United Nations Development Programme

A HANDBOOK ON WORKING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES

A HANDBOOK ON WORKING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES

Acknowledgements

This Handbook is a collective endeavor of the Democratic Governance community of practice within UNDP and its practitioners who have provided, debated and/or learned from political party assistance. In that sense, these colleagues are all the Handbook's authors. At the same time, the rich contributions that emerged from the Democratic Practice Governance Network Discussion in the fall of 2004 required a certain finesse and skill to bring coherence to them in a narrative that would resonate with the main users—UNDP practitioners—but also with UNDP partners in democratic governance. This Handbook would not have been possible without the excellent drafting and editing of Gretchen Luchsinger Sidhu, and the comprehensive inputs and management by Linda Maguire of UNDP's Democratic Governance Group. The Handbook also owes a debt of gratitude to Gita Welch, Principal Advisor and Director, and Magdy Martinez-Soliman, Practice Manager, both of UNDP's Democratic Governance Group, Bureau for Development Policy, who provided the backing, leadership and guidance required in bringing the publication to fruition.

Democratic Governance Group
Bureau for Development Policy
United Nations Development Programme
304 East 45th Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10017
www.undp.org

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations, including UNDP, or its Member States.

Foreword v
Introduction 1

Section I: Why Work with Political Parties? 9
Box: *Political Parties and Civil Society Organizations* 10
THE EVOLUTION OF PARTY ASSISTANCE 11
WHY UNDP SHOULD GET (MORE) INVOLVED 12
UNDP ON THE GROUND *Guatemala: Creating a Shared National Agenda* 12
UNDP'S COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES 13
PERSPECTIVES *Magdy Martinez-Soliman, UNDP New York, Democratic Governance Group: Parties Are Our Business* 14
PERSPECTIVES *Lenni Montiel, UNDP Vietnam: We Need New Rules and a Sense of Reality* 15
A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE UNDP
Thomas Carothers: A Mythic Model 16

Section II: Assessing the Big Picture: What Factors Affect Support? 19
A COUNTRY'S POLITICAL SYSTEM 19
1. Is the system a presidential, parliamentary or hybrid one? 19
2. What kind of system is used for translating votes into seats/offices? 20
3. How are political parties configured? 21
A COUNTRY'S POLITICAL SITUATION 21
Elections 21
Legislature 21
Capacity to govern 21
Experience as a democracy 21
Party constellations 21
UNDP ON THE GROUND *Algeria: Linking MPs and Their Constituencies After Crisis* 22
Internal party diagnostics 23
National/local support 23
Regional/global issues 23
A COUNTRY'S POLITICAL CHALLENGES 23
UNDP ON THE GROUND *Bangladesh: Multiple Challenges Hold Back Democracy* 24
POST-CONFLICT SCENARIOS 25
PERSPECTIVES *Gita Welch, UNDP New York, Democratic Governance Practice Director: Demilitarizing Politics in Mozambique* 26
LOCAL GOVERNANCE 27
PERSPECTIVES *Former UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown: How Can UNDP Help Fix Party Weaknesses?* 28

Section III: Does Working with Political Parties Compromise UNDP's Impartiality? 31
IS THE UN REALLY NEUTRAL? 31
MAKING CHOICES 32
PERSPECTIVES *Sennye Obuseng, UNDP Botswana: No Political Parties* 33
PERSPECTIVES *David W. Yang, UNDP Washington, DC: Some Political Parties* 34
PERSPECTIVES *Benjamin Allen, UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre: All Political Parties* 35
DIRECT AND INDIRECT SUPPORT 35
UNDP ON THE GROUND *Zimbabwe: Indirect Support Builds Institutions, Not Individual Actors* 36
UNDP ON THE GROUND *Ethiopia: In Direct Party Work, Proceed with Care* 37
A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE UNDP
The Institute for Multiparty Democracy: Some Lessons Learned 38

Section IV: Considerations to Shape a Programme 41
ADOPTING A SET OF PRINCIPLES 41
QUESTIONING ASSUMPTIONS 42
ASSESSING OPPORTUNITIES 43
UNDP ON THE GROUND *Saudi Arabia: Debating How to Proceed* 44
ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISKS 46
ENTRY POINTS FOR PROGRAMMING 46
The culture and practice of democracy 47
PERSPECTIVES *Håvard Aagesen, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre: Three Capacity Challenges* 47
PERSPECTIVES *Steve Glovinsky, UNDP New York, Bureau for Development Policy: Reaching the People in the Parties* 48
Governance institutions and processes 49
Policy issues 49
UNDP ON THE GROUND *Benin: Changing a Political Culture* 50
Political parties 51
FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS 52
PERSPECTIVES *Abdul Hannan, UNDP New York: Are We Missing the Mark?* 53
A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE UNDP
M. A. Mohamed Salih: The Challenges of Internal Party Democracy in Africa 54

Section V: How Is UNDP Already Offering Assistance? 57
COUNTRY EXAMPLES 57
Capacity development: **Tanzania**
Acquiring new skills for campaigning 57
Policy-making: **Honduras**
A commission debates electoral reform 58

Elections: **Cambodia**
Parties make the news 59

Multiparty dialogues: **Lesotho**
Inclusive conversations foster political stability 60

A focus on the issues: **Kosovo**, **Cambodia** and **Tanzania**
Raising awareness of human development 61

Conflict management: **Guyana**
Steps towards social cohesion 62

Working in one-party states: **Vietnam**
With the party but not for the party 64

Women's political participation: **Kyrgyzstan** and **Sudan**
Moving towards gender equity in parties 64

Working with youth: **Nicaragua**
The next generation articulates its needs 67

Sharing knowledge: **Mongolia**
'Soft' assistance to help a coalition form 68

Section VI: Who Else Is Involved? 69

WHEN TO PARTNER 70

Box: *Donors Discuss Their Different Contributions—and How They Can Work Together* 71

A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE UNDP
Westminster Foundation for Democracy: The Way Forward 72

Section VII: Monitoring and Evaluating Political Party Assistance 75

MONITORING 77

EVALUATING 77

HOW TO APPROACH POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE WITHIN AN EVALUATION 79

CAVEATS 80

Section VIII: Tools and Resources 81

ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES 81

Multilateral support 81

Intergovernmental organizations 81

Regional political organizations 82

Bilateral support 83

Groups associated with individual governments 83

Groups associated with one or more political parties 84

Party internationals 85

Non-governmental organizations 85

Local organizations 87

UNDP RESOURCES 87

OTHER KEY REFERENCES 88

FURTHER READINGS 89

Acronyms

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States

DPA: Department of Political Affairs

EAD: Electoral Assistance Division

IDEA: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

IMD: Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

IPU: Inter-Parliamentary Union

IRI: International Republican Institute

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

M&E: Monitoring and evaluation

MP: Member of parliament

MYFF: Multi-Year Funding Framework

NDI: National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

NGO: Non-governmental organization

OAS: Organization of American States

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

USAID: US Agency for International Development

Foreword

The strengthening of democratic governance requires more than well-functioning elections, parliaments, an independent judiciary and other institutions and processes — important though these are. It also calls for a strong culture of democracy, in particular, robust, transparent, internally democratic and accountable political parties. Political parties represent a keystone of democratic governance. They provide a structure for political participation; serve as a training ground for future political leaders and seek to win elections in order to enter government. Whether inside or outside of government, political parties exist to transform aggregated social interests into public policy. In the legislature, political parties play an important role in shaping the relationship between the executive and the legislature and in prioritizing the legislative agenda.

If one accepts the proposition that multi-party systems are an essential part of a well-functioning democracy, the question for us as development practitioners is how best to work with them in addressing the challenges they face, in areas such as internal party democracy, transparency in mobilization and use of resources, and message development that adheres to basic norms and standards of human rights and gender equality. In the past, assistance to political parties was considered as taboo by development partners and as interference in domestic affairs by programme countries. More recently, there has been a growing acceptance of and request for impartial assistance and the adoption of norms for engaging with parties on a transparent, inclusive and equitable basis that does not favor one party or philosophy over another. Yet political parties remain a missing element in much international assistance to democratic processes and institutions. Such assistance has tended to concentrate on electoral processes/events and then on assisting the elected bodies, whether local or national, but it has shied away from strengthening party structures that link the two. Reasons for this include fear of becoming involved in a country's internal political affairs and a tendency towards non-party, civil-society support in the belief that this support presents a lower risk of real or perceived bias.

Yet we have seen that the absence of strong, accountable and competent political parties that can represent positions and negotiate change weakens the democratic process. UNDP's principled approach to democratic governance for human development gives it the leverage to play an important role in supporting party organizations with real links to the community, democratic internal structures and broad, inclusive

platforms. The current challenge is to support political parties in a manner that strengthens their role in a democracy but does not compromise UNDP impartiality and other national partnerships. This entails, among other things, understanding the nature of *multi-partisanship* and adopting it as an approach to political party development.

Demand has been steadily increasing for the involvement of UNDP and other development partners in this area. UNDP now supports political parties in myriad places and ways. This *UNDP Handbook on Working with Political Parties* is designed to help us collectively meet this increasing demand with experience-based products and human rights-based approaches. It is intended to be a tool for anyone who encounters these issues, providing information on questions such as: Who in UNDP has significant knowledge on this topic? Who has the best experience? Which professional organizations could be consulted? What have country offices in similar situations done? What literature is out there to learn more about the problems that may be encountered, and are there any case studies written up? What other actors provide support to projects in this field?

The Democratic Governance Practice Network discussion on which this *Handbook* is based is a classic example of how best to discover and then respond to a latent demand for in-house knowledge. And it demonstrates how much knowledge and expertise we in UNDP have on a topic that, until the question came up, might not have been on our collective radar screen. Equally important, however, the Handbook is meant to be a public document for use by our partners in programme countries and donor capitals alike to give them a clearer sense of what UNDP does and does not do in terms of political party support, and why it considers such support critical to the advancement of human development.

*Kemal Dervi*ş
Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

Introduction

In late 2004, UNDP embarked on a two-part electronic discussion on its democratic governance practice network. The subject, engagement with political parties, had emerged from a global meeting of UNDP Resident Representatives, who identified the issue as one deserving greater corporate attention. What followed was one of the most vibrant and participatory debates ever to take place on UNDP's global knowledge networks. This handbook summarizes the highlights of the discussion, synthesizing UNDP experiences and perspectives on the challenges and opportunities in providing political party support.

Seventy-nine contributors wrote from 45 UNDP offices in countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Haiti, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and Montenegro, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. There were 30 contributions from Africa, three from the Arab States, 11 from Asia and the Pacific, six from Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 13 from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 16 from headquarters offices. Part one of the dialogue considered whether UNDP should support political parties, and asked for ideas on what elements should be included in UNDP's approach. Part two questioned what strategic role UNDP could play in political party support given its comparative advantages, and called for partnership recommendations.

During the discussion, some of the most hotly debated issues touched on the sensitivities in working closely with political parties. UNDP is, after all, a multilateral organization guided by the umbrella values of the UN Charter and the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Parties function within national political processes, and basic to their agenda is seeking and maintaining themselves in power. Sometimes this entails behaviour that cannot be condoned by UNDP. Working with parties can therefore involve choices that UNDP may not always be prepared to make, given the very real risk of being perceived as taking sides or interfering in national internal affairs.

But with very few exceptions, contributors to the discussion recognized that parties play a fundamental role in democracies, and in many places, the underdevelopment or poor functioning of parties is a significant fault line threatening progress on both democratic governance and poverty reduction. Given the prominence of these two issues in UNDP's current corporate programme priorities, many contributors articulated a clear and urgent interest in moving towards greater support for parties. They seemed to feel that the question relates not so much to whether or not to work with political parties, as to finding the right ways forward. In what can be a high-stakes undertaking, the right forms of analysis, risk assessment, partnership and expertise need to be in place to ensure that UNDP political party programmes don't endanger the organization's impartiality. Today, with interest growing in political party work in many quarters, including among

bilateral donors and regional organizations, many new opportunities may be on the horizon.

As a recent mapping exercise carried out by the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre revealed, UNDP is already working with political parties to varying degrees in 43 countries across all five of the geographical regions covered by UNDP programmes. These initiatives, which have arisen in response to national needs, have outstripped the introduction of a global corporate policy to guide them—there is not yet a set of official UNDP parameters on working with parties. In 2002, the "UNDP Policy Guidance Note on Parliamentary Development" did briefly touch upon parties, stressing that UNDP can work with them, but must do so in a balanced, non-partisan manner. It suggested how party representatives could be included in parliamentary development programmes, and proposed formulas for determining representation. Similarly, the 2004 "UNDP Practice Note on Electoral Systems and Processes" mentioned political parties as an emerging area of UNDP support, particularly in involving parties in voter registration and education efforts; improving party campaign and media strategies; strengthening party caucuses within legislatures; and encouraging party accountability to commitments to address gender imbalances in leadership.[1]

Over the past five years, party support has grown in many new directions, involving not just parliamentary assistance and elections, but also capacity development, policy dialogues, conflict management, media outreach, and specific initiatives for women and youth. Contributors to the network discussion urged that more detailed guidelines be put in place to reflect this evolution. This handbook is a step in that direction, but with political party programming still a relatively new concept, it stops short of being a prescriptive how-to manual. In the future, more official guidelines may emerge from the accumulation of additional experiences and insight into how UNDP can best position itself to offer assistance in this area.

In compiling an array of perspectives and experiences that UNDP offices have already drawn from their work on the ground, the handbook sheds some light on how individual country programmes have dealt with different challenges in their work with parties. This is not a comprehensive presentation—while the network discussion was a rich one, it relied on voluntary participation. Input from some regions was greater than from others, reflecting the fact that some regions already have a higher demand for and interest in political party programming. And while lessons may be drawn from some existing examples of UNDP party assistance that can be applied to diverse situations around the world, the question of more precise monitoring and evaluation remains an open one. Not much has yet been done to measure or otherwise quantify these experiences.

Even so, some general principles that could guide political party programming are already apparent from the discussion. These start with the fact that political party support in many instances is fully consistent with UNDP's corporate priorities, but national contexts vary widely, from countries that have no parties to those where parties have themselves requested UNDP's partnership. Understanding the political environment is the very first consideration in determining the extent of UNDP's involvement, and identifying the issues related to safeguard-

[1] See the "UNDP Policy Guidance Note on Parliamentary Development" at www.undp.org/policy/docs/policynotes/parliamentarydevelopment.pdf and the "UNDP Practice Note on Electoral Systems and Processes" at www.undp.org/policy/docs/practicenotes/electoralpn.pdf.

ing UNDP's impartiality. This is also essential to designing an effective and responsive programme—in the past, political party support has been prone to exporting models that may or may not be nationally relevant.

An honest assessment of UNDP's own internal capacity to handle the sensitivity of this kind of programming should take place early on. Another basic is to keep in mind that successful party support adheres closely to the broader objective of fostering effective democratic governance. Programmes should be harmonized with other governance initiatives, and should be examined through the lenses of human rights, human development and participation. One general rule is to avoid all activities that would clearly be read as direct endorsement, such as allowing UNDP's name to be used in a political campaign, or singling out some parties for support without a transparent and well-reasoned rationale that may require the consensus of the parties themselves.

