also a significant issue in Serbia. From the initial procurement process to implemen-



Participants in Serbia's first Open Data Hackathon show their applications in Belgrade

Photo by: SEE ICT

tation at the local level to the final oversight by the State Audit Institution, significant gaps allow for corruption and the mismanagement of resources. To address this, UNDP supported the certification of over 1,000 public procurement officials, the first audit of political parties, training for judges and prosecutors on procurement law and fraud, and promoting audit findings at the local level.

Combatting corruption was also the goal of an innovative initiative to support investigative journalists embedded in NGOs. Encouraged to report on corruption specifically, this effort resulted in over 100 articles on the subject, of which 20 led to further action from the authorities. Further, UNDP supported the development and work of cross-party caucuses such as the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption, and sponsored the 10th anti-corruption benchmarking survey.

In efforts to reduce SGBV, UNDP facilitated support for the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention (the Istanbul Convention) on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. With Serbia ratifying the convention, UNDP is helping the country meet its standards. This includes improving the quality of and access to SOS hotline services by promoting

<sup>76</sup> Bloomberg Technology, "Serbia Cuts 2015 Gap by Almost Half Despite December Surge", 1 February 2016. Available from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-02-01-serbia-cuts-2015-deficit-by-almost-half-despite-december-surge>

<sup>77</sup> The World Bank, "Serbia Overview". Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/serbia/overview> (accessed 8 June 2016)

the inclusion of women's NGOs as SOS hotline service providers. UNDP has also been working with 30 municipalities to better coordinate the services required, including health, social protection, the police, the judiciary and civil society. In 2015, positive results are already being seen with the timeliness and adequacy of responses improving in most municipalities.

*"Combating violence against women is a strategic pillar of the policy to improve gender equality in Serbia. What gives the sense to life and politics, in front of pain and suffering of women victims of violence is an action that has a clear goal. And so, for me, the most important question is not where we are today, but where we're going."*

– Ms. Zorana Mihajlovic, Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia and President of the Coordinating Body for Gender Equality

Complementing this, UNDP is also supporting the Work with Perpetrators programme within the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs. This programme provides individual and group therapy sessions in order to reduce the recidivism rate of the perpetrators of violence.

In Serbia, as in many countries across the ECIS region, ethnic minorities, and Roma in particular, remain vulnerable to poverty and discrimination. In efforts to alleviate the worst effects of poverty in Roma communities, UNDP piloted an inclusive housing model for Roma families in Southwest Serbia, refurbishing houses and constructing additional and legal housing for families formerly living in shacks. With a national Roma inclusion strategy being prepared in 2015, UNDP also continued its work with municipal Roma Coordinators, providing specialized trainings on

monitoring and evaluation frameworks, allowing them to more meaningfully contribute to the strategy.

In August 2015, UNDP joined the UN country team in working to address the refugee and migrant crisis, with a focus on supporting local communities to deal with increased pressure on municipal utilities and services. Immediate support was provided in Preševo and Šid, with analysis also completed in other municipalities in preparation for additional work in 2016. UNDP also worked closely with civil society in affected municipalities to strengthen community cohesion during this difficult time.



UNDP gets resources to where they are needed most, hiring the nearest available trucks and crews to help deal with the waste management challenge in Belgrade

Photo by: UNDP Serbia

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

There are several positives for Serbia looking forward. Despite early parliamentary elections being held in 2016, in addition to regular provincial and local elections, continued work on reforms for EU accession is expected to remain a high priority. It is also expected that reform efforts will be helped by improving economic conditions, and a reduction in the large flows of refugees and migrants.

For UNDP, providing assistance and support for reforms required for EU membership will continue to be a key priority. As part of these efforts, support will be provided to joint initiatives on war crimes involving prosecutors from Serbia, Croatia and BiH. Work will also continue on parliamentary openness and accountability in the management of public

finances. New phases of the projects on parliamentary development and accountability in public finance management are planned, and will include opening data on procurement and public finance. Partnerships with municipalities will expand to help them manage the pressure on their infrastructure and services posed by migrants and refugee flows, as well as work on social cohesion and inclusiveness. This will be complemented by 30 additional infrastructure projects. Furthermore, to better prepare municipalities for emergency situations and disasters, UNDP has several initiatives planned. This includes a large programme covering 27 municipalities to improve emergency response abilities, and a conference on gender in disaster risk reduction that will serve as a platform to identify recommendations for future work.

In work to assist at-risk groups, UNDP will contribute to a new UN cross-agency project that will look to address challenges faced by women, youth and Roma. The main focuses of the project will be combatting violence against women, encouraging participation in regional initiatives to support the LGBTI community, and maintaining the dialogue on Roma inclusion.

Finally, in recent years, Serbia has passed significant reforms in rule of law, including the implementation of the 2013–2018 Strategy on Judicial Reform. However, further efforts are needed to safeguard the judiciary's effectiveness and independence, and to ensure the adoption of key pieces of legislation. UNDP plans to continue providing support and assistance to implement needed reforms in this area.

## Key results



*34 public hearings in the parliament and 18 mobile committee sessions of MPs*



*Launch of a portal that enables MPs to monitor public budget expenditures electronically*



*Minimum conditions and standards for provision of SOS helpline service for women survivors of violence adopted in 2015, as the main precondition for establishing 24/7 SOS hotline service for women victims of violence*



# TAJIKISTAN

## BACKGROUND

Since the end of the five-year civil war in 1997, Tajikistan has made progress on several fronts, including reducing the percentage of people living below the poverty line from over 80 percent in 1999 to 31.3 percent in early 2014.<sup>78</sup> However, Tajikistan remains Central Asia's poorest country, and is heavily reliant on remittances from migrant workers abroad, especially in Russia. As a result, the economic slowdown in Russia and other Central Asian countries has resulted in an estimated 33 percent drop in the US dollar value of remittances<sup>79</sup>, significantly impacting the Tajik economy.

Over the last decade, the Tajik Government has undertaken a number of policy and legislative reforms to bring its legislation into line with international standards, including the creation of a framework for an effective justice system. However, the implementation of these reforms remains challenging due to a lack of national capacities and resources. Furthermore, in the absence of a unified legal aid system, many people, particularly in marginalized communities, face difficulties accessing justice. Corruption also continues to be perceived as widespread, although the Government's efforts to fight corruption are resulting in gradual improvements, with Tajikistan's Corruption Perceptions Index

<sup>78</sup> The World Bank, 'Tajikistan Overview'. Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/overview> [accessed 21 June 2016]

<sup>79</sup> The World Bank, 'Tajikistan Overview'. Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/overview> [accessed 21 June 2016]

score increasing from 22/100 in 2013 to 26/100 in 2015.<sup>80</sup>

In early September 2015, national security entities in and around the capital Dushanbe faced an armed attack, resulting in more than 20 deaths. There were also serious political consequences, with the leading opposition party – the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan – being designated a terrorist group and numerous members of the party arrested.

Tajikistan's geographic location also presents external security risks. Concerns are primarily focused on Tajikistan's proximity to, and unsecure border with Afghanistan, but in 2014–2015, tensions also re-emerged on Tajikistan's border with the Kyrgyz Republic. The tensions between Tajiks and Kyrgyz in the Fergana Valley were provoked by disputes over transport links, access to water and border demarcations. To address this, the international community and the UN are providing support to both countries in cross-border cooperation to promote sustainable peace and development

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

With access to justice a major challenge, one of UNDP's priorities is working to improve and expand legal aid. In 2015, 11,206 people, including 7,021 women and 865 people with disabilities, received legal aid services, with over 85 percent of recipients reporting positive outcomes. UNDP also worked to improve the long-term viability of these services, facilitating a discussion between the Government and civil society organizations on state support for free legal aid. As a result, the concept of state guaranteed legal aid was developed and adopted, and a new state agency providing free legal aid was created. A transition strategy for the gradual takeover of the existing, donor-funded system of free legal aid by the government budget was also developed.

Some of UNDP's most successful programming in Tajikistan in recent years has been supporting the work of the Ombudsman's Office to promote human rights. In addition to assisting with the development of the Ombudsman's new Strategy for 2016–2020, UNDP provided trainings to Ombudsman's Office staff on a range of topics, including the rights of persons with disabilities, gender issues, and the international standards for documenting and collecting evidence for torture cases. In addition to the training, a successful study visit was conducted to the Finnish Ombudsman's Office in Helsinki with the participants having since developed a number of specific recommendations that are now being implemented. Furthermore, to extend the reach of the Ombudsman's Office, six regional consultation centres provided advice and legal aid to over 2,000 people across the country, while outdoor legal information sessions were also held in a number of locations on family legislation, labour law, and human rights, reaching an additional 5,200 people.