The cases studies of UNDP party support projects included in this handbook reveal other important ingredients as being close partnerships, a focus on an issue or event such as an election, a receptiveness to the ability of parties to identify their needs or voice their concerns, and a willingness to engage in a sometimes time-consuming and painstaking process of consultation and building consensus—in other words, taking a long-term point of view. Once party support programmes are in place, they should be continually and closely reviewed, including for potential political sensitivities and other risk factors.

What's in this handbook?

The structure of this handbook follows a general continuum for launching political party work. It starts in Section I by assessing the rationale for working with parties, and looking at the evolution of party assistance, inside and outside UNDP. Section II offers basic information for understanding political systems, from their mechanics to the challenges faced by parties, with passages as well on post-conflict scenarios and local governance. Section III considers questions related to UN neutrality, and looks at what is involved in making choices about how to work and with whom. Section IV outlines the process of shaping a programme, with a focus on exploring opportunities and entry points, and assessing risks. It concludes with information on funding options under the current UNDP programming framework.

Section V explores, through a series of case studies, how UNDP is already offering assistance, with the examples highlighting common activities. Section VI examines partnerships in political party programming, including a discussion of when to partner. Section VII describes the process of monitoring and evaluating party programmes, and elaborates how to assess appropriate results indicators. In Section VIII, a comprehensive list of resources for further information rounds off the handbook.

The handbook is designed to offer both practical advice and intellectual insight. Readers may want to dip into it for either one of these—or both. Each section starts with a concise summary of basic background information that can be readily applied to programming, including in some cases lists of questions that can help country offices decide how to move forward. These portions can be read and

used by themselves.

For those who wish to delve a little deeper, contributions from sources outside UNDP—including prominent thinkers and other organizations that work with parties—are interspersed between the sections. Carnegie Endowment scholar Thomas Carothers warns about potential pitfalls in party support by detailing how party aid in the past has followed too closely a set of traditional, and mostly mythological, ideals, mainly based in Western notions. An essay from the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD), a relative newcomer to the field of party assistance but already an influential participant, chronicles the lessons it has learned in establishing multiparty dialogues and making choices about which parties to work with. M. A. Mohamed Salih, a professor and member of the World Panel on Political Parties at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), profiles six challenges to internal party democracy in Africa, such as the dominance of elites and a lack of financial accountability. Finally, an excerpt from a report by the UK's Westminster Foundation for Democracy, which supports cross-party projects, argues the case for mainstreaming party support in democracy assistance.

To lend a human face and unique UNDP identity, passages that have been excerpted from the network discussions or solicited from UNDP country offices run within the sections. Some of these appear as 'UNDP on the Ground' snapshots to elaborate a point in the text through additional examples of UNDP party programmes (see page 6-7 for a detailed index). Others are in the form of 'Perspectives' that flesh out analysis and offer alternative points of view. Colleagues are cited with corresponding names and duty stations as of the date of the network discussion.

Both kinds of contributions reveal the extent to which UNDP staff are grappling with the problems and the possibilities of political party programming. They delineate the many challenges parties face, including poor leadership, limited resources and capacities, a lack of outreach to constituencies, the huge numbers of parties in some countries, and the imbalances that result when non-governmental groups are significantly stronger or weaker than parties. They also debate the different entry points for UNDP support, which fall into four broad categories: the culture and practice of democracy, governance institutions and processes, policy issues and political parties themselves.

Much of the network discussion revolved around how UNDP can strike the right balance vis-à-vis parties. Overall, there is consensus that in politically volatile situations, more indirect forms of support are the most appropriate, involving activities such as dialogue on human development issues or parliamentary development. One argument supports a more hands-off-parties approach that focuses on the rules and systems that support a sound democracy overall, allowing parties an environment in which they can independently flourish. From another perspective, there is also the option of reaching out to individuals within parties who may be interested in supporting progressive change.

It is obvious, however, that in many countries there is a need for direct assistance to parties, especially in terms of capacity development. Party capacity development needs run the gamut from campaign activities, to conflict management, to the ability to negotiate issues with regional or international dimensions.

Support for bolstering capacities like these must be carefully negotiated because it is predicated on more active interaction with parties, and may involve working with some and not others. Besides the greater risk to UNDP's impartiality, other potential problems include parties forming just to qualify for assistance, or becoming dependent on it, or using it illicitly. Yet several UNDP country offices can now claim that they have successfully negotiated these kinds of programmes, contributing, at least anecdotally, to a greater measure of political skill and stability. Moving forward, UNDP can draw on these examples, as well as lessons learned from its more extensive history of experiences in other sensitive areas, such as conflict resolution.

In the network discussion, there was a great deal of back and forth over the question of whether UNDP should work with some, all or no parties, and representative perspectives are included here. Some people contended that UNDP needs to be realistic about supporting those elements of a political system that can make the greatest contributions to progress and stability. As is the case with other democratic governance programmes, there are always going to be 'winners' and 'losers'. Others argued that it is UNDP's role to work inclusively because that is in the spirit of democracy, and because those who lag furthest behind, even on subjects such as the protection of human rights, may be able to benefit most from UNDP programmes in the sense of exposure to new techniques and points of view. Only a handful of contributors maintained that UNDP should not work with parties at all, a standpoint that may be completely appropriate in some countries.

A few contributors took a very broad perspective in raising questions about the validity of party systems, which for various reasons are in crisis in a number of both developing countries and developed countries with long histories as democracies. It can be easy to assume that party weaknesses are symptomatic of problems in specific countries and can be readily fixed, according to this point of view. But it is also possible that the world itself is moving in a post-party direction, one sign of which is the rapid growth of civil society groups and alternative channels of political engagement. One contributor challenged the current notion that elections and parliamentary development, much less party support, can ever pave over the very deep economic, political and other rifts between peoples, within countries and around the globe. These may not be the very first issues to arise when country offices consider designing a programme, but they are important root causes of political dynamics and deserve reflection.

UNDP country offices are the primary intended audience for this handbook, but it may also be useful within other parts of the UN system and to other organizations with an interest in political party support. UNDP is cognizant of the particular value of collaboration in this area, which will be essential in creating create new and better strategies that are grounded in past experiences, and make the best use of current capacities. Aligned with national institutions, these partnerships can help countries advance towards a future of truly representative democracies, in which people can fully participate in the choices that determine their lives.

An Index to Issues: UNDP Country Experiences

Issue	Country	Page
Assessing political context	Saudi Arabia	44-45
Capacity development	Ethiopia	37
	Tanzania	57-58, 62
	Cambodia	59-60
Campaign support	Ethiopia	37
	Cambodia	59-60
	Tanzania	57-58
Codes of conduct	Bangladesh	24
Conflict management	Bangladesh	24
	Guyana	62-64
	Lesotho	60-61
Constituency relations	Algeria	22
	Zimbabwe	36
Elections	Guatemala	12
	Mozambique	26-27
	Ethiopia	37
	Benin	50-51
	Tanzania	57-58
	Honduras	58-59
	Cambodia	59-60
	Lesotho	60-61
Gender	Zimbabwe	36
	Kyrgyzstan	64-67
	Sudan	64-67
Media	Cambodia	59-60
One-party states	Vietnam	64
Parliaments	Zimbabwe	36
	Benin	50-51

Issue	Country	Page
Party challenges	Bangladesh	24
	Benin	50-51
	Ethiopia	37
Party dialogues	Guatemala	12
	Benin	50-51
	Honduras	58-59
	Lesotho	60-61
	Guyana	62-64
Policy or issue-based programmes	Guatemala	12
	Honduras	58-59
	Cambodia	59-60, 62
	Kosovo	61-62
	Tanzania	57-58, 62
Post-conflict	Algeria	22
	Mozambique	26-27
Sharing knowledge	Mongolia	68
Youth	Nicaragua	67-68

SECTION 1:

WHY WORK WITH POLITICAL PARTIES?

"Countries should not become fit for democracy, but fit through democracy."

Amartya Sen

1

Why Work with Political Parties?

In many countries today, political parties are an essential part of the apparatus of governance. Ideally, they play a fundamental role in the exercise of democracy. The 2002 Human Development Report, Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World, emphasizes, "A well-functioning democracy depends on well-functioning political parties responsive to people."

For a multilateral organization such as UNDP, the potentially volatile arena of political parties has traditionally been considered too risky, too open to the charge of meddling in national politics. But a growing number of UNDP country offices are forging ahead with work related to political parties because diverse national situations demand that they do so. In the 2004 electronic discussion on political party assistance held on the organization's democratic governance knowledge network, even many contributors who are not already working on political party projects expressed their support for the idea, while recognizing that flexibility and care must guide all forms of involvement.

Jean Kabahizi from UNDP Burundi argued, "The problem of governance cannot be addressed if governance at the level of political parties is left out of the discussion. After all, it is the leaders of political parties who after the elections become the leaders of key institutions… How can one deplore deficits in governance at the national level while tolerating them at the level of political parties?" A. H. Monjurul Kabir from UNDP Bangladesh questioned whether or not any democratic system in the world has been able to dispense with political party participation.

Parties in a democratic system serve several purposes. They aggregate interests by persuading voters to support various issues, and they lend coherence to voter choices. They may mobilize the masses outside of elections. In conflict situations, they can be crucial in determining whether there is a move forward into recovery or a relapse back into hostilities. Once elected, parties play a major role in shaping public policy, securing resources and orienting the government around certain platforms. Parties also foster future political leaders and monitor elected representatives. An institutionalized party system can hold elected politicians accountable.

Despite the promise of democratic party systems, however, they often fall short in the face of complex national realities, as many UNDP country offices can attest. While a record number of countries are now considered democratic, transition processes have frequently been rocky. Citizens around the world have registered sometimes deep disappointment and cynicism about what democracy has been able to produce—the UNDP report *Democracy in Latin America: Towards a Citizens' Democracy* found that people in some countries in the region had more faith in television stations than their

Political Parties and Civil Society Organizations

A vibrant civil society and effective political parties are both essential for a healthy democracy. Both groups perform similar functions in terms of mobilizing people around issues, but they also play distinct roles. Civil society may be best equipped to stir up popular momentum around a transition process or ensure a level of public accountability. Political parties have to carry out tasks such as policy-making and the aggregation of public interests within the institutional political framework.

The relationship between civil society and parties differs depending on the national context—and this is something democratic governance programming needs to take into account. Some of the common variations include a weak civil society and a dominant political party, a weak civil society and weak political parties (common in post-conflict situations), a strong civil society and weak parties, and a strong civil society and strong parties. In some countries, the distinction between NGOs and political parties may be hard to decipher. UNDP country experiences confirm, for example, that NGOs work on political issues, can play political roles and cannot always be considered outside the mainstream political system.

When the balance between civil society and parties is right, there may be a certain amount of friction between them that constructively enhances democracy. But problems arise when the balance goes out of whack. In the last several years, commentators like Ivan Doherty, the director of political party programmes at the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI), have started highlighting in particular how a decade of heavy emphasis on civil society assistance has made these groups strong and active in some countries, but political parties are not, and as a result the political system fails to function effectively. As the demand side of the political equation, civil society overwhelms the capacity of the supply side—the formal political system—to deliver.

"The neglect of political parties, and parliaments, can undermine the very democratic process that development seeks to enhance. Without strong political parties and political institutions that are accountable and effective, that can negotiate and articulate compromises to respond to conflicting demands, the door is effectively open to those populist leaders who will seek to bypass the institutions of government, especially any system of checks and balances, and the rule of law," Doherty wrote in his paper "Democracy Out of Balance". [*]

He added, "(I)t is not a matter of having to choose between building a strong civil society or strengthening political parties and political institutions such as parliaments. The real challenge is to balance support for democratic institutions and organizations that are more accountable and inclusive, while at the same time continuing to foster and nurture the development of a broadly based and active civil society."

[*] See Ivan Doherty, 2001, "Democracy Out of Balance: Civil Society Can't Replace Political Parties," Policy Review, April/May, www.access-democracy.org/NDI/library/1099_polpart_balance.pdf.

government. The IMD tracked 100 countries that had embarked on a transition to democratic forms of government after the end of the Cold War, and concluded that only 20 had been fully successful, with the rest remaining in a grey area where the future is not entirely clear. [2]

[2] See the IMD publication A Framework for Democratic Party Building: A Handbook, published in 2004, at www.nimd.org/upload/publications/2004/imd_institutional_development_handbook-a4.pdf.

THE EVOLUTION OF PARTY ASSISTANCE

Traditionally, external support to strengthen party development has remained mostly confined to organizations set up by political parties in Western countries. Some success stories have resulted, but these organizations at times have also attracted charges of bias and political agenda-making. The perception that their programmes are often run by Western technical experts based on political concepts in Western countries has dampened interest among parties and political leaders in nations receiving the support, according to Carnegie Endowment for International Peace scholar Thomas Carothers. He estimates that 75 per cent of party aid has funded training seminars and other forms of technical assistance. Approximately half goes to Central and Eastern Europe; significant amounts end up in the former Soviet Union, Latin America and Africa. A very small proportion finds its way to Asia and the Arab States.[3]

With the growth in democratic states over the past 15 years, overall multilateral and bilateral support has grown for initiatives falling loosely under the rubric of democratic governance, but a great deal of this attention has gone towards supporting parliaments, elections and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with various rationales. Some organizations have calculated that this approach supports democracy while avoiding the appearance of involvement in national political schemes; others have maintained that societies need to reach a certain level of development before political party support can be justified.

But a growing number of external assistance providers, including UNDP, are now reconsidering some of these issues. Questions have arisen over whether it is possible to work on democratic governance without including parties—the IMD calls the lack of viable parties 'the missing link' in transition processes. An interconnected issue is whether progress can be made on human development, including poverty reduction and the rest of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), without effective governance. As the 2002 Human Development Report points out: "Politics matter for human development because people everywhere want to be free to determine their destinies, express their views and participate in the decisions that shape their lives. These capabilities are just as important for human development—for expanding people's choices—as being able to read or enjoy good health." The UN Secretary-General's 2005 report In Larger Freedom, which stresses the interdependence of development, security and human rights, notes that "the right to choose how they are ruled, and who rules them, must be the birthright of all people."

Within UNDP, there is no explicit reference to political parties in the corporate Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF). Democratic governance, however, now makes up the largest portion of UNDP's programme portfolio—covering over 45 percent of annual programming resources. Nearly every UNDP country office runs democratic governance projects. One in three parliaments in the developing world is supported in some way by UNDP, which also assists an election somewhere in the world on average every two weeks.

Three service lines under UNDP's democratic governance practice that have received a great deal of attention—policy support, parliamentary development, and electoral systems and processes—current-

[3] See Thomas Carothers, 2004, "Political Party Aid," a paper prepared for the Swedish International Development Agency, at www.idea.int/parties/upload/Political_Party_Aid_by_Carothers_Oct04.pdf.

ly cover most of UNDP's work with political parties. Forty-three UNDP country offices have party-related projects in place.

WHY UNDP SHOULD GET (MORE) INVOLVED

Participants in the network discussion mentioned a number of reasons for extending UNDP's work related to parties. These included: to promote democracy, enhance human development and the

UNDP ON THE GROUND

Guatemala: Creating a Shared National Agenda

Fernando Masaya and Jochen Mattern from UNDP Guatemala reported:

Here, in Guatemala, we are convinced that UNDP must be engaged with and support political parties. Why? Because the political party system in Guatemala is weak, and parties almost don't play the role of intermediation between state and society. We are working to strengthen both the political party system, and the capacities of political parties to analyse national issues and take a systematic approach to their own responses.