*"Our office is less than 10 years old, but thanks to UNDP's assistance – in training, funding, and technical assistance – we've been able to grow very rapidly. We're able to support human rights in many different ways now, from free legal aid to prison visits."*

– **Mr. Alizoda Zarif**, Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman) in the Republic of Tajikistan

UNDP is also supporting Tajikistan with accession to the CRPD. As part of this process, a large study on the costs and benefits of accession was carried out and a ministerial-level conference held with the participation of over 100 representatives of the Government and civil society, along with a visiting delegation from Kazakhstan.

<sup>80</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2015". Available from <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2015/#results-table> (accessed 22 July 2016)

CRPD accession has now been approved at the ministerial level, and is expected to go to the Government for final approval in the near future. Complementing this, efforts were made to improve public awareness and perceptions of disability, with seven TV programmes on disability broadcast a total of 18 times on national television.

#### Improving access for people with disabilities



Photo by: UNDP Tajikistan

In efforts to boost inclusive governance, UNDP supported a set of Policy Dialogue platforms, bringing civil society and NGO representatives together with government stakeholders. Two policy dialogues were conducted at the national level, and two at the regional (oblast) level, in Khujand and Kurgan-Tyube. Additionally, UNDP supported Tajikistan's first National Rule of Law Forum, which brought together over 150 participants, including government officials, donors, civil society, lawyers and academics, to discuss key issues relating to the rule of law in Tajikistan, and to make concrete recommendations for law and policy changes.

In view of Tajikistan's vulnerability to external security risks, enhancing border management capacities remains critical. Since the beginning of 2015, UNDP training on subjects such as border management skills, counter narcotics, engine mechanics, gender sensitivity, disaster risk reduction and other topics associated with integrated border management have been provided to 322 Tajik and Afghan border and customs officials, including 28 females. To ensure greater donor coordination and more efficient

use of available technical and financial resources going forward, UNDP has consolidated its border management programmes funded by the EU (Afghanistan) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Tajikistan) under one management umbrella.



Border commanders from Tajikistan and Afghanistan meet at Langar

Photo by: UNDP Tajikistan

In the Fergana Valley, UNDP offices in both Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic cooperated to conduct a community-level conflict analysis and establish a monitoring system. Based on the results of this monitoring, dialogue was started in conflict-prone cross-border communities, which helped to identify community initiatives with a potential to reduce tensions. 17 small-scale community infrastructure projects (e.g. irrigation water, social infrastructure) were selected and six of them have already been implemented to improve the access of local communities to natural resources and promote joint management of common goods. A larger Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Peace and Development programme was also launched, bringing together five UN agencies from Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

To address tensions between border communities, and the risk radicalization and violent extremism more generally, UNDP supported and contributed to a UNICEF produced report looking at the reasons behind the marginalization and exclusion of adolescents and youth in Tajikistan. This report will allow for a better understanding of the issues impacting this at-risk group, something vital for all development agencies seeking to mitigate risks and understand the drivers of marginalization and exclusion.

## Key results

With corruption and transparency still significant concerns, UNDP has been working to improve the openness of the Tajik authorities and institutions. To this end, UNDP supported the establishment of mmk.tj, a website that includes a free, publicly



*11,206 people received legal aid services, up from 8,505 people in 2014*



*340 Afghan and 84 Tajik border and customs and drug control officers provided with border management training*

available database of Tajik laws and regulations. UNDP also provided support for a section of the Ministry of Justice website to be dedicated to providing information on notaries, their location and services, and relevant laws and regulations.



*In the Tajik-Kyrgyz border area, 6 small-scale community infrastructure projects have been implemented to improve intercommunity relations*



*National and Regional Rule of Law Policy Dialogue Platforms expanded*

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Continuing economic uncertainty is expected to be a significant challenge. The reduced flows of remittances and returning workers have put pressure on the local employment market and is contributing to increased social tensions. Despite some positive developments in recent years, Tajikistan also continues to make significant progress in the areas of democratic governance and the rule of law.

Continuing challenges are expected in the area of border security, with risks that drug trafficking and violence in Afghanistan may spread across the border. Further efforts will be needed to reduce tensions between Tajik and Kyrgyz communities in the Fergana Valley region where there are still incidents occurring.

To address these border security challenges, UNDP has high hopes its new expanded peacebuilding programme can make significant progress. A

number of planning and coordination events involving members of the two UN country teams have already taken place, with the Peace and Development Advisor in Tajikistan playing a leading role. In addition to existing initiatives to encourage intercommunity dialogue and cooperation, UNDP will facilitate the sharing of best practices, national expertise and experience in the areas of cross-border cooperation and mine action. UNDP will also continue to support efforts to reduce the risk of home-grown violent extremism amongst youths.

To improve rule of law and access to justice, UNDP will continue pushing for state financing of legal aid services and supporting efforts to train and support government staff to provide these services. Support will also be provided to ongoing reforms, including the Judicial and Legal Reform Programme 2015–2017. Furthermore, a new programme will aim to provide technical support to the Ministry of Justice in reviewing and strengthening the legislative and institutional frameworks of Civil Registration Offices

for more simplified, effective and accessible service provision. The feasibility of preserving and digitising the national archives is also being considered, and research is being coordinated by UNDP to assess the scope of this important task. After the review, UNDP will assist in aligning these frameworks with international standards and best practices.

Finally, UNDP will work to improve the quality of local development and governance by working with local authorities to improve capacity and facilitate participatory planning and monitoring in line with the National Development Programme (2016-2030), the Mid-Term Development Strategy (2016-2020)<sup>81</sup> and the SDGs. This will be complemented by support for the newly established Local Development Committee.

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<sup>81</sup> Expected to be endorsed during the next Parliamentary Session in fall 2016.



# THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

## BACKGROUND

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has enjoyed relatively steady economic growth since weathering the 1998 financial crisis. Although still the poorest of the Yugoslav successor states, it qualifies as an upper-middle-income country, with GNI per head hitting US\$5,140 in 2015.<sup>82</sup> GDP grew by 3.7 percent in 2015 and, although a dip to 2 per-

cent is now forecast for 2016, growth rates are expected to surpass 3 percent in 2017 and 2018.<sup>83</sup> Assiduous efforts have been made to court foreign investment, including through the creation of special economic zones, and the country traditionally ranks highly in ease of doing business.<sup>84</sup> However, economic growth is currently driven more by state-funded investment in infrastructure and

<sup>82</sup> The World Bank, "Gross national income per capita 2015, Atlas method and PPP", 11 October 2016. Available from <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GNIPC.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> The World Bank, "Employment Increases in Southeast Europe with Increase in Growth", 27 September 2016. Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/09/27/southeast-europe-growth-macedonia>

<sup>84</sup> The country ranked 12th among 189 countries. The World Bank, "Doing Business 2016", 27 October 2015. Available from <http://www.doing-business.org/~media/giawb/doing%20business/documents/profiles/country/MKD.pdf>. However, for a powerful methodological critique of this index, see [http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=67&newsletter\\_ID=85](http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=67&newsletter_ID=85) and [http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document\\_ID=152](http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document_ID=152), both from the European Stability Initiative.

other public-sector spending than it is by foreign investment.