By facilitating a multiparty dialogue process, we supported the political parties of the country in elaborating a Shared National Agenda, with the aim of identifying the main socioeconomic problems and adopting actions to face them, taking as a basis the Peace Accords and a series of National Human Development Reports. However, the purpose of this work was also to bring the politicians of different parties together, so they could see each other as members of a common political 'class', and understand they have to work jointly in the strengthening of the political system. They accepted this challenge. A group of around 40 politicians from 20 parties was established to initiate a dialogue. More than 40 workshops included the participation of over 100 national and international experts from the political, private and academic sectors, as well as leaders of social sector movements.

The Shared National Agenda they produced was intended to become a reference for the formulation of governmental plans and political agendas before and after the 2003 general elections. A number of new laws have since drawn from its provisions, and political parties represented in Congress still use it to define legislative agendas. This process includes dialogues within each party and continued multiparty dialogues.

UNDP has partnered with the IMD on the multiparty dialogue process, in coordination with an initiative by the Organization of American States (OAS) to strengthen the political party system.

According to our experience in Guatemala, it is possible to be neutral in doing this kind of work. The formula is to engage with all parties and create programmes that generate interest in all of them. We do not offer support related to party operations or functions—other organizations take care of that. The challenge is to remember that all this is done in order to promote democratic governance, and that this requires working with political parties: There is no choice.

MDGs, improve governance, address crisis prevention issues, increase consensus on national development agendas, and assist the development of a political culture that respects the division and routine transfer of power.

Raquel Herrera, at UNDP Costa Rica, called working with parties in Latin America an urgent need. "Political parties are not doing their job since people do not feel represented by them. They are in a vacuum of ideas or lack ideology and have transformed into electoral machines responsive to interest groups. If our mandate is to support governance as conducive to human development, we should work on strengthening political parties as key actors of representative democracies."

Jalal Elmuntaser weighed in from UNDP Libya: "The risk of not supporting political parties exceeds the risk of providing support to them, especially in developing countries with a limited democratic cultural background. Weak political parties could contribute to the premature failure of a new 'democratic' system, which in turn could be attributed by many anti-democracy forces to the system itself rather than the actual reasons."

While a number of contributors expressed concerns about how UNDP can work with political parties without compromising its impartiality, only a few expressed strong objections, mainly to direct support to political parties. "I cannot agree less with the idea of UNDP supporting parties, because being engaged and at the same time remaining neutral simply does not work," said Tomislav Novovic from UNDP Serbia and Montenegro, referring to experiences under the "crypto-democratic" regime of Slobodan Milosevic. Naglaa Arafa from UNDP Egypt questioned the need to work with political parties to promote democracy and good governance, given that the government represents the people. Towards this end, she said, UNDP can work with parliaments, universities, youth organizations and NGOs, and can support the modernization of election processes.

Chris Spies from UNDP Guyana responded: "Governments legally represent the people, but they are often not representative of all the people. In fact, they are in conflict with the opposition! While it is important and effective to work with parliamentarians, it is not enough. Decisions by governments do not suddenly happen in cabinet. They are proposed, shaped, debated, calculated and positioned in the politburo or executive committee of the political parties in power. That is where the attack and defence mechanisms are shaping the paradigms and where the blindfolds are handed out. That is where UNDP needs to work proactively."

Jasmina Bell from UNDP Serbia and Montenegro reminded her colleagues, "It is very challenging to try to depart from our traditional approach. UNDP cannot remain static in an ever-changing international environment and should explore how to position itself to achieve the biggest impact. I am very much in favour of considering moving into new areas, even the most sensitive ones."

UNDP'S COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES

Within and outside UNDP, there is a growing recognition that the organization could bring some unique and fresh perspectives to the field of political party work—and in some cases is already doing so. UNDP's comparative advantages include its status as a multilateral organization that is impartial and in some sense globally owned. Its long histo-

Magdy Martinez-Soliman, UNDP New York, Democratic Governance Group:

Parties Are Our Business

Parties are major governance actors. The discussion about whether we should or should not work with them is moot in my view: We do work with them already, through their leaders (national and local government), their representatives (parliaments, electoral commissions) and their policies. The issue is perhaps more how we can work with the formal political party structures, and when we need to work with all major parties (together or one by one), and when we can afford to work with some of them only. Looking at this through the lens of the different development drivers we have adopted corporately:

Anything that contributes to national capacity development in the governance area is our job. Political parties included. What capacities do the political parties need to strengthen? All those that have to do with their constitutional functions, clean campaigning and financing, management of social organizations, communication and access to information, advocacy and problem-solving techniques, analysis and response, constituent relationships and leadership training.

Any further contribution to gender equality is our job. Political parties included. Sensitization inside political parties, support to women in parties' caucuses and discussion groups, capacity development of women as leaders, gender analysis of political problems including political representation are areas that can be addressed.

Anything that contributes to forging partnerships around the UN's values is our job. Political parties can be UN partners in advocacy and awareness initiatives when they favour objectives defined by the international community. If we launch a campaign for girls' enrolment at school, as we did in Islamic countries before the MDGs were born, and we don't get the support of a given religious party, *in casu* in power, it doesn't mean that we cannot work with the other groups because they are in opposition. The balance is, however, delicate.

ry as a trusted partner in many countries already includes considerable work on other highly sensitive issues, such as conflict resolution. To capture and build on these and other experiences, the knowledge networks are allowing an increasingly rich global exchange of development expertise.

UNDP also plays a leadership role within the UN system, and is widely acknowledged as one of the primary advocates for the MDGs and sustainable human development. The corporate framework is in tune with priorities in both developing and developed countries, namely through the MYFF development drivers: developing national capacities, enhancing national ownership, advocating and fostering an enabling policy environment, seeking South-South solutions and promoting gender equality. All of these drivers can inform political party work.

"UNDP—through its new and pertinent concepts, its capacity to advocate in favour of poor populations, its political neutrality, and its support for the improvement of democratic governance and the struggle against poverty—can rapidly

Lenni Montiel, UNDP Vietnam:

We Need New Rules and a Sense of Reality

UNDP has already accumulated a good deal of institutional experience working with and assisting political parties. This has happened via several years of parliamentary development initiatives, electoral assistance and extensive interaction with political leaders, government officials and elected representatives (both at national and sub-national levels). We just need to formalize rules and develop institutional approaches to more systematic interventions.

UNDP's comparative advantage also includes years of experience in the resolution of significant conflicts, where we have managed to maintain non-partisanship while supporting political parties and groups to better interact among themselves and achieve peaceful solutions to their differences. UNDP played a fundamental role in peace negotiations in Central America and Sri Lanka, and has made incredible efforts in Cambodia and Timor Leste, just to mention a few cases.

We should not fear situations in which our counterpart governments will not feel comfortable if we provide assistance to other political actors. We just need to face this positively and with a good sense of the political realities in each case. This has happened to us when promoting decentralization and local governance—in fact, very often we work with local authorities who do not represent the same interests as the central government.

In all these difficult situations (and in many others), UNDP interventions have experienced success and failure. At times we have even been questioned for one or another decision not only on governance issues, but even in such 'neutral areas' as the environment and information technology. This will happen again if we start working with political parties, but that should not prevent us from making additional efforts to positively influence (according to our mandates, policies and values) the improvement of governance in any country where we are providing governance assistance. In today's world, this also includes working directly with political parties.

establish itself as an essential partner for political parties," wrote Bissari Magbenga from UNDP Togo.

Audax Rutta from UNDP Tanzania made the case that "clearly, the entry points are sensitive and potentially tricky, but this recognition should only serve to underline the fact that the question of who provides the leadership should not be left to chance. An experienced and trusted organization like UNDP should take the lead."

A Mythic Model

Thomas Carothers

Party aid organizations tend not to make their goals very explicit beyond general statements that they are seeking to strengthen the parties they are working with. They proceed from a conception of 'strong parties' or 'good parties' that is implicit in their activities but rarely spelled out in much detail. Observation of the actual efforts of party aid programmes in many countries leads to the conclusion that most political party aid providers generally are trying to help foster a common set of characteristics in the parties they work with (see Figure 1).

Interestingly, although the political parties in the various countries that sponsor political party aid vary greatly (Swedish and American political parties, for example, are obviously quite different), the party aid programmes developed by these different countries all seem to adhere to the same template for party building. Generally speaking, this appears to correspond most closely to a northern European political party model that is quite traditional in its basic features and reflects the idea of parties in a pre-television age when they depended almost exclusively on grass-roots organizations to build support. It is also striking that party aid programmes look basically the same on the ground all over the world, no matter how different the political contexts and traditions of the place where the programmes are carried out.

It is hard to escape the impression that party aid is based on a highly idealized or even mythologized conception of what political parties are like in established democracies. Although some parties in a small number of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries may have most of the characteristics set out in Figure 1, most do not. Many parties in the established democracies are not, for example, very internally democratic, are highly personalistic in their external image and internal functioning, do not maintain regular contacts with voters beyond elections, do not have clear ideological definition, do not give women a strong role in the party, and do not do a good job of incorporating youth in the party.

A party aid advocate might reply to this by saying that of course few parties conform fully to the ideal but it is important to have a coherent aspiration. Moreover, many areas of democracy aid suffer, to at least some degree, from the problem of pursuing idealized models—such as programmes that expect aid-receiving countries to develop efficient, effective judiciaries and parliaments, to have strong, independent NGO sectors, and to have consistently high voter turnouts—that established democracies themselves often do not live up to. Yet there is still a troubling sense with party aid that the assistance efforts seek to create something in new and struggling democracies that exists at best only very partially, or rarely in much older, more established democracies.

Western party aid seems to be based on an old-fashioned idea of how political parties were in some earlier, more virtuous era, before the rise of television-driven, image-centric, personality-driven politics, the diminution of direct links between parties and voters, the blurring

and fading of traditional ideological lines, and the growing cynicism about partisan politics that characterizes political life in many established democracies. Some party aid practitioners might believe that parties in new and struggling democracies can first be helped to develop the way parties used to be in many established democracies and then worry at some later time about the corrosive effects of technology and postmodern culture on party politics. But this would be a mechanistic, stage-based idea of development that does not correspond to reality. The reality is that although new and struggling democracies are trying to consolidate the basic institutions of democracy that many OECD countries consolidated many decades (or longer) ago, at the same time they are confronting the effects of television-driven, image-centric politics. In some sense therefore they are forced to grapple simultaneously with the challenges of both modernism and postmodernism in political party development.

The fact that party aid follows an implicit institutional template—a relatively standardized, detailed and fixed idea of what a good political party is—raises the same two important questions that confront other areas of democracy aid in which template methods are common (such as parliamentary assistance and judicial aid). First, does the use of such a template lead party aid providers to have low tolerance for local differences and to unconsciously (or consciously) insist on trying to reproduce parties that look basically the same no matter how different or varied the local political contexts are? And second, in focusing on the characteristics they would like to see parties in new or struggling democracies have, are party aid providers ignoring the underlying economic, socio-cultural, and other structural determinants of party development? That is to say, are they assuming that merely by working with the parties themselves (as opposed to trying to address some of these underlying structures and conditions) they can produce parties that conform to the Western ideal?

—Thomas Carothers is a Senior Associate and Director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. This contribution was excerpted from a paper prepared for this handbook.

Figure 1: **Party Aid Objectives Based on Traditional Ideals**

- *A democratic leadership structure with competent, rational and transparent methods of internal management*
- *Processes of internal democracy for choosing candidates and party leaders*
- *A substantial presence around the country with local branches enjoying significant responsibility for party work in their area*
- *A well-defined grass-roots base and regular contacts with the persons making up the base, both for constituency relations and broader political education*
- *Cooperative, productive relations with civil society organizations*
- *A substantive party platform and the capacity to engage in serious policy analysis*
- *A clear ideological self-definition that also avoids any ideological extremes*
- *Transparent, legal funding that draws from a wide base of funders*
- *A strong role for women in the party as candidates, party leaders and managers, and members*
- *A good youth programme that brings youth into the party, trains them, and makes good use of their energy and talents*

SECTION 2:

ASSESSING THE BIG PICTURE: WHAT FACTORS AFFECT SUPPORT?

"As with all areas of democracy aid, party aid has to… look more closely at the internal incentives and disincentives for change within and around political parties and craft assistance strategies that reflect these realities."

Thomas Carothers

Assessing the Big Picture: What Factors Affect Support?

Deciding whether or not to work with political parties begins with a judicious assessment of the context in which they work, which varies widely not only by country, but also among and within different types of political systems. This includes developing baseline knowledge of the system in place; probing into the different aspects of a country's current political situation overall, including issues related to key political actors such as civil society and the media; and understanding the challenges faced by political parties. Additional considerations apply to post-conflict scenarios and local governance.

During elections, an assessment may also include contact with the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the head of which serves as the UN focal point for electoral assistance. The department's Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) assesses pre-electoral conditions, maintains UN electoral standards and assists other UN organizations in designing electoral assistance activities. Contacting DPA with respect to potential political party support is at the discretion of the UN Resident Coordinator under normal development situations, although a general rule is to check when in doubt. Crisis situations, where there is a Security Council mandated UN mission overseen by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General, require all such activities to be cleared by the Special Representative.

A COUNTRY'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

Three basic structures define the mechanics of political systems and the flow of political power, and determine the viability of parties.

1. Is the system a presidential, parliamentary or hybrid one?

In a presidential system, a party may capture the executive branch but not the legislature, while in parliamentary systems the dominant party (or coalition of parties) in the legislature controls the executive post and its related appointments. Hybrid systems feature both a president and a prime minister; one usually appoints the other, and they may represent different parties.

Party discipline, the practice of legislators voting with their parties, may be stronger in parliamentary systems because party members must stick together to maintain their hold on the executive branch. The internal hierarchy of parties in presidential systems may be less structured because the electoral stakes are not as high. Directly elected candidates may benefit from stronger ties to their constituencies. In hybrid systems, dominant parties tend to support the prime minister, which can lead to a logjam if there is a dispute with the president. But the president may be able to break this paralysis by dissolving the legislature or dismissing the prime minister.

In parliamentary systems, highly organized parties can act as an effective link between party leaders and local constituents, but some political theorists have also argued that parliamentary

systems can encourage one-party dominance of the state, at times locking out ethnic or regional groups.

2. What kind of system is used to translate votes cast into seats/offices?

The electoral system heavily influences the number and size of political parties in the legislature and their representation within other governing institutions, such as local government bodies.[4]

Three broad categories in use today include (see also the chart below):

Majoritarian/plurality: These systems usually are built around single-member districts. Under the first-past-the-post system, the winner is the candidate—running under a party banner or as an independent, depending on the law—who garners the most votes, but not necessarily an absolute majority. Variations include the block vote, which involves multi-member districts where the highest-polling candidates fill the seats, and the party block vote, where party lists replace individual candidates. Majoritarian systems include the alternative vote and the two-round system, where candidates need to secure an absolute majority.

Proportional representation: Proportional systems strive to balance a party's share of the national vote with its share of parliamentary seats. Voting generally involves parties presenting lists of candidates. The single transferable vote approach allows voters to rank candidates in multi-member districts.

Mixed systems: Some countries have a parallel system that comprises elements of both majoritarian/plurality and proportional representation systems. The proportional representation element can be used to offset disproportionality arising from the majoritarian/plurality component.