Indicators of social well-being continued to show gradual improvement. Unemployment, though still high, declined to 28 percent in 2014 and 26.1 percent in 2015. However, some of this decline stemmed from discouraged job-seekers dropping out or emigrating; youth unemployment rose in 2015 to 50 percent. The share of the population at risk of poverty, defined in line with EU standards, continued to fall, from 26.2 percent in 2012, to 24.2 percent in 2013, and to 22.1 percent in 2014.<sup>85</sup> The 2015 Human Development Report put the country in the high human development category, with a human development index of 0.747.<sup>86</sup>

The country's political environment remained fraught. Having boycotted the Parliament since the 2014 early parliamentary elections, the main opposition party in early 2015 made public dozens of wiretapped conversations that implicated leading government officials in corruption, electoral fraud, surveillance and intimidation of political opponents, and direct meddling in the judiciary, police and media. These revelations inspired widespread indignation and a wave of protests. Visiting the country in May 2015, UN Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights Ivan Simonovic voiced "deep concern" at "serious challenges to the rule of law and the shrinking of the democratic space."<sup>87</sup>

Similar concerns brought the intervention of the EU and the US, which oversaw difficult negotiations among the four main political parties. These yielded an agreement June and July 2015

designed to re-direct political conflict into appropriate institutional channels. The terms of the 'Przino Agreement,'<sup>88</sup> included sweeping reforms (particularly in the rule of law and media), the creation of a Special Prosecutor's Office (SPO) to investigate the wiretaps, the return of the opposition to the Parliament and the resignation of long-serving Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski ahead of early elections.<sup>89</sup>

Adherence to the Przino Agreement was at best partial, and its implementation was a source of contention into 2016, particularly owing to the exclusion of civil society from the process. Early elections were scheduled twice only to be cancelled, and 11 December 2016 was only agreed as the final date under renewed international pressure. Without a greater commitment to reform, however, elections alone are unlikely to end the protracted crisis. Przino's most important achievement has been the creation of the SPO. Although it faces widespread resistance, it has opened cases against many high-ranking officials, and a 2016 poll shows its chief to be the country's most-trusted figure.<sup>90</sup>

Political tensions were heightened in May, when an "anti-terrorist" action launched by police in the multi-ethnic city of Kumanovo resulted in the deaths of eight elite security troops and ten ethnic Albanian gunmen. The exact circumstances of the incident remain unknown, but it served as a reminder of what the European Commission has called the "fragile"<sup>91</sup> state of inter-ethnic relations.

<sup>85</sup> State Statistical Office, "News Release – Laeken poverty indicators in 2014", 25 December 2015. Available from <http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2015/4.15.100.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> UNDP, "Human Development Report Explanatory Note", 2015. Available from [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/MKD.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/MKD.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> UNDP, "Human Development Report Explanatory Note", 2015. Available from [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/MKD.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/MKD.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> The agreement consists of three documents: 1) [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news\\_corner/news/news-files/20150619\\_agreement.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news_corner/news/news-files/20150619_agreement.pdf); 2) [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news\\_corner/news/news-files/20150619\\_annex\\_to\\_the\\_agreement.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news_corner/news/news-files/20150619_annex_to_the_agreement.pdf); and 3) [http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/hahn/announcements/agreement-skopje-overcome-political-crisis\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/hahn/announcements/agreement-skopje-overcome-political-crisis_en). The agreement also encompasses two expert documents: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news\\_corner/news/news-files/20150619\\_urgent\\_reform\\_priorities.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news_corner/news/news-files/20150619_urgent_reform_priorities.pdf) and [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news\\_corner/news/news-files/20150619\\_recommendations\\_of\\_the\\_senior\\_experts\\_group.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news_corner/news/news-files/20150619_recommendations_of_the_senior_experts_group.pdf)

<sup>89</sup> Gruevski resigned on 15 January 2015. Balkan Insight, "Macedonian Prime Minister Confirms His Resignation", 14 January 2016. Available from <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-prime-minister-resigns-01-14-2016>

<sup>90</sup> International Republican Institute, "Survey of Macedonian Public Opinion | April 19-25 2016", 8 June 2016. Available from [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri\\_macedonia\\_survey\\_april\\_2016\\_0.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_macedonia_survey_april_2016_0.pdf).

<sup>91</sup> European Commission, "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Report 2015", 10 November 2015. Available from [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2015/20151110\\_report\\_the\\_former\\_yugoslav\\_republic\\_of\\_macedonia.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_report_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf) (see page 4)

Youths working with UNDP and the Government to prepare the new National Youth Strategy



Photo by: UNDP the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The country also faced a potent humanitarian challenge in 2015, in the form of an estimated 900,000 refugees and migrants – most of them fleeing conflict in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan – who crossed the country on their journey to wealthier EU countries in the north. State institutions were initially slow to react, but transit centres were eventually established at southern and northern borders, registration procedures were adopted and vulnerable groups provided with assistance. Host communities in Gevgelija and Kumanovo faced a particular burden in serving the transit centres while at the same time maintaining an adequate level of public services to local residents. The crisis eased with the full closure of irregular borders in March 2016, though the treatment of the small numbers of refugees who remain in the country continues to raise human rights concerns.<sup>92</sup>

Two natural disasters also struck in 2015. February floods in the Pelagonija and Southeast regions caused an estimated US\$35.7 million in damage, and flash floods and landslides in the Polog region in August 2015 cost six lives and caused US\$21.5 million in damage in Tetovo and nearby villages.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

UNDP adapted its program to help the country address these multiple challenges.

As the UN humanitarian actors mobilized to address the refugee crisis, UNDP crafted a

development-oriented response to support its traditional partners at the local level, in the two most-affected host municipalities. Here waste management and water supply quickly emerged as the most urgent challenges, in which the refugee crisis exacerbated existing shortcomings in public services.

In the early days, UNDP provided new garbage trucks, containers and other waste-management equipment to Gevgelija and Kumanovo. Then, with US\$2.3 million in funding from the Government of Japan, UNDP developed plans to double the drinking water supply for Gevgelija by repairing a local well and to relocate the municipal landfill from the banks of the Vardar River to a more ecologically suitable location. In the north, in Kumanovo, UNDP undertook to repair a local road damaged by the heavy equipment needed to service the transit centre in Tabanovce, and to refurbish a multi-ethnic primary school. UNDP also provided assistance to the Crisis Management Centre (CMC) to improve emergency response.

These efforts built on UNDP's long-standing efforts to improve governance at the local level, particularly supporting completion of the decentralization process, which in the country is dedicated not only to bringing local institutions closer to the public but also to promoting inter-ethnic cohesion.

*"Decentralization has been and still is the main priority of our country due to its complexity and impact over the relations between all stakeholders at horizontal and vertical level."*

– Mr. Lirim Shabani, Minister of Local Self-government, opening of the Fiscal Decentralization Conference

<sup>92</sup> See the statement from the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights of 23 September 2016: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20567&LangID=E>.

To this end, UNDP supported the Ministry of Local Self-Government to prepare a new Programme and Action Plan for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization for the 2015-2020 period. This was noted as one of few areas of progress in the European Commission's 2015 report on EU accession. The policy process was enriched by data from a UNDP-led survey on citizens' satisfaction with local government services, disaggregated data from planning regions and a study on local e-services.

UNDP Resident Representative Louisa Vinton visits the Vinojug transit camp in Gevgelija to meet with refugees



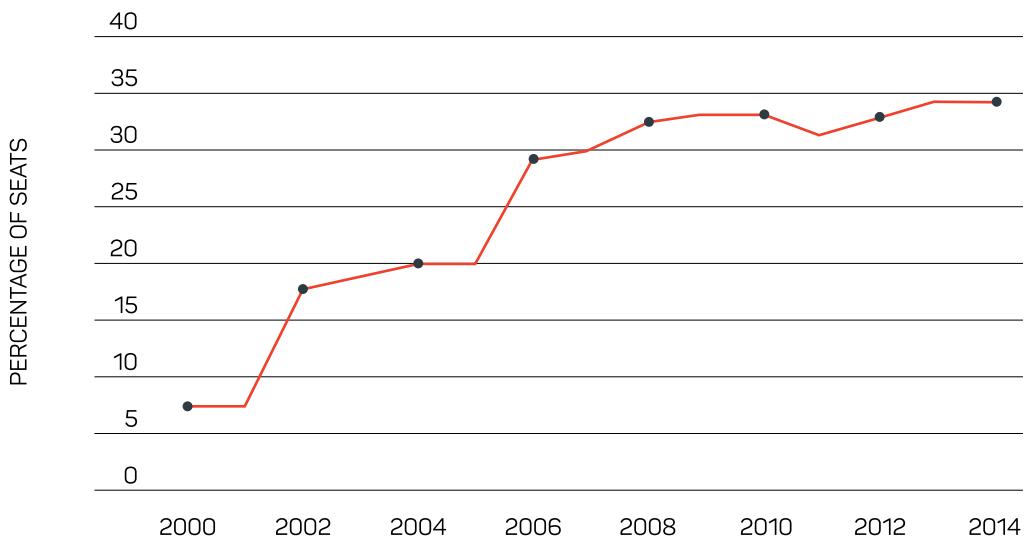
Photo by: Ivan Zverzhanovski

At the regional level, with funding from the Ministry of Local Self-Government, UNDP helped to replicate models for alternative service provision that were pioneered in the Vardar

Planning Region. To boost local development and help mitigate the effects of multiple crises, new centres to support private business were established in five planning regions and a centre for rural development was created in the Northeast Planning Region. At local level, UNDP aided municipalities in addressing the needs of vulnerable groups and people with disabilities. To help address high rates of youth unemployment and emigration, UNDP worked in 2015 with the Agency of Youth and Sport to prepare a new National Youth Strategy for 2016-2025. UNDP's role was to ensure the process was fully participatory; the strategy preparation involved more than 65 workshops, public debates and local meetings, engaging more than 95 youth organizations and informal groups. UNDP also worked to encourage social cohesion, focusing on the local youth councils in Kumanovo and Gostivar. 30 workshops, trainings, street art performances and debates were organized to raise awareness of the councils and bring youth from different communities together.

Increasing the participation of women in public life was another priority. Although mandatory quotas have secured 34 percent of the seats in the Parliament for women, currently only two of 25 cabinet ministers, and only four of 81 municipal mayors are women. Thanks to good timing, cooperation with civil society and oth-

## FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA NATIONAL PARLIAMENT - 2000 TO 2015



Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank<sup>93</sup>

<sup>93</sup> The World Bank, "Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)." Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?locations=MK> (accessed 1 September 2016)

## Key results

er UN agencies and support from women politicians from both ruling and opposition parties, the quota for "the less represented sex" was increased from 30 percent to 40 percent. As a result, the country is likely to have one of the highest shares of female parliamentary representation in the world in 2017.

### CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Looking ahead, many of the challenges that arose in 2015 appear unlikely to be resolved in the near future. The result of the elections in December 2016 has done little to resolve the political crisis, and it is unclear whether any of the major parties have a serious commitment to the broad reform agenda mandated by the Przino Agreement. Even if the European Commission grants the country a (conditional) seventh recommendation to open accession talks, the magnetic force of the EU will continue to wane. The dispute over the country's name will block progress and the EU will itself suffer deep divisions over major issues. The country's position as "gatekeeper" to the Western Balkans migration route will keep it at centre stage in migration discussions and continue to raise human rights concerns.

UNDP governance work will continue to focus on the local level, while also addressing democratic deficits and rule-of-law challenges pertinent to the EU accession agenda and the relevant UN conventions. Following an in-depth preparatory phase, a US\$3.3 million Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)-funded four-year project is in



*30 workshops, trainings, performances and debates held for youths to strengthen social cohesion in multi-ethnic Kumanovo and Gostivar*



*Increase in the candidate list quotas for women from 30 percent to 40 percent*



*Water supply and waste management priorities identified and constructed in migrant-affected municipalities*

place to help municipal councils strengthen their oversight and outreach functions, particularly on budget, gender and inter-ethnic issues.

Building on a long tradition of inter-municipal co-operation, UNDP will also continue assisting regional development centres in extending services to people with disabilities and in building regional competitiveness, including through mapping of rural tourism potential. Past work in innovating tools for transparency, accountability and integrity will be integrated into these efforts.

In addition, UNDP will continue to forge partnerships with civil society and institutional actors to promote the open governance agenda, and explore its connections with the SDGs.

UNDP governance work will continue to complement the humanitarian response to the refugee crisis with a sustainable local-level development response. The efforts will aim to help the municipalities of Gevgelija and Kumanovo build resilience for potential future crises while improving the delivery of utilities and other public services to local residents. UNDP will also continue supporting the CMC, municipalities and other institutions to build crisis-response capabilities, with a focus on updating the online crisis management system.

In the area of social cohesion and youth, UNDP will launch an initiative to promote social cohesion in ethnically diverse Kumanovo. This project will create youth-friendly spaces for inclusive dialogue and serve as a platform for youth-driven activities that will meet local needs, address the migrant crisis, and bring the community together.



# TURKEY

## BACKGROUND

Over the past 15 years, Turkey has experienced rapid improvement across a number of economic indicators. Extreme poverty fell by approximately two thirds to 4.5 percent between 2002 and 2012, per capita incomes increased by 300 percent over the same period, and, in 2014, GDP per capita exceeded US\$10,000.<sup>94</sup> This level of GDP per capita gave Turkey an estimated GDP of just under US\$800 billion that year, making it the 18<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world.<sup>95</sup>

In 2015, Turkey continued to be impacted by the war in Syria and accompanying refugee and mi-

grant crisis. Turkey has invested heavily in providing humanitarian support to Syrians and others fleeing violence, with more than 2.7 million refugees now registered.<sup>96</sup> However, large numbers of refugees are also leaving the country for the EU, occasionally with tragic consequences. In response to the loss of life and the large numbers of asylum seekers entering Europe, the EU and Turkey entered negotiations in November 2015, reaching an agreement for Turkey to help stem the flow of people to Europe in return for funding for the response to the refugee and migrant crisis, visa-free travel for Turkish citizens, and renewed talks on joining the EU.

<sup>94</sup> The World Bank, "Turkey Overview". Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/overview> (accessed 10 June 2016)

<sup>95</sup> The World Bank, "Gross domestic product 2014". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf> (accessed 10 June 2016)

<sup>96</sup> UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response". Available from <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> (accessed 9 June 2016)

Domestic tensions also increased in 2015. The peace process with the armed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was suspended in July, resulting in a number of violent incidents, predominantly in the southeast of the country. This breakdown came in the aftermath of the first of two general elections held in 2015. The first election resulted in a hung Parliament, leading to a second election being called in November, with the AKP returning to power.

Despite the political situation, Turkey has continued to push for reforms in key areas. The challenging reforms required for EU alignment, particularly those aimed at strengthening rule of law, fostering human rights and democracy, are further complicated by increasingly polarized political and social settings. Recent developments, many of which were addressed in the Outcome Document of the 2015 UPR, have also led to concerns over the adequacy of checks and balances, the independence of institutions such as the judiciary, protections of freedom of speech, privacy, and restrictive censorship.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

One of UNDP's major initiatives in 2015 has been working with the Ombudsman Institution. This includes supporting the drafting of the first strategic plan for the Ombudsman Institution. Drafted in a consultative process involving a range of actors, including government institutions, the judiciary and human rights focused civil society organizations, the strategic plan addresses the needs of the national human rights architecture, and incorporates international best practices. Many of the recommendations provided by UNDP were reflected in the draft, including a proposal for a specific target for the handling of gender-based complaints. A capacity assessment of the Ombudsman Institution was also conducted, contributing to the Strategic Plan development process and was communicated to the Prime Minister's office. The draft strategic plan is currently being reviewed by the Ombudsman Institution and the Ministry of Development. The UNDP and the Ombudsman Institution's joint project is considered an important step forward on the eve of the establishment of new institutions that will focus on anti-discrimination and equal-

ity, as well as independent oversight for law enforcement. The knowledge and experience gained during this process also resulted in long-term co-operation agreements being signed between the Turkish Ombudsman Institution and five similar institutions in Europe

To further improve the existing public administration, UNDP remains a strong advocate for the use of technology in expanding the effectiveness and efficiency of government services. As part of a wider effort to support e-governance, UNDP supported the enhancement and expansion of the e-visa system, with the number of users reported to have increased significantly to over 6 million. The e-consulate system, which was also developed with the support of UNDP, has also shown significant improvements, and improved the speed of services even as demand has increased.

UNDP also invested considerable resources into promoting the human rights of disadvantaged groups. Under a grant program aimed at empowering women, 20 projects involving 8,646 people across 11 provinces enhanced the ability of civil society to support the effective implementation of gender-related policies at the local level. Building the capacity of local NGOs and universities enabled the establishment of independent monitoring mechanisms for gender-related policies, and improving communication and cooperation between different organizations and communities. Efforts to push for gender-sensitive policymaking and anti-corruption were also implemented at the local level, where grassroots women groups were enabled to provide feedback on the integrity plans of their local municipalities.