Some basic generalizations can be made about electoral systems and parties. Proportional list systems, for example, cannot function without parties or political groupings. First-past-the-post systems tend to encourage the emergence of a few powerful parties. As a group that has extensively studied the issue, IDEA cautions against making assumptions, however. Systems that may seem to favour multiple parties in some countries are consolidating the power of single parties; there are examples of the opposite as well.

Electoral Systems in Use by Region

	Africa	Americas	Asia	Eastern Europe	Western Europe	Oceania	Middle East	Total
Plurality/ majority	27	23	14	1	5	13	8	91
Proportional representation	16	19	3	13	17	0	4	72
Mixed	5	3	8	9	3	2	0	30
Total	48	45	25	23	25	15	12	193

Source: IDEA, 2005, *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook.* [www.idea.int/publications/esd/new_en.cfm].

[4] For much more detailed information, see the IDEA publication *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook, published in 2005*, at www.idea.int/publications/esd/new_en.cfm.

3. How are political parties configured?

The number and configuration of political parties in the legislature shapes the relationship between the executive and the legislature, and influences the scope of party discipline. Most countries in the world today have two or more parties.

Multiple parties: In these systems, majority parties may dominate the legislature, or several parties may form a coalition to gain control. Coalitions may face problems with stability, especially if competing interests make it difficult for parties to work together.

Two parties: Power tends to shift back and forth between two dominant parties, even if other parties exist. Problems with this system include gridlock between the executive and legislative branches if they are controlled by different parties, and an ideological orientation around the centre that may discourage alternative points of view.

Single parties: One party nominates and promotes candidates. While the legislature is not organized on a partisan basis, internal caucuses or factions may evolve around shared interests. One-party systems tend to foster executive dominance at the expense of the legislature.

No parties: Some countries that hold elections ban political parties; candidates run as individuals.

A COUNTRY'S POLITICAL SITUATION

A number of factors affect the functioning of a political system overall and will fluctuate over time, determining party behaviour. Issues to consider and questions to ask include:

Elections: Where is the country in terms of recent or upcoming polls—sub-national and national? Different points in election cycles are a major determinant of party behaviour and priorities.

Legislature: Which parties are represented? Which have caucuses? Are there political factions within parties that play a prominent role? How are legislative committees divvied up between the parties, especially leadership positions?

Capacity to govern: What are some of the overall governance capacity issues? How are these reflected in terms of capacities within parties themselves, including both technical issues such as campaign management, and substantive topics related to party platforms and positions?

Experience as a democracy: How long has a country embraced a democratic system? What was its previous system? What tendencies, in thought or practice, have been carried over? Is the system based on institutions, or prominent personalities, either modern or traditional (such as African chief-led systems)?

Party constellations: What is the legal framework governing the political and electoral system? What does it say in terms of political parties? Does the reality of how political parties function mesh with the law? If there is no legal framework, what are the historical reasons for this?

Algeria: Linking MPs and Their Constituencies After Crisis

Moncef Ghrib, now at UNDP Haiti, described experiences in working with political parties within a highly sensitive political context:

Algeria went through a severe economic and security crisis in the 1990s, which took a high toll in human lives. As the crisis came to a close, UNDP launched a project with political parties to help strengthen and expand participatory democracy by setting up parliamentary constituencies offices across the country.

In 2002, UNDP started informal discussions with one major political party to convince it of the need to engage in an innovative process of dialogue between members of Parliament (MPs) and their constituencies. We felt that dialogue was the only way to avoid misunderstandings, protestations, conflicts, etc. We decided to work only with the party's MPs, so as to avoid having a big population to deal with. Following these discussions, we later expanded negotiations with the five other parties represented in Parliament.

One of the first things we did was to establish a special unit to handle the project. We wanted the project far from political pressures. We also used a proportional system to establish the MPs' offices, and signed a memorandum of understanding on the liabilities and obligations of the MPs, and on the use of equipment purchased through the project.

Our main purpose was to bring MPs back to their own constituencies and to give them the means to interact at the local level. In addition to putting in place the offices, we trained MPs and their assistants on information and communications technology, dialogue, human rights, good governance, etc. We set up more than 40 offices used by more than 100 MPs, and were able to put aside the political agendas of the parties by considering the MPs as constituency representatives, not political party representatives.

The project revealed the many crucial roles that MPs can play in developing their regions and the country. MPs learned what they could do as local development agents and ombudspeople, and how they could lead dialogues between local authorities, communities and civil society. The voice of civil society was subsequently brought into the national Parliament through MPs who had met locally with these groups. It also became apparent that MPs from different parties needed to join forces for the development of their districts.

In our experience, we noticed that bilateral donors were afraid of engaging with UNDP on this sensitive project. They attended our seminars, but they were unable to work with us, due to their political agendas. We did, however, partner with NDI, and this proved to be a good collaboration. NDI was able to orient many US researchers towards our project. This in turn gave UNDP more credibility among other development agencies.

Internal party diagnostics: How are individual parties organized? How big are they? Who are their primary constituencies? Do they cater to special interests—regional groups, ethnic groups, industries, and so on? What are their sources of funding? Do they have established rules and procedures? Is decision-making democratic and based on established rules? Is there a strong sense of political unity? Do parties have strategic plans and platforms, even outside election campaigns? How effective are parties in managing conflict?

National/local support: Are the parameters for parties different on the local/regional and national levels? Are parties competing on both levels? If not, what are the relationships—cooperative or otherwise—between parties active in different arenas?

Other political actors: What political roles do different civil society groups play? Which groups are most influential, and how do they intersect with parties? How well organized are they in their capacity to exert political influence, including in terms of links across different regions of the country? How free is the press? What is the level, outreach and quality of political coverage? To what extent are parties able to engage with the media? What laws govern the functioning of civil society organizations and the media?

Regional/global issues: What external issues influence party behaviour? Do individual parties have strong external ties, for example, to a diaspora, or to parties in other countries with the same ideological approach? Are they organized around issues with regional or global implications?

A COUNTRY'S POLITICAL CHALLENGES

Understanding political challenges is essential to calculating the most relevant points of intervention. These challenges may be intertwined with the mechanics of political systems or current political trends, or deeply embedded in national history or cultural practices. Some political challenges are common to most political systems; others relate more specifically to transition processes or to a country's stage of political development. Participants in the UNDP network discussion identified a number of concerns.

Personality-based politics has cropped up in every region of the world, as has uninspired party leadership. Parties that are young, underdeveloped or corrupt may manage themselves badly. Poor performance translates into low confidence among the members of the electorate, and limited turnout during elections. Some parties openly defy common standards of tolerance and integrity, or are ruled by parochial interests with a low level of commitment to national issues. Economic and other incentives can be misaligned and fuel fragmentation. State institutions may be weak and/or corruption prevalent.

Many countries face scenarios where power is over-concentrated in national parties or the capital. Parties may reflect this by remaining anchored in elite voter bases and having no constituencies among the poor. In single party states, there may be little or no interest in reforms of any kind. Other countries are emerging from a legacy of authoritarian regimes that may have sown widespread suspicion of party intentions among the general public. In states where weak or highly controlled parties are the norm, informal political movements may spring up to fill the void in democratic expression.

Bangladesh: Multiple Challenges Hold Back Democracy

As is the case in many countries, Bangladesh's political system struggles with a complex tangle of party challenges. These start with the family dynastic legacy that has persisted for the nearly 35 years since independence, according to A. H. Monjurul Kabir, who contributed to the network discussion from UNDP Bangladesh. Parties tend to contribute little to a more democratic climate because they themselves are internally authoritarian and reluctant to practise transparency, accountability and participation in decision-making.

At present, there is no law to guide party behaviour on even basic issues such as party registration, membership, funding, preparing and auditing of accounts, or funding disclosure. There is no regulation requiring political parties to submit or produce political publications, promotional literature or election manifestos to any authority, or to conform to any standards. There is no credible estimate of the funding of major political parties. Kabir listed other issues as "the personalization of leadership, over-centralization of power, pro forma manifestos, dependence on money and muscle, limited social bases and a party system based on confrontation rather than consensus."

UNDP Bangladesh has a democratic governance programme in place that includes capacity development of the Bangladesh Electoral Commission and Parliament. The parliamentary programme, for example, covers both enhancing the capacity of MPs and modifying rules of procedure to strengthen accountability and promote participation.

Recently, however, the country office has embarked on a new direction by starting to target some work more specifically to political parties. As Kabir maintained in the network discussion, "A regeneration of political parties is essential to democratic consolidation and good governance in Bangladesh."

The office started by publishing a policy paper presenting alternatives to hartals, a common mechanism to vent political opposition or social demands by calling for a general strike that shuts down the formal economy for a stretch of time. Often, violence among political groups also takes place. As a follow-up to the paper, UNDP Bangladesh now plans to work with parties on drafting a code of conduct that would encourage more constructive forms of dialogue. The success of such an initiative, Kabir pointed out, largely depends on positive feedback from and close cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, including political parties.

Globally, parties have a tendency to lapse into the anti-democratic impulses common to many institutions: gender bias, a lack of transparency and inclusion, and the practice of patronage. Ayayi Adodo d'Almeida from UNDP Togo wrote: "Certain political parties do not even have a political programme for their countries, and once at the head of their countries they seek to fill their pockets. Public funds are wasted to the detriment of the beneficiary populations." Parties in many countries struggle with issues related to the management of even routine political disputes.

A number of challenges relate to limited capacities. These can hinder parties' ability to compete effectively in elections, analyse and manage information, and respond to constituents. Candidates from new parties who successfully contest an election can be drawn quickly into the business of governance, and neglect the development needs of their organizations. Poverty can make it difficult for parties to raise funds, even as some countries are beginning to adopt the expensive and media-intensive campaign methods used in some Western democracies.

An issue raised by several participants is the proliferation of political parties—in some African countries, they now number in the hundreds. Many lack a platform and a party infrastructure, but still have a paralysing effect on the government. Oumar Sako from UNDP Rwanda remembered a prime minister from a country with over 100 parties saying that "some political parties are limited to their leader and their silhouette." In other countries, the consolidation of power has reduced the number of parties, sometimes with a corresponding reduction in democratic debate.

Mikiko Sasaki and Moustapha Soumare reported from UNDP Benin on how different factors intersect: "In Benin, political parties have proliferated from one in 1990 to nearly 150, and weigh heavily on the governance of the country. Management of government personnel based on merit and programmatic results is compromised by the politicization by parties. While it is difficult to pinpoint the percentage, a significant number of NGOs are backed by political parties and are in reality fundraising channels for them. The media on the one hand flourishes from the liberty of expression, but on the other hand suffers from the lack of quality in analysis partly due to its alignment to political parties. Trade unions also have become a tool for influence by party politics. This widespread politicization is an obstacle for the country's development because like many other African countries, political parties are in general founded not on policies and national interests, but rather on individual, ethnic or regional interests. Consensus making towards a common national objective is extremely difficult in this environment. The question under these circumstances would be whether it is sufficient working to fix a politicized institutional apparatus, or whether we need to go within the dynamics of political parties themselves to change the culture at its roots—chicken or egg."

POST-CONFLICT SCENARIOS

In countries that have been through a war or some other form of extreme hostilities, the post-conflict period has been increasingly recognized as a time to bridge the gap between conflict and development by laying a foundation for development programmes. Work with political parties could in some cases be key to this process; ideally, political parties could become a tool for nation-building.

Realistically, many of the challenges found in peace-time political scenarios deepen and become much more complex in countries emerging from conflict. They may not have a political system in place, much less political parties to operate within it. Issues related to nonpartisanship can become vastly more sensitive, and the situation may require negotiating a minefield of ethnic, religious, ideological, regional and other national divisions that may have fueled the conflict in the first place. Other issues may arise early in the tenure of new governments, such as dominant parties using the excuse of

Demilitarizing Politics in Mozambique

Gita Welch, the Democratic Governance Principal Advisor and Director within the Bureau for Development Policy at UNDP in New York, and a High Court Judge in Mozambique until 1994, recalled how peace in the country was finally achieved:

The peace process in Mozambique, and the 1992 General Peace Agreement that resulted from it, are often quoted as examples of an effective strategy to demilitarize politics in a post-conflict situation. This strategy succeeded in its two main objectives: ensuring a sustainable end to a 16-year civil war and establishing a solid platform for democratization.

By 1992, due to an intersection of economic, social, and geo- and national political factors, including the end of the Cold War, the struggle in Mozambique had reached an impasse. Neither RENAMO, the Mozambican National Resistance, nor the FRELIMO Government could see any prospect of an immediate military victory. A combination of disastrous economic policies had left the economy in tatters. RENAMO's external support had fallen away, and there were no resources to tap in Mozambique to continue fighting. For both sides, the only way out was to seek peace.

Of course, besides the will of the warring parties, a peace process needs other ingredients to be successful, such as sufficient funding and able mediation. The UN's Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Aldo Ajello, attributed his great success in helping to implement Mozambique's peace accord to economics, namely, the $17.5 million trust fund provided by the international community. He used this primarily to help transform RENAMO from a guerrilla army into a political party.

Ajello's extraordinary skills in steering a very complex process, in partnership with the Government, built upon the deep level of compromise and understanding established through the peace agreement. This was fundamental to the successful dismantling of the two previously warring armies and the creation of a new national army integrating combatants from both sides. Arguably, this aspect of the agreement was the key to peace overall in Mozambique, guaranteeing that neither the Government nor RENAMO would be tempted to return to war.

However, an almost equally critical factor was the deliberate inclusion of a 'roadmap' in the peace agreement to transform RENAMO into a political party and ensure its participation in the first general election. Under Protocol I of the agreement, RENAMO agreed to refrain from armed combat and committed to "conduct its political struggle in conformity with the laws in force, within the framework of the existing State institutions." Protocol II provided criteria and arrangements for the formation and recognition of political parties in Mozambique. It established their independence and voluntary basis, and required them to accept democratic methods (to the exclusion of other methods) to pursue national and patriotic interests. The second protocol also expressly committed both the Government and RENAMO to creating the conditions for the latter to commence its activities as a political party immediately following the signa-

ture of the General Peace Agreement. Protocol III outlined the principles of the electoral act and the first National Elections Commission, and stipulated that although the Government would set up this commission, RENAMO would nominate a third of its members.

The first general election in the post-conflict period in Mozambique subsequently became a platform for introducing RENAMO to its new role as a political movement instead of a military organization. This election also served to start shifting Mozambican politics from a culture of human insecurity and fear, to one that adopted the ballot as a valid and powerful instrument of collective choice. The process did not eliminate frequent mutual recriminations and the strong political disagreements that characterize a democratic process. It did, however, foster a long-term political process as the vehicle for resolving disputes and a legitimate way for exercising power.

While post-conflict recovery depends greatly on the historical, political, economic and cultural context, and there are some aspects of the situation in Mozambique that may be unique, the example strongly suggests that apart from demobilizing combatants, an efficient strategy to demilitarize politics involves the creation of institutions such as political parties and electoral commissions that are linked with the new political reality. Post-settlement elections can then be instrumental in advancing the goals of conflict resolution and democratization.

national stability as a political strategy to eliminate opposition groups. The political arena, which even under the best of circumstances involves a measure of conflict and opposition, can inflame previous grievances. In some countries—Mozambique being a prominent example—members of former armed movements have regrouped into political parties, with the challenge of transforming earlier habits of force and violence into a peaceful political discourse (see page 26-27).

During the network discussion, Mathieu Ciowela Katumba from UNDP Democratic Republic of the Congo proposed a holistic approach to post-conflict scenarios: "Especially in crisis countries, alignment with a political party relates much more to certain subjective criteria (access to power, ethnic/tribal concerns) than to the firm conviction of a party to a given vision. It shows that, unfortunately, the principles of good governance are not at all in place, and that leaders and party members demonstrate a lack of capacity. This is why the political party, one of the key actors for good governance, must be strengthened. However, UNDP should also extend its support for traditional partners such as governmental institutions (parliamentary and judiciary) and civil society, since political parties function within a framework and according to rules defined and established by these institutions."

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

An understanding of local governance can provide insights into the full spectrum of political dynamics, regardless of whether support is being considered at the national or the sub-national level. In regions and individual communities, the configuration of parties may be much more diffuse and fragmented, with local groups adhering

closely to local concerns. Or parties as such may or may not be part of the scene. In some cases, they are best equipped to aggregate local interests and help in exercising power on the people's behalf. But where local governance is quite dynamic and direct democracy mechanisms such as town hall meetings are already in place, parties may not add value. In transition countries, given the urgency of national consolidation, local elections often occur only many years after the first national elections. In other states, a history of poor performance by parties has led to the embrace of alternative 'direct democracy' measures such as referendums, citizen initiatives and recall options.

Even where local parties do exist, their relationship to national and regional parties varies. In some countries, national parties are barred from contesting local elections. In more developed democracies, regional and local parties tend to be strong within their constituencies, but less so at the national level, leading to some degree of disconnect between local and national policies. The flip side is when influential national parties have strong local cells that replicate national policies and ideologies in miniature. As is the case with national parties, electoral systems will determine to a great extent the configuration of local party systems as well as practices within parties.

Former UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown:

How Can UNDP Help Fix Party Weaknesses?

Essentially, it is clear that for most of us a democratic process without vibrant, independent political parties is an incomplete democracy, and that right now, political parties of that nature are, at best, the exception rather than the rule across the developing world. But as we think about how best to tackle this problem, we need to think hard about two issues: First, what is the root cause of the weaknesses in the current system, and second, what is appropriate for UNDP to do in helping address the problem given our neutral, multilateral character?

When thinking about the first question, it is important not to assume inadvertently that weak political parties are somehow symptomatic of specific weaknesses in a particular country and therefore subject to easy fixes. Indeed, the problems faced by political parties today are certainly not unique to the developing world or relatively recent democracies: Nearly everywhere they are in crisis and have been for some time. In some long-established Western democracies, big, single-issue NGOs now have vastly more members than long-established political parties. In developing countries, this is often due to the fact that some traditional constituencies for big parties, such as

organized labour, or a semi-feudal rural vote, have been eroding through broader social and demographic changes. But there is a real question as to whether they will be replaced by newer, dynamic alternatives or whether, in a more fundamental sense, the world is moving slowly into a 'post-party' era, driven by a number of factors such as the changing nature of how political information is conveyed to citizens via the media, and other channels such as the rise of civil society and how people respond and act on issues that concern them. Indeed, there is a plausible scenario where parties never regain the level of mass membership, popular trust and engagement they once enjoyed in older democracies, and never gain that level in newer ones.

Even if that is the case, however, clearly parties will continue to play a critical role in democracy, and the question remains how and whether UNDP should help ensure they play that role as effectively as possible. But there is also the tricky issue of partisanship. How do we avoid helping selected parties, often government parties, and thus appear to be giving support to one or the other side of a political divide? There is no neat answer to this question, and so where I come down is believing that with regard to direct support to parties per se, we as UNDP should limit our support to capacity development in a non-partisan manner and dialogue around development issues, as well as not seek to do direct work ourselves but should probably bring to the table our partnership networks and rely more on a strong referral system—helping bring in groups like NDI and the International Republican Institute (IRI) from the US and their equivalents in Europe and elsewhere to complement our strengths. In that way, we leverage our trusted role as a facilitator and catalyst in democratic governance, and, to ensure that we do not make ourselves vulnerable to that charge of partisanship, where we do something of this nature, it should be open to all parties that share values of tolerance and use peaceful means in their political strategy.

An area where we can and should get directly involved is helping governments adjust and adopt legal codes and regulations—the enabling environment for multiparty democracy if you like—that can protect and nurture democratic systems. Our advice should include best practices on issues such as regulating political fund-raising and state funding of elections. I am aware that this non-partisan rule-setting and capacity-building role is easier said than done in a context where so many countries have de facto or de jure one-party or even no party systems, but my feeling is it is probably where we can maximize our impact while remaining true to our UN mandate and responsibilities.

SECTION 3:

DOES WORKING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES COMPROMISE UNDP'S IMPARTIALITY?

"The question should no longer be whether or not UNDP should be involved in supporting political parties. Rather, it should be how UNDP can provide support and continue to be seen as a neutral and nonpartisan organization."

Audax Rutta from UNDP Tanzania

3

Does Working with Political Parties Compromise UNDP's Impartiality?

Many participants in the network discussion registered some degree of concern about how UNDP can work with political parties without itself becoming a political actor and compromising the principles of trust and impartiality that lie at the heart of the organization's mandate. One critical issue is the process of choosing which parties to work with: generally speaking, all, some or none. A selection process that winnows down the number of parties receiving support risks being perceived as interference in a country's domestic political affairs, or as UNDP overreaching its role. At the other extreme, working with all parties could include those whose practices run contrary to the fundamental ideals spelled out in the UN Charter, the UN Declaration on Human Rights, and, most recently, the Millennium Declaration. In countries with dozens of parties, trying to reach everyone could exceed UNDP's capacity and dilute the strength of an assistance programme.

IS THE UN REALLY NEUTRAL?

A number of contributors considered UN neutrality in terms of what it means in practice. While there was no debate about whether UNDP should ever deliberately adopt an overtly partisan stance, there was also a general concern that the word 'neutrality' can in some cases serve as a screen for doing nothing.

Several contributors noted that in reality, UNDP could be considered a partisan organization because it works directly with governments made up of political parties already in power. "In countries with only one dominant party, such as China, this is who we work with. Is this being neutral? I'm not sure," wondered Malin Samuelsson from UNDP China. Håvard Aagesen from the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre cautioned, "All forms of engagement and capacity development have an inherent potential for supporting and/or strengthening established power structures in any given country. This is obviously something to be aware of when cooperating with political parties, as it should be in all aspects of our work."

The fact that the UN system is committed to the highest human aspirations implies some degree of choice and selection. The Millennium Declaration, for example, agreed to by all UN Member States, has strong language covering a spectrum of political, economic and social rights. Section V, on human rights, democracy and good governance, commits governments to "spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development." The eighth Millennium Development Goal, on a global partnership for development, includes a reference to "a commitment to good governance and poverty reduction—both nationally and internationally."

Dan Dionisie, from UNDP Romania, proposed, "Neutrality as a concept is very limiting, and after all, UNDP has a mandate. Maybe 'non-partisanship' is a more workable principle when dealing with political parties, meaning that UNDP works within its mandate without any bias towards any political party, although it can be conceived that some of its interventions can incidentally—and indirectly—help certain parties more than others. For example, increasing the political participation of the poor and marginalized is something definitely consistent with what UNDP stands for, but in all likelihood is bound to benefit some political parties more than others."

MAKING CHOICES

The bottom line may be that choices about working with political parties need to be made with great care, because in many countries too much choice can easily push UNDP into a compromising position. The most obvious cases of parties that UNDP might not work with because their ideology strays too far from basic UN principles are those that are racist or xenophobic, or promote a violent agenda—but these are not the norm. Gray areas quickly emerge in looking at parties that may be based on ethnicity, regional affiliations or religion, or have a history of participation in armed struggles. While in some countries there are hugely negative experiences with groups like these, they remain essential for the functioning of political systems in many parts of the world. And they may be a reality in countries emerging from conflict or with less than democratic histories and traditions. Another issue arises when parties that may contradict international principles are still legally recognized entities within their country.

Magdy Martinez-Soliman, from the Democratic Governance Group at UNDP in New York, does not support working with parties that stray too far from UN principles even if they are legally recognized, but recounted a "slippery and difficult" situation in Bangladesh: "Would we provide support to the leadership of Jamaat Islami, when this party (in favour of women voting but against their becoming candidates) was inside Parliament? The Government did not see any problem, and UNDP decided that Jamaat was a party one could work with, although it obviously doesn't share the integrity of the international instruments on human rights. My guiding principle would be in dubio pro partitum (if in doubt support the party). But where we are absolutely sure that the core values are not shared, that a minimal common ground does not exist, I suppose I am in favour of not providing support to such political platforms."

Making this decision requires in-depth understanding and a longer-term perspective. Chris Spies from UNDP Guyana underscored lessons learned in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo that "taught us that decisions to exclude anyone who claims to be a role-player come back to haunt the process in years to come." He cautioned that too strict a definition of acceptability would have ruled out working with F. W. de Klerk's National Party in South Africa to dismantle apartheid, or, more recently, with many of the Somali clan-based parties to elect a new president.

Perhaps as fundamental as impartiality to UNDP's identity as a development organization is its commitment to remaining engaged even when circumstances are less than ideal. "We do not only work with the good guys," Spies maintained. "Those who don't understand or violate fundamental values and human rights probably

Sennye Obuseng, UNDP Botswana:

No Political Parties

There is no compelling reason for UNDP to engage political parties directly and plenty of risks that not every country office will be able to properly deal with. We do not need to engage political parties as individual organizations to promote democracy and good governance, or to market the human development paradigm. To go this high risk route is to suggest that available and considerably more neutral platforms for engaging politicians are somehow not as well suited as working directly with political parties for promoting our perspectives on development. It is a hard sell for me.

Here in Botswana, UNDP has had plenty of opportunities to involve political parties in our work and our events by recognizing that they are important components of civil society. For instance, they were invited to participate in the development of the governance programme; they have unfettered access to knowledge resources available through UNDP, including Human Development Reports, MDG Reports, etc. As an institution, we have access to the legislature, councils, the electoral commission, etc., all of them non-party political platforms where political parties can be constructively engaged.

UNDP is not at all suited for direct engagement with political parties as a means to somehow counterbalance the influence of ruling parties on government policy. If our aim is to support democracy and good governance, and to promote the human development paradigm, then our concern should be facilitating the creation of space for fair political contest and availing information through neutral avenues. We can work with electoral commissions and parliament to advance the necessary reforms and promote human development through the same structures and many other neutral platforms at our disposal.

need our assistance more than others. We may not agree with what parties say or do, but we can still provide spaces for dialogue. We still need to defend their right to seek satisfaction of their needs for freedom, identity, understanding and protection. If you leave them to fight alone for the satisfaction of these needs, there is no control over their actions. A dialogue process can help them moderate their positions, discover common ground with their opponents and increase the chances of collaboration to find mutual solutions. The key, it seems, lies in our ability to develop relationships that are based on respect, openness and trust, even when we grind our teeth and disagree with their views…."

Making choices about working with parties can stem from issues besides behaviour or ideological orientation. There may be obvious reasons to work only with parties represented in Parliament, or having a well-defined constituency in a given region. Some parties may have capacity development needs that others have already fulfilled. From the perspective of strengthening democratic governance, there could be a rationale for leveling the political playing field to the benefit of weaker opposition parties. However, on the last point, Fortunata Temu from UNDP Tanzania highlighted the tendency to think that because ruling parties have enjoyed access to most development assistance

David W. Yang, UNDP Washington, DC:

Some Political Parties

I find myself adhering most closely to the notion that UNDP should support only those political parties whose principles are in harmony with the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Otherwise, the UN's core principles are at risk.

It's easy to mythologize the ideal of UN neutrality. And ironically, in mythologizing this ideal, we denature it. In its most fundamental sense, the UN is not neutral: indeed, it stands for the highest principles of humanity, as illustrated in the Universal Declaration and other seminal documents.

Our daily work as UN(DP) officials must be fully informed by these principles. We are in the business of promoting key political, economic and social reforms. There is nothing neutral about this mission. How else are we to think of advancing the MDGs or of empowering the poor and women? While we must pursue our goals with both strategic and tactical sophistication and sensitivity, we must disabuse ourselves of the notion that we are above the fray of the local political economy of the societies in which we are working.

This, of course, does not mean that we brazenly and clumsily show partisanship in backing certain political parties or civil society organizations. But it does mean that we do not kid ourselves about reform inevitably resulting in winners and losers in politics and economics. It is our job to identify and support as best as we are able the most effective and democratic agents of change within a society. To do this well requires that we have an integrated and comprehensive strategy of political and economic reform. And to implement such a strategy requires that we not shrink from supporting key reformers—whether they are government officials, political party leaders, or non-governmental activists.

As UNDP progresses in developing its democratic governance practice, we must continue to grapple with the meaning of UN(DP) neutrality as it applies to our work. And I believe that if we are to truly progress, we must break through traditional concepts of 'neutrality' in order to fashion a new, bolder concept more in harmony with a more activist, pro-democracy and pro-MDG organization.

for so long, donors now need to play catch up and help opposition parties become self-sustaining. "This could result in a diplomatic row between the government of the day and the development partner, and UNDP cannot afford to be caught up in such a situation," she contended. "Most governments in power have the assumption that development partners are required to work with them. Even though this response may be uncalled for, it shouldn't be ignored."

Whatever the reasons for working with some parties and not others, some of the watchwords to guide these choices may be transparency, accountability and a clear rationale that is publicly explained. This process requires a certain level of capacity within UNDP country offices, including highly skilled staff who have a detailed knowledge of the political context, and who are comfortable working with a range of political platforms regardless of what their personal perspectives might be. In

Benjamin Allen, UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre:

All Political Parties

Political parties are a key part of the picture of democratic governance, yet one that is largely overlooked, except by partisan donors such as those associated with political parties. UNDP can help to fill that gap. However, it is essential that we do so in a completely non-partisan way—offering assistance to parties at any point on the political spectrum. This will mean some difficult decisions—should we include parties that promote racism, ethnic hatred, particular religions, gender bias or violence? For example, support from the United States, while broadly neutral, has long excluded some kinds of parties. This is understandable, but open to the possibility of abuse, and to charges of political favouritism or interference.

Personally, I think we should avoid the whole potential morass and support everyone. We should say, "Yes, among others, we support the party advocating replacement of the government with a plutocracy led by white, Hindu, Communist women." Why? Because democracy requires that everyone have a chance to participate, and we help all parties to make their voices heard through the democratic process. I don't feel that this exhibits indifference to human rights. Instead, it demonstrates commitment to democratic principles.

countries with particularly sensitive situations, there may be concerns related to the safety of UNDP staff should public perception begin to view the programme as supporting a political agenda.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT SUPPORT

Much of the debate on maintaining impartiality broke around two basic approaches to programming: direct and indirect. 'Direct' support refers to UNDP engaging with or supporting political parties as primary partners and or beneficiaries in their own right. Examples might include assisting in the development of party manifestos, promoting women in political parties, leadership training and the strengthening of organizational structures. 'Indirect' support covers cases where UNDP engages with or assists political parties as secondary partners and/or beneficiaries. These kinds of programmes often touch the institutions within which parties function, and include activities such as parliamentary development, electoral support, constitutional reform and anti-corruption programmes.

Network discussion participants working in more sensitive countries where the fears about compromising UNDP's impartiality are greatest tended to favour indirect support, which is viewed as less politically intrusive. Some participants suggested that in cases where parties blatantly disregard international standards, UNDP should clearly not provide direct forms of organizational capacity development, and should modulate its support to offer basic knowledge and information about those standards.