Local activists embrace the '16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence' campaign

Photo by: UNDP Turkey

Given the impact of the conflict in Syria and the large numbers of refugees being hosted, providing assistance with this challenge is a UNDP priority. UNDP's support was expanded in 2015, with three new partnerships that will increase the technical and physical capacities of the local municipalities hosting refugees. This included urban waste management; socio-economic empowerment of women; vocational training services; and skills development programmes. In addition, in late 2015, a large-scale project was launched to support legal aid services targeting disadvantaged groups such as women, children and Syrian refugees. The project aims to design and implement specific legal aid approaches based on the gender, age and location of applicants. In order to enable this effective targeting, the project started with a detailed assessment of the legal needs of Syrians in five provinces in southern Turkey. The results of the assessment will contribute to the improvement of the system through capacity development and awareness raising programs, as well as possible legislative changes.

UNDP Administrator  
Helen Clark speaks  
with Syrian refugees  
in Turkey



Photo by: Ariel Rubin/UNDP

As a result of the migration crisis and visa liberalisation discussions with the EU, border governance and management has been a focus. In addition to the launch of a demining programme in the eastern border regions, UNDP is supporting the establishment of effective, legitimate and sustainable institutions in the justice and security sectors, border control and the coast guard. UNDP's approach also focuses on building the capacities of its partners to prevent and manage crises, while building awareness that the borders in question represent one of the greatest security and developmental challenges for the wider region. Overall, the current migration crisis on Europe's southern and eastern flank is a terrible reminder of the need

to work collaboratively to build the resilience of communities and institutions, including integrated border management capacities.

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

The political environment in Turkey is expected to remain turbulent going forward. Violence as a result of the suspension of peace talks with the PKK appears likely to continue, along with attacks from extremist groups such as ISIS. It is also expected that the debate over moving to an executive presidential system will continue. The political, social and economic environment is therefore expected to make the implementation of needed institutional reforms challenging.

This is also expected to be true of human rights protections where additional measures are needed, particularly to address discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation. Although the legislation for a National Human Rights and Equality Institution is drafted, there are concerns about its compliance with international standards, especially with regard to its structural independence.

UNDP has several strategic priorities, including continued support for reforming and strengthening institutions. With the strategic plan of the Ombudsman Institution expected to be officially adopted, UNDP plans to support the implementation of the plan and provide ongoing expert advice. Similarly, UNDP will support a new initiative for the adoption of a code of ethics and increasing transparency in the functioning of the Court of Cassation. Furthermore, UNDP plans to facilitate the incorporation of the SDGs into national targets and the Government's reform agenda, with technology and entrepreneurship expected to play an important role. This includes a planned follow-up project to integrate a number of the e-services established in recent years, including e-notary.

Improving local governance systems and effective public service delivery will remain a priority, with plans to introduce a new generation Local Administration Reform Programme and pilot initiatives on local integrity systems. For UNDP, ensuring local service delivery meets the needs of disadvantaged groups will be key in developing and implementing initiatives in cooperation with local authorities. Gender equality and women's rights will also be a focus, and plans are in place

to continue working with local governments and civil society to ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of gender related policies, as well as improving the coordination and cooperation between different groups with aligned interests.

With the Syrian conflict continuing, UNDP plans to continue supporting initiatives to assist Syrian refugees and the communities that are hosting them. This will include scaling-up and replicating previous work to improve livelihoods, local economic development and capacity development, and new interventions targeting the design of active labour market programmes. The large-scale project started in 2015 to provide legal aid services for disadvantaged groups such as women, children and Syrian refugees will also continue to collect and utilize information on these populations to effectively target legal aid services.

With increased migration flux, border governance and management also continue to be a high priority. Work will continue to improve integrated border management capacities to address the increased risk of ISIS operatives and other extremists seeking to cross the border and launch attacks in Turkey and Europe. This makes effective border management a high priority, not just for UNDP and Turkey, but for the wider region. Finally, in more recent events, the failed coup on 15

July 2016 represents both a victory and a new trial for Turkish democracy, and also reveals the current level of political polarization. This political polarization, in combination with the opportunity to prosecute political rivals, has given UNDP's inclusive and democratic governance interventions a new level of importance. In particular, UNDP will refocus its efforts on supporting the establishment and/or improvement of independent and accountable mechanisms that protect and foster human rights and the rule of law. To this end, the restructuring process underway in the Turkish public administration system provides a new opportunity for UNDP to ensure that changes are adopted and implemented in line with international norms and standards, with one example being the improvement of civilian oversight of internal security sector under the new structure of gendarmerie and police in Ministry of Interior. UNDP's role in this new environment will be critical in settling the relations between the responsible institutions and developing the accountability of security forces in order to prevent casualties in the current challenging environment.

## Key results



*Strategic plan drafted for the Ombudsman Institution through a consultative process*



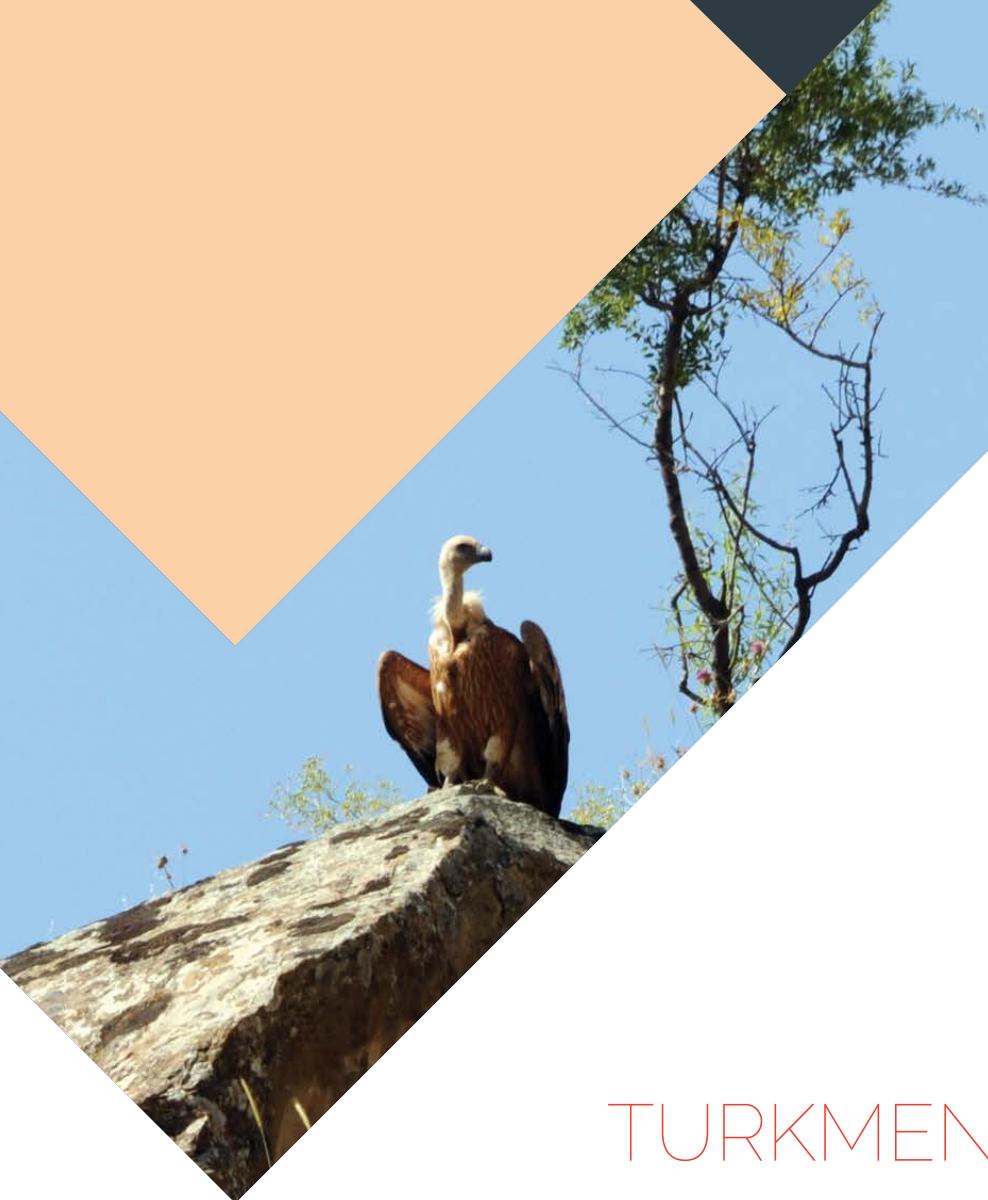
*8,646 men and women directly benefitted from civil society's active role in implementation of gender related policies*



*Initiated programme to provide legal aid services to disadvantaged groups in southern Turkey, including Syrian refugees*



*Launch of large demining programme in eastern border regions*



# TURKMENISTAN

## BACKGROUND

Following independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the economy of Turkmenistan has developed significantly, outperforming its Central Asian neighbours. With a GDP per capita of US\$6,947.80 in 2015,<sup>97</sup> Turkmenistan is now considered an upper-middle income country. Much of this economic growth is due to large reserves of oil and gas, including the world's fourth largest natural gas reserves. This has enabled the Government to invest significantly in nation-building and renovating its cities, particularly the capital Ashgabat. However, with the fall of commodity prices in

2015 and 2016, a lack of economic diversification is expected to lead to a significant slowdown. To some extent this can already be seen in the country's GDP growth, which fell to 6.5 percent in 2015, significantly down on the greater than 10 percent growth rates seen between 2011 and 2014.<sup>98</sup> To counter the problem, the Government is prioritising economic diversification, announcing a plan to increase revenues from non-hydrocarbon sources to 70 percent by 2030.