Zimbabwe: Indirect Support Builds Institutions, Not Individual Actors

Bernard Mokam reported:

In Zimbabwe, we are providing indirect support that benefits political parties through the promotion of institutions or mechanisms of governance. We are supporting the Parliament first and foremost because it is a forum for dialogue between political parties. Even though the current inter-party dialogue on the political settlement is being steered by South Africa, our support to Parliament has nevertheless enabled the two main political parties to hold constructive discussions on some key domestic issues. This is very consistent with UNDP's role as a broker and facilitator of dialogue, and in helping our programme countries build consensus on national issues.

We are also supporting Parliament to perform its oversight, legislative and representational functions. For example, we have recently helped Parliament set up constituency information centres for the 120 elected MPs from both parties. These centres belong to the Parliament, but political parties are the main beneficiaries. MPs and their constituents can discuss matters related to their constituency and access information. Many UN agencies have agreed to provide advocacy material for the centres.

Within Parliament, we are supporting a Women's Parliamentarian Caucus, which is composed of women politicians from all parties. And when the current Parliament was elected in 2000, UNDP organized a study tour of the country for all MPs. Because of the apartheid system of the past, many had never been in other parts of the country and had very little knowledge about their resources and potential. The tour was an eye-opener. Subsequently, we organized budget and pre-budget seminars to help MPs from both parties understand the key challenges of the country and how the budget could help respond to them. We have strengthened the capacities of portfolio committees where MPs from both parties are represented, and provided negotiation skills training to all MPs to improve their constructive participation in parliamentary debates.

Ethiopia: In Direct Party Work, Proceed with Care

In the lead-up to the 2005 Ethiopian parliamentary elections, UNDP sought to help cultivate a level playing field for multiple parties. Previously, opposition groups had only managed to capture a meager 12 out of 547 seats, which dampened the quality of parliamentary debate. Since electoral law prohibits direct financing from bilateral donors for electoral activities, and political parties are prohibited from fundraising in the diaspora, UNDP was one of the only legal avenues of support for parties. It was also widely viewed as having the level of impartiality required to fulfill such a sensitive role. A pooled donor fund to back the programme was set up under UNDP's management.

A primary area of support was technical training, which included developing a draft political party code of conduct and a non-violence pact, and providing training on voter registration, polling and complaints procedures. With assistance from the pooled fund, the National Elections Board of Ethiopia established the Joint Political Party Forum. It provided an institutionalized arena for the 31 contending political parties to meet with the board and have regular updates on the elections process. The donor pool also assisted with the drafting of a media code of conduct and the allocation of equal airtime on public media to all political parties. Both NDI and IRI were partners in some of these activities.

Campaign finance became a much-debated topic during the course of the programme. Donor support began late in the election process, and some donors maintained that cash support to political parties would be the only way to even out campaign opportunities. UNDP and the majority of donors insisted on providing in-kind support in the form of access to printing facilities to produce campaign flyers and to transportation companies so candidates could campaign in their districts. The consulting company ERIS helped devise a formula for support based on the number of registered candidates for each party, the number of regions the party was contesting and the number of its female candidates.

After the election was over, there were indications that many opposition parties had illegally sought support from the diaspora. Many parties did not take advantage of the goods and services made available and only wanted cash. Some donors have since concluded that support might be better channeled towards advocacy for changing election campaign finance laws or should be limited to technical assistance. A case has also been made to avoid support to future campaigning in order to prevent dependency on foreign donors.

The Institute for Multiparty Democracy: Some Lessons Learned

The IMD was established in 2001 by Dutch political parties with seats in the Netherlands House of Representatives. Its mandate is to support the development and/or consolidation of political parties and multiparty systems in young democracies. In its partner countries, the IMD offers a mix of direct party assistance and support for cross-party initiatives—the exact formulation depends on circumstances and extensive consultations in each country.

The missing link of political parties needs to be included if democracy is to be consolidated. There is no way around them. Moreover, the politicians in young democracies are open to and interested in engaging in the IMD's cooperation programmes and in a number of cases in joint ventures with UNDP and others.

Political parties are generally not well-functioning institutions. Opinion polls almost everywhere indicate that they belong to the institutions that are least trusted by the general public. The basis of many political parties is often narrow in the case of opposition parties, and in the case of many governing parties the state has taken over the functions of the party. Most parties hibernate until elections are looming. They usually lack resources to build up institutional capacity to engage constituencies between elections. Internal democracy is rarely practiced. Financial resources depend on a few rich individuals who bankroll a system of money politics. Opposition parties are sometimes formed by governing parties as decoys in the political arena to divide and complicate opposition politics. It takes leadership on the part of the political elites, constituted by both governing and opposition parties, to acknowledge that, in the interests of the country, the political practice has to change. By engaging in a dialogue process through which the levels of trust increase, reform proposals can be introduced that over time can generate the momentum for a genuine consolidation process. Guatemala and Ghana are both making interesting progress with this approach.

An important lesson learned is that one cannot engage political parties at face value and start by investing money in their development. In fact, this approach may add to the problems that fragile and polarized systems of governance already have. In young democracies, divisions are often deep and mistrust rife while states are weak. International intervention—specifically in the political arena—should take the greatest care not to compound the divisions. In the IMD's experience, political parties should be invited to engage in inter-party and intra-party dialogues that produce a genuine will to reform and agendas for strategic intervention to which the international community can respond. Failure to meet these objectives should result in disqualification for assistance. Cross-party cooperation works in this respect as a useful instrument for peer review and social control to stimulate the performance of participating parties while neutralizing the inevitable spoilers in political reform processes. Generally, direct financial assis-

tance should not be provided unless the agendas have been developed and a transparent and jointly agreed framework and modalities are in place.

Because of the many sensitivities involved, the IMD has encouraged the political parties in its programme countries to select eminent personalities in their societies to function as Advisory Boards to the programmes and the IMD. These Advisory Boards have been helpful in avoiding conflicts and in providing guidance with respect to the strategic issues in the partnership relations between the IMD and its counterparts.

Furthermore, a choice had to be made by the IMD on whether the cooperation should be limited to the political parties represented in parliament only or should a smaller number of serious parties.

The multiparty approach through which cross-party and direct party assistance is channeled has earned the IMD substantial political capital among the key political stakeholders in the partner countries. However, this approach also poses new challenges in assuring that agreed reform agendas are implemented. Practical contributions are needed to help multiparty systems work better and political parties perform better. The IMD is in the process of developing more specific indicators for impact in this field. The strategic programmes of cross-party cooperation and of the political parties are an essential starting point for monitoring progress. Hopefully, in due course, their impact can be measured in opinion polls that show whether perceptions about the performance of political parties have improved.

be extended to all registered political parties, including those not elected to be represented in parliament. In countries with free and fair elections, the parties in parliament obtain legitimacy from the electorate. Again on the basis of consultations with all stakeholders, the solution usually found is that the parties in parliament qualify for direct assistance while the cross-party programme is open for participation by all registered political parties to ensure the inclusive nature of the process. In countries with an unrealistically large number of registered political parties, initial consultations should lead to a preliminary selection of parties to be included. In Mali, for example, only 34 of the more than 90 registered parties are currently participating in the programme. This is still a high number, but the performance criteria applied are expected to result in the eventual emergence of

Political parties sometimes express the fear of losing their identities by entering into inter-party dialogue and cross-party cooperation. In addition, parties may be afraid that the media will expose them as weak or as selling out when entering into dialogue with their perceived antagonists. The level of acceptance of parties entering into dialogue is related to the prevailing political cultures of a country. Where a multiparty system exists, people are more used to dialogue, negotiations and agreements between parties than for example in a two-party system or a multiparty system with a dominant governing party. Nevertheless, experience shows that political parties do overcome such fears, once they accept that political parties collectively share responsibility for sound foundations for the political system in a country even

The Institute for Multiparty Democracy: Some Lessons Learned cont.

though their interests differ when it comes to competing for the support of the electorate. In practice, the two responsibilities can be well reconciled.

The fact that political parties and political society have been missing in international assistance, while much aid in the context of democracy support has been invested in civil society, has not contributed to improved relations between the two sectors in many countries. The animosity between these two should receive special attention, so that political parties can become less defensive about the advocacy roles of civil society organizations and civil society organizations can become more aware that undermining political

parties is not in their interest since such an approach does not contribute to a stable democratic political system.

What counts is developing trust among the key stakeholders, as the basis upon which institutionalization of democratic processes can be nourished. Successful poverty reduction and increased human security presuppose a deepening of the democratic reform processes in which the politicians and their political parties are the key vehicles.

—Excerpted from the 2005 IMD publication "Support for Political Parties and Party Systems: The IMD Approach," available at www.nimd.org/default.aspx?menuid=17&type=publicationlist&contentid=&archive=1.

SECTION 4:

CONSIDERATIONS TO SHAPE A PROGRAMME

"Political parties are political and politicians are politicians! They are not the typical development partners, and this may require very different communication and diplomacy skills, and may require some very different logic for making decisions on seemingly superficial things that can, however, have a political impact."

Max Ooft, UNDP Sub-Office Suriname

4 Considerations to Shape a Programme

In most countries, the first two steps towards considering whether or not to pursue a programme for political party support will be a political assessment along the lines described in section II and an investigation of the impartiality issues discussed in section III. The next step involves considering how to shape a programme, described in the following section. This could start with mapping basic guidelines or principles. Questioning assumptions can then help uncover hidden biases that could otherwise make a programme ineffective or inappropriate. Assessing opportunities should generally be paired with an assessment of risks and, given the sensitivities involved, a plan to manage them. If a decision is made that a political party programme is feasible, it can generally be designed around one or more of four entry points in the political system: the culture and practice of democracy, governance institutions and systems, policy issues and political parties themselves.

ADOPTING A SET OF PRINCIPLES

Throughout the network dialogue, participants expressed a desire to have a set of corporate principles to help guide UNDP's work with political parties, while also acknowledging that given the diversity of national situations, it is probably not possible to devise a one-size-fits-all prescription. However, very generally, the basic principles articulated in the UN Charter and other fundamental UN agreements remain touchstones for all aspects of UNDP's work. The human rights-based approach to programming has increasingly been embraced within UN agencies and by the UN Secretary-General. UNDP has additional corporate standards defined by the MYFF development drivers—again, developing national capacities, enhancing national ownership, advocating and fostering an enabling policy environment, seeking South-South solutions and promoting gender equality—and the service lines, particularly under the democratic governance and poverty reduction practices.

Some participants did attempt to propose principles specifically for political party programming. A clear 'don't' was applied to ever allowing UNDP's name to be used for electoral purposes. An obvious 'do' is impartiality, but the full implications of this draw once again from the country context. Other basic principles included:

- Emphasizing indirect and/or issue-based support in situations that are sensitive or otherwise difficult to call
- Respecting the democratic process and always bearing it in mind as the ultimate objective of support
- Working with parties that behave responsibly and have a 'project for society'
- Clearly demarcating the line between capacity development and endorsement
- Practising transparency and accountability
- Refraining from supporting one party in a way that blocks out whole groups of other parties

- Being practical and realistic about UNDP's internal capacity to interact skillfully with parties.

Lenni Montiel from UNDP Vietnam and others suggested the preparation of a code of conduct for UNDP staff and consultants working with parties. It could be based on existing UN and UNDP rules, with specific additional principles to guide relationships with parties.

Several participants cautioned that financing of parties should automatically be excluded from UNDP's approach, mainly because this form of support could be most easily misused and/or perceived as a direct endorsement. But this does not necessarily mean that the issue of political party financing per se need be off limits. This is a pressing concern in many countries, and UNDP is often well placed to advise on practices and legal frameworks governing the public and private financing of parties. Eric Overvest from UNDP's Sub-regional Resource Facility in Panama noted: "The financing of political parties is high on the agenda in Latin America, not only because of the danger of narco-politics and corruption but also because it is essential to a sustainable democratic system."

Given the complexity and fluidity of many political dynamics, something that may be needed in all cases is the capacity to be aware, informed, sensitive and tactful. This can start with examining some of the assumptions that, spoken or otherwise, may influence how a country office constructs party support.

QUESTIONING ASSUMPTIONS

Some of these may make clear sense in some countries; in others they may not apply. Some may seem overly obvious—but as Thomas Carothers has pointed out (see page 16-17), the history of political party assistance has unfortunately been prone to bypassing an examination of assumptions, and ended up exporting models that may be closer to ideals than reality. The following list features some key assumptions to consider that were gathered from the UNDP network discussion.

- A multiparty system should always be the goal.
- Democracy can only exist where there are political parties.
- Traditional political systems should be subsumed by modern ones.
- Only the big parties are important.
- Only formal governance structures are important.
- Working with a parliament is analogous to working with the political party system.
- Religious, ethnic and/or regional alliances automatically threaten political stability.
- Programming can't start until the political system reaches a certain configuration or level of 'maturity'.
- It is more politically neutral to work through NGOs.
- Political parties and civil society are interchangeable.
- UNDP must take an all-or-nothing approach to working with political parties.
- Partnership can automatically shield

UNDP from political fallout (partners themselves carry political liabilities; for example, those associated with former colonial powers).

- Donors know best.

As a recent, internationally agreed reference point, the outcome document from the 2005 High-Level Summit of the General Assembly underscored that while democracies may have common philosophical underpinnings, there can be variations in systems and practices. It stated: "We reaffirm that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives. We also reaffirm that while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy, that it does not belong to any country or region, and reaffirm the necessity of due respect for sovereignty and the right for self-determination."

ASSESSING OPPORTUNITIES

In determining entry points for work with political parties, it may help to start with questions that will frame the country context, and provide an understanding of UNDP's existing capacity, strengths and weaknesses. Many network dialogue participants emphasized that the point of departure must be careful strategic planning that includes a needs assessment as well as analysis of goals and objectives, target audiences, personnel, modalities, timing and so on. The following questions emerged from the discussion:

- Is the country office equipped to work with political parties in terms of resources and staff skills? There may be a need for high-level political analysis, negotiation and training skills.
- What forms of support for political party programming are available within UNDP at large? To whom in the UN system should UNDP turn for advice and expertise? When should UNDP contact DPA (see also section II)? In crisis situations, the Special Representative for the Secretary-General must be consulted.
- What forms of support are available outside UNDP, including through partnerships with other donors, political party organizations, NGOs, etc.? (See section VI for ideas.)
- Does UNDP have something different or better to offer?
- Should support be invited or negotiated as part of an overall UNDP Country Programme?
- If UNDP has been asked to work with parties, why? What is the motivation of the government and/or parties themselves?
- Realistically, how much 'neutrality capital' does UNDP have to work with in a given country, especially given that opinions of UN impartiality vary within nations and regions?
- Is there an existing history of work with parties?
- How would working with parties fit into UNDP's Country Programme, particularly in terms of democratic governance and poverty reduction?
- Should parties be engaged in the Common Country Assessment/UN Development Assistance (UNDAF) and Country Programme processes?
- Are there synergies with civil society and media development work, even if the country office decides not to work directly with parties?

- Is there a need for complementary capacity development within other sectors for political party support to be effective?
- How would working with parties support national priorities, as articulated by the government as well as by civil society, the media, community groups, etc.?
- Has a thorough assessment of the country's political system and situation been carried out? Is a stakeholder analysis important? What are the primary public perceptions of the country's quality of governance?
- What are the benefits and liabilities of working with some/no/all parties?
- If the decision is made to work with only selected political parties, can UNDP provide a clear, transparent rationale for doing so? What would be the anticipated public response?
- Are both formal and informal governance processes understood?
- Where is the country in the election cycle?
- Which parties conform to a country's laws governing party formation and financing?
- How do support needs differ between parties in government and those outside?
- In the case of party strengthening programmes, what degree of resistance can be anticipated from those who think they won't benefit or may lose ground, namely, parties in power?
- Is there a need for a formal consultation with the government? Does it make sense to obtain a non-objection agreement from the government or ruling parties?

UNDP ON THE GROUND

Saudi Arabia: Debating How to Proceed

UNDP CO reports:

The UNDP Saudi Arabia Country Office conducted a brainstorming session in October 2004 to explore why or why not and how to engage with political parties.

The first aspect for thorough discussion was the political context. Viewed from the global angle, the 1990s witnessed a wave of overwhelming democratization and for good reason. In reality, there is a solid world consensus, as demonstrated by the Millennium Summit in 2000, that democratic governance must underpin national efforts to reduce poverty, sustain the environment and promote human development.

From the national perspective, Saudi Arabia has recently embarked on a reform agenda whereby genuine public participation is being seriously considered. This is expected to be subjected to scrutiny in two counts: first by the voters in the municipal elections that took place in November 2004, in which UNDP provided policy assistance in close coordination with the EAD; second, scrutiny has been undertaken in terms of extensive reporting to capture the lessons learned and to expose the experience to specialist analysis utilizing the rosters of international experts at the UN System. Moreover, the National Forum for Dialogue has been established with the objective of fostering debate among scholars and intellectuals from all walks of life.

The discussions at the Country Office covered political parties, their theoreti-

cal definitions and empirical implications, and their role as a vehicle of good governance, with a focus on the peculiarity of the political context of each country. In the Arab region, which may be the geopolitical litmus test of relevance, societies are seen as not yet well developed enough to allow the free formulation of political parties that can express the vested interests of their respective societies or constituencies. As for Saudi Arabia, where there are no political parties, it is premature to speak about lending support to something that is nonexistent.

The Country Office went through the pros and cons of UNDP's engagement with political parties. The issue at stake was seen as context-specific and, therefore, each Country Office should carefully weigh the benefits of such interventions against the possibility of tampering with the corporate core assets of neutrality and impartiality. Particular emphasis was put on UN Reform and the reiteration of UNDP's stance, as expressed by the Administrator in addressing the Executive Board, that our focus should remain on assisting developing countries in their own efforts to improve the lives of their people. We are the supporters and partners of programme countries, not political parties, currents or movements.

The discussions also affirmed the viability of nurturing sustainable human development by creating an enabling environment that builds on the success of UNDP in supporting good governance. True, we should avoid dictating agendas. It is equally true that UNDP has long been pursuing the interests of its constituencies—namely, those who live in poverty—and that supporting political parties might not be one of the thorniest issues for the poor at this particular time. But to maintain our status as a partner of relevance, we could still support the gradual evolution of things rather than posing as a revolutionary advocate for change, including the creation of political parties where they have never existed.

In conclusion, the Country Office reached a consensus to avoid jeopardizing UNDP's image as a trusted partner for the Government, a partner that has long been known as very neutral and sincerely impartial. Only through these strategic advantages can UNDP meet its mandate to advocate for policy issues and build national consensus around concerns meant to foster sustainable human development.

ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISKS

Because political dynamics can fluctuate widely and rapidly, and because the stakes can be higher in working with parties than in other aspects of development governance programming, it is crucial to assess the risks in advance and if possible put in place a plan with the mechanisms to manage them. Lenni Montiel from UNDP Vietnam raised the issue of what would happen if UNDP is accused of serious wrong-doings, whether they are substantive or the result of media manipulation or contesting political factions. "Is UNDP ready to deal with these situations corporately? What do we do in case allegations are serious? How do we ensure that appropriate provisions are taken to minimize such risks?"

As pointed out in Section III, the most fundamental risk is that UNDP's reputation for trust and neutrality could be damaged, with a worst-case scenario involving a charge of illegal interference in national affairs.

Another pitfall could be that UNDP is perceived as a source of resources, and political parties form just to tap them. If there is a large number of parties and UNDP decides it has to support them all, there would be a risk that a programme of limited duration and resources would be diluted.

Some concerns relate to the ways party needs change during election cycles. A lack of understanding of different phases could result in crafting programmes with a limited impact. This also applies more generally to political dynamics at large.

In cases where the culture of democracy is very weak, targeted assistance to parties could prove ineffective, as parties won't have a supportive environment in which to function. Special issues arise in situations where political systems are heavily driven by personalities, at the expense of systems to moderate individual ambitions. Amadou Mamadou from UNDP Cameroon goes so far as to say that "an institutionally led system (rather than a chief-led system as we know is operating in many African countries) should be one of the main criteria for support."

Many network discussion participants highlighted that one of the primary tools for managing risks is maintaining a high level of transparency and accountability in implementing the programme. Other strategies could include regular consultations, developing a network of personal relationships, routine monitoring of party activities, and a media or communications plan in the event something does go wrong.

Francesca Cooke from the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre advocated regular conflict analysis and mechanisms to deal peacefully with potential conflicts. She underscored, "Support to political parties has high potential for creating tensions and conflicts, as well as an increase in attempts to wrestle or maintain power by other means (corruption, cronyism, control of business and money, etc.), especially in countries with little history of democratic systems."

The flip side of the risk of working with parties is the risk of not working with them. As described in Section I, it is increasingly clear in a number of countries that democratic governance, human development and poverty reduction strategies may not move forward without a functioning party system.

ENTRY POINTS FOR PROGRAMMING

There was broad agreement in the network discussion that political parties are integral parts of most governance

Håvard Aagesen, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre:

Three Capacity Challenges

In fostering strong and vibrant democracies there are, in my view, three main challenges that relate directly to the role and capacity of political parties:

First, there is the 'democratic capacity' of the political parties themselves. I believe that developing this capacity is probably the main entry point for UNDP's engagement. Given the very special attributes of political parties—their key role in decision-making processes—it is vital that they also have the resources and capacity needed to represent and respond to broad interests in society, and have an outreach beyond the social and economic elites of their country.

The second challenge involves the capacity of political parties to function within a framework where both donor-driven demands and strong civil society organizations might overpower political parties as actors in the political decision-making process. When rebuilding Norway after World War II, there was a process where American donor funds (the Marshall Plan) included one financial transfer, and (at least in principle) a process where decisions in the parliament prioritized the use of the money. Developing countries and their political institutions are confronted with a fundamentally different reality. Funds are distributed through thousands of channels, mostly with some conditions attached to them. UNDP should assume a specific responsibility to ensure that the political institutions of our partner countries can exercise their mandate in prioritizing and implementing the policies of the country.

Finally, political issues are increasingly regional issues, and are met with solutions at a regional level. Some issues, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, are of such fundamental importance that the efforts to address them are extraordinary, and therefore sometimes take place outside traditional decision-making procedures. For political parties, inside and outside parliaments, to relate to and engage in these processes, capacity and resources are needed. UNDP should help facilitate the ability of national political bodies and their parties to take a stronger role in these.

Solutions addressing all of these three points will lead to activities where political parties are operating in a space of common interests across what normally divides them.

systems, and that the different parts of these systems interact in ways that affect the functioning of the whole. Four basic entry points for working on the role of political parties in democratic governance seemed to present themselves: the overall political environment, including the culture and practice of democracy; governance institutions and processes, such as elections, legislative frameworks and parliaments; an array of development policy issues, from poverty reduction to gender; and the parties themselves, in terms of operational and other capacities. In actual practice, these entry points often overlap, as is evident in the country case studies presented in Section V.

The culture and practice of democracy: This entry point generally involves initiatives to nurture practices such as tolerance, good citizenship, respect for others,

Steve Glovinsky, UNDP New York, Bureau for Development Policy:

Reaching the People in the Parties

Back in my career as a 'policy specialist', many assignments I tackled dealt with political change—decentralization of power, transition to democracy, administrative reform, etc. Invariably, whatever the political situation, my approach was to seek out the one person who, against whatever odds and often at great personal risk, was attempting to change the system to bring about a more responsive and responsible government. Sometimes this person was high up in the system and sometimes not. But in every single country I worked in, I always managed to find one—most of the time they were well known by the UNDP programme officer I worked with.

My message was basically, "We're from the UN. How can we support you to achieve your goals?" It was empowering to my colleague, but it meant a lot of responsibility on my part to follow through. I could always get on a plane; the change agent could not.

The bottom line here is that UNDP does not deal with political parties or with regimes; fundamentally, we deal with the people in them. We can work with political parties if we hook up with the serious and committed change agents within them, and strengthen their hand for what they aspire to do: help their government work better—to be more effective, efficient and responsive to the needs and aspirations of all its people.

Sometimes it is holding a forum to discuss topical issues; sometimes it is promoting Human Development Reports or MDG Reports that tell the leaders more about the people they serve. Yes, we need to be perceived as neutral and not openly supportive of one political viewpoint or another, but a lot can be done with political parties from both an advocacy and a capacity-strengthening perspective. It's just a matter of finding one serious politician (or person able to influence the political platform) who is interested in our help.

respect for the balance of power, accountability and transparency. Activities may include public awareness campaigns, voter education and multiparty dialogue processes, and may extend to work to strengthen the media and NGOs, and to increase the participation of excluded groups, such as through training women on leadership and political skills. Work on this level may be most important when democracy is nascent or troubled, including in post-conflict situations. Several contributors noted that a fundamental problem in their countries was the inability to recognize that political conflict can be managed, rather than suppressed.

The Executive Director of the IMD, Roel von Meijenfeldt, points out, "In practising democracy, perhaps too much emphasis has been put on the competitive function of democracy as highlighted in elections. In developing trust in the democratic system of governance, other functions of democracy should not be neglected, such as accommodative and reconciliatory functions. Hence the process through which democracy is constructed, with a focus on participation, inclusiveness, tolerance and consensus building, needs greater emphasis over the often dominating focus on competition and rivalry. For a stable democracy, the different functions need to be carefully balanced."[5]

[5] See the IMD publication A Framework for Democratic Party Building: A Handbook, published in 2004, at www.nimd.org/upload/publications/2004/imd_institutional_development_handbook-a4.pdf.

One approach often raised in the network discussion as a relatively low-risk way of easing into political party programming is to convene party dialogues. These bring different players together to discuss their issues and concerns, and perhaps learn new methods of conflict resolution and consensus building. Costa Rica is one of several Latin American countries using this approach. A recent topic has been 'Representation and Participation', which delved into subjects including the crisis of representation in both political parties and electoral models, and political parties and political exclusion. "Through social dialogue with relevant actors belonging to different political and social groups we expect to reach a minimum consensus or form 'coalitions' for future work that will necessarily involve political parties," said Raquel Herrera. She added that in the Costa Rica experience, "Social dialogue initiatives can be useful for identifying sensitive issues as well as for identifying promising areas for UNDP's support in a given political context."

Governance institutions and processes: Programmes in this area are some of the most common and traditional across UNDP. They include parliamentary development, electoral support, constitutional and/or legislative reform, decentralization support, anti-corruption initiatives, and information and communications technology for e-governance. Specific initiatives involving parties have comprised strengthening or establishing regulatory frameworks for parties; training members of parliament on awareness of the constitution and parliamentary procedures, as well as tasks such as budgetary oversight; assisting the creation of Web sites and electronic networks; helping to review ground rules to maximize fair play among parties; taking steps to increase women's role in parliament; and supporting the establishment of independent electoral bodies.

Policy issues: Another approach is to focus on sensitizing political players on whatever are the most relevant development issues—the MDGs, poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS and so on. This can happen through dialogues, by distributing information directly to parties or through the media, or by holding workshops and round table discussions. Mounir Tabet from UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States suggested preparing one uniform package of information on policies, issues, and policy stances related to the UN agenda and human development. "This could be delivered to all political parties with a clear written indication that this package is sent to all equally and does not mean endorsement of one party or another." He also proposed asking national elections commissions to sponsor meetings for all electoral stakeholders during which UNDP could "advocate the human development message." He added, "This also can be done through parliaments, but we need to ensure that those parties that are not represented are also included."

Several contributors favoured an issue-based rather than a party-based approach to programming as a surer way of maintaining UNDP's impartiality. "The formula is to promote those programmes that are focused on general development and that are common to all of the parties," wrote Wendy Cuellar from UNDP Guatemala. In some countries, the points of commonality may be easier to find than in others. Dan Dionise warned that while some issues may be generally applicable, like increasing the political participation of women and the poor, others may depend heavily on local context.

Steve Glovinsky from the Bureau for

Benin: Changing a Political Culture

Mikiko Sasaki and Moustapha Soumare from UNDP Benin reported:

In 2005, UNDP Benin began providing direct support to political parties through the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund. The objective is to strengthen the capacity of political parties in dialogue and consensus building, and to establish a code of professional ethics. Benin has often been cited as a reference for African democracy, since its extraordinary transition in the 1990s from a one-party socialist regime to a multiparty democratic system. We see today a remarkable freedom of the press and expression, and the emergence of nearly 150 political parties, although the latter also presents new challenges.

Over the years, UNDP Benin has directly or indirectly involved political parties as a stakeholder group through capacity development projects with the National Assembly and electoral support. In a parliamentary programme on bolstering budget analysis capacities, for example, the opposition party appreciates the technical analysis provided by the project experts, which helps them interrogate ministers with more rigour and substance, even if they are still politically driven to oppose the budget proposal. It would be further progress if this could help actually achieve consensus around common objectives based on technical grounds. Inspired by the experience of Niger, the Beninese National Assembly members have now started multipartisan public consultations to review legislation, with UNDP assistance. Both the assembly members and citizens have said they appreciate the joint presence of politicians from majority and opposition parties listening to issues that concern the public.

Another UNDP initiative has involved the evaluation of past elections. A forum organized in 2003 led to a consensus among majority and opposition parties on the methodology and the institutional framework of a permanent voter register slated to be in place for the presidential elections in March 2006. However, when the government started to deviate from the original consensus, confidence was lost, and the process was caught amidst the vicissitudes of political forces. It was only in July 2005 that Parliament finally adopted the revision of the electoral laws, and the process was able to regain its momentum.

While these interventions to reinforce formal democratic institutions and mechanisms are critical, they are not sufficient in the quest for better governance. What is more entrenched and difficult is to deal with informal, 'underhand' political interventions in the executive and judiciary arms, which undermine trust in formal processes. Political parties and their leaders have considerable influence over the functioning of government institutions and virtually all other aspects of public life, including the press, civil society and the private sector. Without strengthening the awareness and capacity of political parties on how they can play a more effective role in the governance of the country, it will be difficult to achieve development goals, including the MDGs.

After key political parties themselves expressed interest in developing their capacities, UNDP embarked on the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund project, with the first step being the

establishment of a consultation forum to draft the code of ethics and validate the final document. The forum comprises political parties, civil society organizations, religious establishments, and government and donor representatives. Training in leadership and communication skills is being offered to the parties.

An initial challenge was to agree on which parties should be included in the forum. It would have been operationally difficult for all 150 parties to participate, and this might offer an unnecessary incentive to create more political parties. While criteria were developed in close consultation with an array of national counterparts before the first meeting as the basis for the list of invitees, participants reopened the issue. After some debate, they finally agreed that participating parties would be those in conformity with the Charter of Political Parties, and represented in the National Assembly and/or at the municipal and district levels. Eighteen parties met these criteria. Work on the code of ethics is now moving forward.