A participant in international human rights mechanisms, Turkmenistan is only now looking to establish a NHRI in accordance with the Paris Prin-

<sup>97</sup> The World Bank, "Turkmenistan GDP per Capita (current US\$)". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=TM> (accessed 14 July 2016)

<sup>98</sup> The World Bank, "Turkmenistan". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/turkmenistan> (accessed 6 October 2016)

ciples, with the Law on Ombudsman adopted in late 2016. All issues pertaining to the obligations of Turkmenistan under the UN treaty bodies are coordinated by the National Institute of Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan. As the result of the constitutional review process, in 2016 Turkmenistan adopted a new Constitution that was widely commented on by the UN, OSCE and other international partners.

In December 2015, Turkmenistan celebrated the 20th anniversary of its UN-recognized status of positive neutrality. This policy has provided Turkmenistan with stability in foreign policy, but in the early 2000s also contributed to international isolation. In recent years, Turkmenistan has increased engagement with the international community, as is reflected by its election to a number of international boards and committees. In addition, for the first time in 12 years, Turkmenistan sent a delegation to the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of the OSCE in 2015. Turkmenistan has also taken steps towards a climate-friendly future, with the Government declaring an intention to approve an action plan to move toward a green economy.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

UNDP continues to advocate for improvements in human rights and the freedom of expression in Turkmenistan. On this front, 2015 was a milestone year with reports to three human rights treaty bodies, and the finalization a National Human Rights Action Plan for 2016-2020 based on the recommendations of the 2013 UPR and other treaty bodies. UNDP also provided technical support to the Parliament and the National Institute of Democracy and Human Rights (NIDHR) on the development of legislation for an Ombudsman Institution, and the establishment of an Institute of the Ombudsman as the NHRI. For the benefit of NIDHR and the Parliament, UNDP also worked jointly with OHCHR and the EU to present the best practices for the Institute of the Ombudsman to forty members of the working group, and provided suggestions for what model could best function in Turkmenistan. In efforts to improve the quality of governance, as well as decentralize



University students debate sustainable development, human rights and strengthening rule of law at the 3<sup>d</sup> annual UN Debate Cup in Ashgabat

Photo by: UNDP Turkmenistan

*"The quality of the national reports of Turkmenistan has significantly improved in recent years. This is due to the combined efforts of the Inter-agency commission on implementation of international obligations in the field of human rights and humanitarian law and the reforms implemented in the Turkmenistan and support of UNDP Turkmenistan Office."*

– **Ms. Shemshat Atajanova**, Head of the democracy and human rights department of the Institute of Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan

decision-making, UNDP assisted the Parliament to conduct a review of the administrative, legal, and financial systems of local governments in order to develop a list of proposals for improvement. The resulting recommendations focused on providing more independence to local communities and their representative bodies, strengthening their ability to participate in the formation of local plans for socio-economic development, and giving them the ability to approve and monitor public spending at the local level. The proposals

were received by the Parliament and will serve as a basis for a planned revision of the local governance system. Furthermore, UNDP supported the Government in preparing a road map for the development of the Civil Service Academy, a project that will be co-funded by the Government as part of the 2016–2020 programme.

UNDP has also been working to address the under-representation of women in politics and leadership

Study visit by the Parliament to the Republic of Tatarstan of the Russian Federation to promote direct exchange of experience in the fields of legislation, local self-governance, and IT technologies

Photo by: UNDP Turkmenistan



positions. To this end, UNDP helped to facilitate the active participation of the chairwoman of the Assembly of Turkmenistan, Akja Nurberdiýewa, at several international events, including the 10th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliaments and the 4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

Finally, assisting the Government with the constitutional review, UNDP engaged international experts to provide information and guidance on the best practices of constitutional democracies. The resulting draft Constitution was published for public discussion in the national newspaper. UNDP is providing an extensive review and recommendations on the new draft of the Constitution, which was adopted in 2016.

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

The immediate challenge facing Turkmenistan is the economic impact of the fall in commodity prices. With declining tax revenues and a likely increase in unemployment, efforts will be needed to ensure vulnerable groups are not left behind and that important reforms continue to be implemented. As such, UNDP will continue working with the Government to further initia-

tives started in 2015, such as the establishment and strengthening of the Civil Service Academy, the creation of an Ombudsman Institution, and the implementation of the Human Rights Action Plan.

UNDP will also work with the Government to strengthen its employment and labour policies, improve training for public servants, and develop the Government's capacities to deliver services to the population in a modern, effective, and transparent way. At the same time, UNDP plans to continue providing the Government with assistance to empower people with disabilities, focusing both on policy development and creating national mechanisms that promote the social integration of this section of the population.

UNDP will also continue to support the Turkmen authorities to engage with the international community. Particular importance will be placed on encouraging cooperation and coordination with neighbouring governments in Central Asia to solve regional challenges, and on drawing lessons from successful examples of programmes and reforms in those countries.

Lastly, UNDP will continue working with the Government to incorporate the SDGs, which were approved by the Government of Turkmenistan in September 2016, into the broader vision of national development – particularly SDG 16. One high priority in this area will be supporting the integration of SDGs into the new President's socio-economic development plan for 2017–2021. Overall, UNDP will continue advocating for a more open society which, evidence suggests, will encourage an innovative and entrepreneurial culture that could provide large benefits to the Turkmen people and their economy.

## Key results



*Human rights action plan developed based on the recommendations from the 2013 UPR and approved by the Presidential Decree in January 2016*



*Completed a review of administrative, legal, and financial systems of the local governance in order to develop a list of proposals for improvement*



*Provided expertise and guidance on the drafting of a new Constitution*



# UKRAINE

## BACKGROUND

Due to its abundance of fertile farmlands, Ukraine has long been a major exporter of various agricultural products. The country also has a diversified industry that manufactures a range of products from steel and iron products, to jet engines and railway cars. With high levels of education and an extensive social protection system, it has enjoyed relatively high levels of human development in the past. In recent years however, Ukraine has faced a series of challenges that have stalled needed reforms and aggravated many existing problems. Institutions, which often date back to the Soviet era, have become frail and increasingly vulnerable to corruption.

Over the past two years, Ukraine struggled with the twin challenges of post-revolutionary political

reform and the defence of its territorial integrity. These challenges arose out of a series of events starting in 2013, when then President Viktor Yanukovych suspended negotiations on an association agreement with the EU. This decision resulted in large protests in Kiev and eventually snowballed into the 2014 Ukrainian revolution, known as Maidan for the square where the protests took place. As a result, President Yanukovych fled the country, and was subsequently removed from his position by the Parliament, leading to early elections. This in turn was followed by the Russian annexation of Crimea and conflict with armed separatists in the eastern Donbas region of Ukraine.

The ongoing conflict in the Donbas region has created a humanitarian crisis, with significant loss of human life and more than 1.5 million peo-

ple displaced<sup>99</sup> – a situation that, if not resolved, may drive further conflict, worsen the country's already dire economic situation, and erode confidence in government. The conflict has had a large negative economic impact, including currency devaluation, high inflation, a credit crunch and slowdowns in the economies of neighbouring countries, and estimates that real GDP decreased by 6.8 percent in 2014 and by a further 10 percent in 2015.<sup>100</sup> In addition, the conflict has impinged on the human rights of individuals living in conflict-affected regions, and further exacerbated issues such as inequality, social exclusion, and a lack of trust among communities.

Yet, Ukrainians are showing a strong commitment towards democracy, with the new political leadership pursuing a comprehensive reform agenda, and civil society, including human rights organizations, playing an important role during and after the revolution. In this regard, 2015 was a critical year for Ukraine, not only in terms of efforts towards economic and political stabilization and reform, but also in terms of seeking a peaceful settlement to the armed conflict in the east of the country.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

There were a number of positive outcomes for democratic governance in 2015. The post-2014 coalition government has developed Ukraine's most comprehensive governance reform programme to date, which emphasizes anti-corruption, rule of law and decentralization reforms in line with European standards. Important reform initiatives include new open data legislation, a State Anti-Corruption Programme for 2015–2017, and the launch of the National Agency for Prevention of Corruption. All of these developments were supported by UNDP.

Since 2008, UNDP has been working to empower rural communities to take part in the decisions that affect their lives. Using a community-based approach, UNDP has helped to facilitate joint decision-making and bottom-up planning processes, leading to the development of local partnerships and real improvements in people's lives. In 2015, the living conditions of more than 600,000 people were improved through 500 micro-projects, including the installation of water pipelines, energy efficient street lighting and windows, and the renovation and reequipping of local kindergartens and rural health clinics.

There were also important achievements for human rights, with the first National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan being adopted following an inclusive process involving civil society, the Government and a number of development partners. UNDP also funded the development of the National Human Rights Strategy portal (<http://hrstrategy.com.ua/>) by the Ministry of Justice, promoting the engagement of public institutions and individuals in the development of the strategy. The UNDP-supported international conference on the specific topic of the role of NHRIs in conflict and post-conflict situations resulted in the signing of the Kyiv Declaration, which calls for a stronger role for NHRIs in conflict and post-conflict settings. The Kyiv Declaration was adopted and signed by 19 NHRIs.



Guests arriving for the international conference on the role of NHRIs in Kyiv

Photo by: Eugene Zelenko/UNDP Ukraine

<sup>99</sup> OHCHR, "Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine 16 August to 15 November 2015", 9 December 2015. Available from <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/12thOHCHRReportUkraine.pdf>

<sup>100</sup> The World Bank, "Ukraine Overview". Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ukraine/overview#1> (accessed 3 June 2016)

UNDP has developed a comprehensive approach to integrate anti-corruption efforts across its programmes. In addition to sector-based integrity initiatives such as health sector procurement services, UNDP also launched a dedicated support project with the National Agency for Prevention of Corruption to prevent corruption through a range of measures including the creation of conflict-of-interest rules and asset declarations. Complementing this, UNDP helped to restore local governance functions in conflict-affected areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, and has worked closely with oblast administrations to identify and minimize corruption risks in recovery and regional economic development efforts. UNDP also continued to improve the knowledge and resources of civil society, enabling them to act as local corruption monitors. In early 2015, the first UNDP Anti-Corruption School kicked off, offering civil society and other organizations exposure to some of the leading experts on national transparency and integrity. As a result, local civil society organizations produced significant results, including the cancellation of US\$1.2 million worth of dubious public procurement contracts.

In a combined effort to combat corruption and improve health services, at the request of the Ministry of Health, UNDP has been procuring a range of medicines and related medical products for the diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis, hepatitis, haemophilia and orphan diseases in children, and HIV/AIDS, and has begun to build the capacity needed for a transparent and cost-effective procurement system for the Ministry.

Arguably the biggest challenge facing Ukraine at present is the conflict in the eastern part of the country, resulting in large numbers of IDPs and conflict-affected people who lack access to adequate services. An estimated 50,000 people, including IDPs and their host communities, in 19 communities of the Donbas region benefited from a UNDP programme to rehabilitate social infrastructure, including healthcare facilities. UNDP also worked to assist the affected individuals, financially supporting 30 civil society organizations to provide 3,620 IDPs with psychological assistance and 6,900 with legal aid. Furthermore, a case management system used to keep track of IDPs assistance was introduced,

allowing assistance to be extended to around 1,700 people. Complementing this, UNDP is promoting community security and access to justice in conflict-affected areas, working with local communities and security providers on measures that are aimed to enhance local security and social cohesion.



Working out at the Artemivsk Territorial Center of Social Services for elderly and people with disabilities in Donetsk

Photo by: UNDP Ukraine

*"UNDP proved to be a very good and reliable partner not only in terms of community development but also in terms of shelter projects for IDPs. This project is highly necessary and very interesting: people learn from it, they can see that cooperation with UNDP allows us to introduce the European standards of living. Together we managed to provide shelter to children who are going through a difficult period, who lost their family, until we find some durable solution for them. We appreciate these social projects very much."*

- Ms. Olga Lishyk, Deputy Head of Luhansk oblast state administration

In a forward looking programme, UNDP is supporting civic partnerships that document human rights violations in the east and has launched a database for storing the evidence. To date, 120 individual and group cases in 15 localities have been filed. Based on this work, eight monitoring reports have been prepared, five criminal investigations launched and three applications filed with the European Court of Human Rights.

### CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

After the recent instability, there are some positive signs for Ukraine. Economic growth is expected to stabilize, with the World Bank predicting 1-2 percent growth in 2016.<sup>101</sup> The benefits of positive reforms in recent years will also begin having an impact, with anti-corruption and transparency initiatives expected to result in positive changes.

On a less positive note, although a ceasefire agreement in the Donbas region has stemmed most of the violence, violations continue to occur and the situation remains extremely fragile. In addition, the implementation of the Minsk II package of measures to defuse the conflict remains incomplete.

Ukraine also faces other substantial challenges. The pace of reform slowed during 2015, with po-

litical instability leading to the formation of a new government following the fracture of the earlier broad reform coalition. As a result, many key reform agenda items, such as constitutional changes on decentralization, have been delayed and have led to disillusionment among the wider public. UNDP will continue to push for these reforms to be reprioritized.

UNDP will also continue working to combat corruption. In addition to the continuation of the UNDP Anti-Corruption School, UNDP will look to support the development of anti-corruption strategies and risk assessment methodologies, at both the national and local level.

Lastly, restoring peace and addressing the consequences of the conflict also remain priorities for both the Ukrainian authorities and for UNDP. Work to rebuild physical and social infrastructure, and improve social cohesion will continue, with the case management system for IDPs expected to further expand the ability of UNDP and service providers to assist people in need. Recovery activities more generally will increasingly incorporate governance, peacebuilding and gender elements, while options are being explored for a comprehensive mine action project. Work started in 2015 to record and document human rights violations and to improve access to justice and community security will also continue.



## Key results

*National Human Rights Strategy was adopted by Presidential decree*

*Open data legislation was approved by the Parliament*

*UNDP Anti-Corruption School opened, offering exposure to some of the leading experts on national transparency and integrity*

*50,000 IDPs and their host communities benefited from a UNDP programme to rehabilitate social infrastructure*

<sup>101</sup> The World Bank, "Ukraine Overview". Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ukraine/overview#1> (accessed 3 June 2016)



# UZBEKISTAN

## BACKGROUND

Since the mid-2000s, Uzbekistan has enjoyed steady economic growth and made progress in increasing per capita income, reducing malnutrition, and decreasing the gender gap in education and political participation. However, a number of challenges remain, including tackling poverty in rural areas, improving the human rights situation, and creating a more inclusive society. Like Kazakhstan

and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan's economy is reliant on a range of commodity exports,<sup>102</sup> with oil, gas, gold, copper, uranium and cotton being the primary income generators. Similar to neighbouring countries, low commodity prices and recent economic slowdowns in Kazakhstan and Russia, where remittances from migrant workers are another major source of household income, are expected to impact growth and present new socio-economic challenges.

<sup>102</sup> Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Foreign Trade Statistics". Available from <http://www.mfer.uz/en/export/statistics/> (accessed 7 August 2016)

Uzbekistan is also faced with security risks due to the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan and tensions over the management and use of energy and water resources with the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan<sup>103</sup> in the Fergana Valley. There is particular concern with regard to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and its splinter group the Islamic Jihad Union, which have been actively fighting alongside the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan. Although neither group has successfully launched an attack in Uzbekistan since 2004, the threat posed by these groups has been used to justify tightening security measures and increasing restrictions on civil society.

In September 2015, Uzbekistan hosted a joint meeting of Central Asian foreign ministers and the US Secretary of State. Amongst other things, this resulted in a declared commitment to protect human rights and strengthen civil society.<sup>104</sup> How this will impact on previous restrictions imposed in those areas remains to be seen.

In March 2015, Uzbekistan held a presidential election, which was won by the long-term incumbent Islam Karimov. He subsequently passed away in September 2016, with Chairman of the Senate Nigmatilla Yuldashev currently acting as President.

## ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

One of UNDP's priorities in 2015 was to boost public engagement with the legislative process. A significant achievement on this front was the launch, promotion and enhancement of a public consultations platform in both Uzbek and Russian, [www.regulation.gov.uz](http://www.regulation.gov.uz). By the end of 2015, almost 300 draft laws and regulations had been put on the platform, with over 500 comments and proposals received from citizens and experts for consideration. This feedback has enhanced the quality of government legislation, facilitated a reduction in impractical and costly regulations, and strengthened citizen and business participation in decision-making.

The decentralization of power to local government bodies is also seen as an effective way to encourage political engagement. To this end, UNDP supported an initiative to strengthen the oversight role of locally-elected bodies (Kengashes) by improving their legal frameworks. Based on the results of a pilot initiative in the Tashkent region Kengash, a package of proposals has been developed that aim to reform how the activities of Kengashes and their interactions with local executive bodies and communities are regulated. These proposals have been submitted to the Senate.

To improve public service delivery, UNDP, in a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (now the Ministry of Labour), piloted a redesign of the provision of social service for the elderly and persons with disabilities, focusing on interagency cooperation and data exchange, as well as streamlining back office procedures. The pilot resulted in a new model, which significantly reduced administrative burdens, eliminating redundant steps, and shortening the duration of many procedures.

UNDP also worked with the E-Government Development Centre and the Ministry for the Development of Information Technologies and Communications to develop a Cabinet of Ministers' resolution that seeks to "improve procedures for public service delivery and interagency information sharing". The resolution was adopted in May 2015. This streamlining of public service delivery has since been expanded to a number of line min-



Uzbek delegation in Estonia to learn about the globally recognized E-Toimik E-Justice system

Photo by: UNDP Uzbekistan

<sup>103</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Press Release", 19 July 2016. Available from <http://mfa.uz/en/press/statements/2016/07/7923/>

<sup>104</sup> US Department of State, "Joint Declaration of Partnership and Cooperation by the Five Countries of Central Asia and The United States of America, Samarkand, Uzbekistan", 1 November 2015. Available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/11/249050.htm>

istries and local governments that provide services to businesses through one-stop shops. In a further E-Governance initiative, a six-day study tour of Estonia was undertaken to learn from the best practices of the globally recognized Estonian E-Justice system, 'E-Toimik', and help guide the ongoing development of the E-SUD system.

Like most countries in Central Asia, corruption remains a significant issue in Uzbekistan. In a step forward for the prevention of corruption, UNDP collaborated with the Ministry of Justice to co-design a new anti-corruption screening policy, which came into force in December 2015. The new policy requires and regulates how draft legal acts are to be assessed for corruption risks (of which 23 are identified), with conclusions and recommendations to be provided by an anti-corruption specialist. Once risks are identified, they are to be addressed by the relevant agency. This mechanism will also be applied to adopted legal acts and international treaties.

In another step to reduce opportunities for corruption, open data and government transparency were given a boost in 2015. With UNDP support, the Cabinet of Ministers' resolutions on an open data portal and the transparency of state bodies were adopted, and an official open data portal launched in March. The Portal (<http://data.gov.uz>) is now populated with 748 datasets from 64 government agencies, and the datasets downloaded over 294,000 times.<sup>105</sup> This move towards increased transparency was picked up at the local level where, in November, a newly developed website for the Tashkent regional



1st Hackathon to promote data.gov.uz – held by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technologies with UNDP support

Photo by: UNDP Uzbekistan

*"This is a giant step forward, because it allows for a direct route of inquiry about the available information, and opens doors for the data's greater use in academia, the mass media, and individuals looking for other constructive uses of the information through innovative professionals like IT programmers. The commitment by government officials in making sure the available data is complete and accountable shows their important commitment to greater transparency."*

– Mr. Avazbek Niyazov, senior expert at the Uzinfocom Center

council was presented to deputies and the public as part of council efforts to disclose local public information through open data formats.

Finally, with a plan to harmonize domestic legislation with international commitments, UNDP facilitated an interagency initiative from the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate to create an inventory of more than 4,000 ratified treaties, and to enhance procedures for their implementation through national legislation. This assistance included providing support and international expertise to the interagency working group, drafting new methodologies for an inventory of international treaties, and supporting the enhancement of the international treaties online database at [www.lex.uz](http://www.lex.uz). This initiative will result in the institutionalization of a monitoring tool for implementing international treaties, and the creation of a unified database for collecting and tracking all international agreements and treaties relating to Uzbekistan.

<sup>105</sup> as of 4 March 2016



*Access to 4,000 ratified international treaties enhanced*



*Public consultation platform [www.regulation.gov.uz](http://www.regulation.gov.uz) launched and receives over 500 comments on 300 draft laws*



*Open Data Portal <http://data.gov.uz> launched and now has 748 datasets from 64 agencies*



*New streamlined model of public service delivery piloted*

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Despite progress in 2015, key governance challenges remain for Uzbekistan. These include the need for further decentralization, increased independence and efficiency of the judiciary, improvements in government transparency and accountability, increased citizen participation in public life, and bridging differences between diverse population groups. Alongside these challenges, new legal frameworks for law enforcement and increased quality of law making are key priorities for Uzbekistan. It also remains unclear what impact the loss of long-term leader Islam Karimov will have on development efforts.

UNDP will continue its support for the legal and judicial reforms by supporting policy development and the implementation of reforms. Specifically, UNDP will support efforts to increase the efficiency and responsiveness of the judiciary and its administration,

particularly the Supreme Court and Higher Economic Court, with the goal of achieving greater alignment with international standards of accountability, rule of law, and judicial performance.

These efforts form part of a larger plan to support further reforms in public administration. In particular, a functional review of public administration bodies and redesign of business processes will be promoted to optimize and further strengthen the efficiency of government authorities and their service provision, as well as incorporate international best practices.

Uzbekistan will also be supported in meeting national development targets through the provision of technical and policy advice. This advice will focus on the incorporation of the SDGs (particularly Goal 16) and international best practices into those targets, and on identifying and discussing gaps in national priorities.

# APPENDIX 1 – PARTNERS

Much of the governance and peacebuilding work undertaken by UNDP would not be possible without the commitments and contributions of our partners. International donors and implementing partners play a vital role in ensuring the imple-

mentation of UNDP programmes through their contributions and support. UNDP is grateful to these important partners for their generosity and involvement in shaping the many facets of governance and peacebuilding work in the ECIS region.

## **UN Agencies and Bodies**

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- UN Action against Conflict Related Sexual Violence
  - United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
  - United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)
  - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
  - United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD)
  - United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)
  - United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)
  - United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
  - UN Team of Experts on Rule of Law/Sexual Violence in Conflict
  - UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women
  - United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS)
  - UN Women
  - The World Bank
-

## **Regional & International Organizations**

Council of Europe

Council of the European Union

NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA)

Council of the European Union

The European Union (EU)

NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA)

Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Open Data in Europe and Central Asia (ODECA)

Open Government Partnership (OGP)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI)

Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC) - Centre for Security Cooperation

Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)

## **Governments and Government Agencies**

Government of Denmark

Government of the Netherlands

Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Government of Denmark

Government of the Netherlands

Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Government of Sweden

Government of Switzerland

Her Majesty's Government (UK)

International Trust Fund for Enhancing Human Security (ITF)

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia

Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM)

Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

United States Institute of Peace (USIP)

US Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)

US Department of State Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement

### **Non-governmental and Independent Organization**

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Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM)

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International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

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International Community Action Network (ICAN)

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Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM)

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International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

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International Community Action Network (ICAN)

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International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

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Partners Foundation for Local Development

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Small Arms Survey

Finally, this section would not be complete without acknowledging the huge number of civil society and NGOs that have partnered with us across the ECIS region. These organizations are a driving force for democratic governance and peacebuilding, and

are important promoters of human rights, rule of law, transparency and inclusiveness, amongst other things. Their active involvement in the work of UNDP has played a critical role in fostering the implementation of reforms throughout the region.