In the words of Robert Dossou, an ex-minister who spoke at the forum, Benin is still in a democratic transition. Benin's political parties need to learn to engage in actions based on conviction, and not on gains and interests; they need to be able to consider the society as a whole as well as other political parties whose viewpoints naturally differ; they need to differentiate political engagement from administrative obligations and not interfere with the administration and the running of the economy; and they need to invest not only in elections but in strengthening their capacity to conceive and deliver programmes.

Development Policy at UNDP in New York referred to a project in Latin America that sponsored a national conference on corruption six months before an election. Key political candidates participated, and various campaign promises to combat corruption resulted. When one of the candidates won the Presidency, UNDP was in a position to offer to help them follow up.

Political parties: This entry point involves working with political parties themselves, generally through direct forms of support. Many of these relate to capacity development. On the operational end, parties need capacities to exercise effective political leadership, communicate, negotiate, build consensus, manage conflict, plan campaigns, strengthen organizational structures, raise funds, work with the media, develop party platforms and messages, and cultivate other technical skills. Some capacities relate to internal democracy, such as improving the participation and leadership of women within the parties, or to strengthening links with constituencies, such as by establishing district outreach centres. Parties have to be able to carry out civic education campaigns, and to diagnose and understand people's needs and problems.

Other capacities may relate to the ethics of governance and setting up codes of conduct. Audax Rutta from UNDP Tanzania noted, "A quick tour of political parties in Tanzania suggests these have many common needs, including a clear understanding of their responsibilities and obligations with regard to nation building, fair and mature politics, political integrity and political tolerance." Specific issues comprise the rights and responsibilities of public office, funding and funding disclosure, campaigning, parliamentary roles and functions, and

poll monitoring. Rutta also referred to the capacity of political parties to fully grasp and participate in regional and international issues such as the MDGs, globalization and the New Partnership for African Development.

Other forms of support mentioned in the network discussion included the provision of materials, for example, to carry out campaigns. There were suggestions to build stronger links between parties and development actors, including UNDP, possibly through party participation in the UNDP programming process.

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

Given that political party assistance is a relatively new area for UNDP, country offices may need to consider funding options. Few Country Programmes have been written with a significant component devoted to political parties; most still emphasize governing institutions. Country Programmes are more flexible than they used to be, however, and with the UN system's move towards harmonizing and simplifying programmes and other procedures, additional flexibility will come through the Country Programme Action Plan and the corresponding Annual Work Plans, which can be amended more easily.

One current alternative is the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund, which offers funding up to a pre-determined ceiling per year to projects that are experimental, catalytic and innovative. The idea is that these projects can benefit the countries where they are implemented, but can also benefit UNDP at large by demonstrating what works and what does not, charting new territory and in general furthering UNDP's work in the democratic governance practice. The fund allows country offices to develop projects that respond to more immediate needs compared to the Country Programmes. Trust fund grants may also be the place to start exploring what the prospects and possibilities for party programming are within a given country.

Abdul Hannan, UNDP New York, Operations Support Group:

Are We Missing the Mark?

Our approaches to democratization, and indeed those of the democracy community at large, may be hitting the rocks because we are reaching the limits of a simplistic 'transition paradigm'. In a growing number of instances, it's becoming hard to sustain arguments that countries are 'progressing steadily' towards establishing 'viable democratic polities'. Such arguments stick persistently to the 'stages of development' logic touted by generations of developmentalists, despite development being anything but logical. These assumptions are powerful and entrenched, yet how many of our country experiences subscribe to these rational sequences? The lived experience in a great many polities is not sequential, but simultaneous, with modernity meeting tradition head on in different combinations and producing different outcomes. The transition paradigm downplays or obscures these complexities when what we need is to understand them more.

What are we missing in our calculations? For a start, the chasm between political and economic elites on the one hand, and citizens on the other, are rooted in deeper factors such as societal composition, colonial infrastructure and ecological endowments, which typically such things as elections, parliamentary development and public sector reform do not confront and probably cannot overcome. Also, let's remember that many countries have been forced to roll back the state over the past 20 years, which has denied them the apparatus needed for minimal political integration (this ideological attack on all things 'public' has taken place even in countries where the state wasn't rolled forward in the first place). Add to this the removal of economic decision-making to supra-national levels, which is changing the meaning of sovereignty and making the exercise of national affairs less representational and more symbolic. In fact, one can observe that the pomp of ritualized spectacles used by political elites to justify their authority is sometimes inversely related to the ability of these same elites to act effectively in the national interest. These and other fundamentals are, in my view, feeding disaffection with the democracy encounter.

So, where will our faith in the transition paradigm of democratization leave us in the short term? At risk of missing the mark? The reassertion of non-democratic practices through the very process of democratic reform; the mutation of reactionary forces into legitimate political players; the overwhelming of the political by the economic and the replacement of the public by the private; the growing disaffection with, and dysfunction of, political discourse: these are the sort of issues we need to grapple with as part of hybrid and differentiated political realities, rather than as awkward bumps on the road to liberal democracy. This can only happen when we accept the following: The transition paradigm has had a good run for its money. It has produced heady optimism and long queues at polling booths around the world. Subsequent experiences, however, are taking us in directions that require a new way of approaching the democracy experience.

In sum, we need a new paradigm, or paradigms, or non-paradigms, for the next generation of governance work. The individual experiences of polities should be our starting point, not the linear assumptions of transition. Unless we do this, we may struggle to remain relevant to the needs of the political cultures in which we work.

The Challenges of Internal Party Democracy in Africa

M. A. Mohamed Salih

It is easy for political parties to claim that they have democratically contested elections, acquired power, and now control the resources and personnel of government. The more difficult question is whether political parties are organized in a manner that ensures internal party democracy.

Internal party democracy implies support for the general interest of the party membership, the public and the state. It means that party structures and organization are participatory and inclusive, essentially vehicles for the exercise of nascent democratic leadership and values. Internally democratic parties are agents of collective action and not the monopoly of the few to the exclusion of the majority. No political party qualifies for being called democratic if its membership criteria or committee structure excludes certain social groups for class, race, gender or religious considerations.

Political parties assign certain powers and duties to some of their leaders and committees to manage the party as an organization, guided by party regulations that sanction the decisions they take. But in some cases, the range of responsibilities and resources with which party leaders are entrusted is so broad it encourages the abuse of power. Internal political party governance therefore is one of the most delicate, vulnerable and difficult functions to manage in democratic societies.

In Africa, at least six challenges confront internal party democracy:

The dominance of elites: Although political parties are on the whole elite dominated, African political parties are particularly so. High levels of political illiteracy mean the relatively easy manipulation of political processes based on ethnicity, community allegiances, religion, party pledges, etc.

Non-competitive leadership ***selection/election and succession:*** Although most political party internal regulations are clear about holding regular and periodic leadership elections, the 'founding-fathers' are, in most cases, confirmed, which makes a mockery of competitive politics.

Discriminatory selection of candidates: Although some African political parties fare well on the representation of women and socially disadvantage minorities in the legislature and as candidates to contest elections, most deliberately marginalize these groups.

Client-patron relationships: Political party tycoons and the oligarchies' kickbacks make party leaders behave like party bosses who use government resources to boost political privileges. Client-patron relationships often develop when the client offers his/her vote in the party leadership election in expectation of the patron's favours once confirmed in office.

Lack of regular and periodic consultation with the grass-roots: This is a worldwide trend, along with lost confidence in politicians and political parties. Although the situation differs from one African country to another, 'absentee' party representatives and committee members who emerge only to mobilize voters during election time are common.

Lack of accountability and transparency in party finance: Despite legislation intended to regulate party financing (donations, election campaign expenditures and audit of political party accounts), financial exchanges are often difficult to verify and involve murky interactions between those who support an ideology, expect paybacks or want to fulfill political ambitions. In most African countries, political parties depend on a small core group of individuals, businessmen and women, foreign donors, party-to-party networks and fraternal organizations for funding their activities.

Some of these challenges could be addressed by better legislation, the firmer institutionalization of democratic values, and improvements in the overall socio-economic and political environment. Despite their other faults, African parties in general still also contend with the burden of high levels of underdevelopment that can weaken democracy—widespread poverty, relatively high levels of illiteracy, and a widening income gap between the haves and have-nots as well as rural-urban disparities.

In addition, most African political parties do not yet fully own their political agendas. A globalized notion of party-based democracy operates within the confines of a neo-liberal globalization that makes politics subservient to the market. This has shaped not only political party ideologies, with the triumph of neo-liberalism over its more radical opponents (communism and military socialism), but also imposed economic and social policy reforms that no political party can escape complying with. These are also reasons why African parties lose credibility among their electorates, who feel that the parties are not worthy of their support.

—M. A. Mohamed Salih is Professor of Politics at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, and a member of the IDEA World Panel on Political Parties. This contribution was prepared for this handbook.

SECTION 5:

HOW IS UNDP ALREADY OFFERING ASSISTANCE?

"One of the challenges for UNDP will be to develop a [political party assistance] policy orientation to respond to the emerging demand for such assistance while remaining a neutral facilitator of development cooperation."

Multi-year funding framework report on UNDP performance and results for 2004

5

How Is UNDP Already Offering Assistance?

A recent mapping exercise by UNDP's Oslo Governance Centre found that 43 UNDP country offices, representing all five geographical regions, are offering some form of political party support. Most of these projects fall under three service lines: electoral systems and processes, parliamentary development and policy support for democratic governance. Initiatives can be loosely grouped into six areas of focus: capacity development for members of parliament, capacity development for political parties, enhancing political party engagement in dialogue processes, increasing women's political participation, improving electoral systems and processes, and strengthening political party systems.

Sixteen country offices say they are engaging directly with parties, and 28 indirectly. One office is involved on both levels (see chart on page 58). There are wide variations regionally.

COUNTRY EXAMPLES

The following examples of UNDP's existing work with parties, drawn from the mapping and the network dialogue, highlight some of the specific programmatic approaches that country offices are taking, using one or more of the sets of entry points identified in Section IV. From capacity development to conflict management to multiparty dialogues, the examples feature activities that frequently characterize UNDP political party assistance, in line with the corporate priorities reflected in the service lines and the MYFF development drivers.

Capacity development: Tanzania

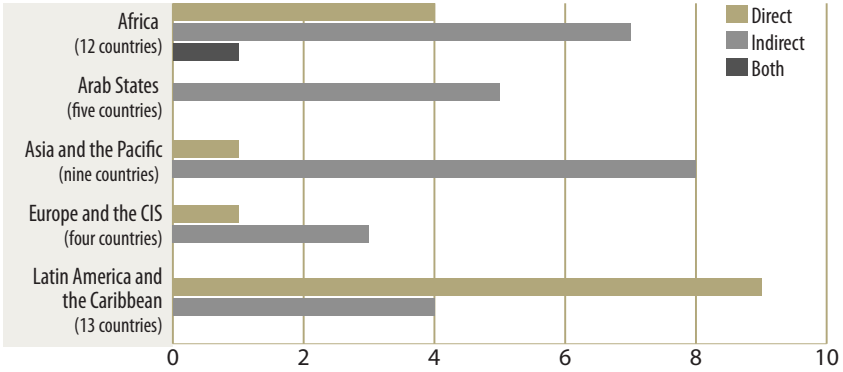
Acquiring new skills for campaigning

In Tanzania, political party capacity development was an integral part of an electoral support programme designed around the 2005 election. One of the programme's primary goals was to assist "the effective preparation and conduct of a free and fair electoral process…fully recognized as such by political parties and domestic and international observer groups." To this end, it featured a menu of capacity development projects—for the National Electoral Commission, civil society, the media, the police and political parties. A joint donor basket supported the programme, comprising 11 donors and administered by a programme management unit under the auspices of UNDP. NDI assisted with the political party component.

Tanzania has 18 political parties, but the ruling party dominates the political scene. Only three to four opposition parties can claim to be nationally visible, and of these, some have influence only in specific regions. In the 2000 election, the already small number of seats held by opposition parties actually declined. "Smaller parties struggle for relevance, resources and recognition," noted Margie Cook from UNDP Tanzania.

The goal of the party capacity development project was to help level the playing

A Regional Picture of UNDP's Direct and Indirect Support



Source: UNDP's Engagement with Political Parties, 2005, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre.

field by increasing party capacities to engage in political and electoral processes, mainly through a series of national and regional training workshops. National seminars brought together all parties and hosted prominent speakers who were mostly current or former political leaders—some came from other African countries. They spoke on subjects such as experiences in moving from opposition to ruling party status, constitutional issues and internal party democracy. Other seminars briefed parties on the main messages being delivered through the electoral assistance programme's NGO and media components, which were oriented around a civic education programme that parties later publicly endorsed.

Parties worked with the Electoral Management Authority on a comprehensive programme to train party poll-watchers. They were also invited to identify those issues where their capacity development needs were the greatest. On the basis of their responses, training was designed for specific parties, covering, among other things, mass mobilization techniques, campaign strategies, political communications and methods for engaging with constituents. To bring parties closer to their constituencies, these sessions took place in different regions of Tanzania.

Cook dubbed the responses to the project "very warm and enthusiastic." Achievements included the increasing participation of women politicians during the course of the project, the growing visibility of some opposition parties in the regions, and the stepped up involvement of ward and district leaders. Closer links grew between party leaders and members in regions where workshops were held. These events deliberately provided time for internal party meetings, a tacit acknowledgment that parties strapped for resources often cannot perform the basic task of gathering their members together.

Policy-making: Honduras

A commission to debate electoral reform

Long-needed electoral reforms in Honduras fell by the wayside first due to conflict in Central America during the 1980s and then during the necessary demilitarization period that absorbed the 1990s. But by the end of the latter decade, the need for electoral reform was once again apparent, and civil society began actively lobbying for it during the 2001 election campaigns.

In May of that year, the five primary political parties established the Political Commission of the Honduran Political Parties. Its purpose was to set up a dialogue mechanism before the elections to discuss electoral reform. The commission included high-level representation from each party—the president, vice-president, secretary-general, etc., all with decision-making power. One or two members represented each party, depending on human resources, but all parties enjoyed only one vote in the commission regardless of their number of appointees or size of legislative representation. The parties agreed that consensus would be the rule for decision-making.

The commission asked UNDP to help facilitate the dialogue, and UNDP accepted under two conditions: First, the negotiations should address structural reform issues and not just short-term problems, and second, UNDP's intervention should not be taken as a warrant for complying with commission decisions (this responsibility lay completely with the parties).

In September, the commission issued the "Statement of the Political Parties to the Honduran People," which addressed electoral reform steps advocated by civil society. These included separating the Citizen Registry Department from the Supreme Electoral Court, and promoting the independence and autonomy of both; amending the Constitution to allow plebiscites and referendums; regulating and reducing electoral campaigns; regulating and recognizing alliances between political parties; improving the financial control mechanisms for political party funding; searching for a new election model for legislative elections; revising the system of presidential appointees; and drafting a new electoral law

The commission agreed that the winning party in the November elections would comply with this agreement, and would be supported by the rest of the parties. A Legal Commission, also facilitated by UNDP, was created to help the Political Commission draft constitutional reforms and new laws. By November, the legislature had approved the last of the constitutional reforms. Since then, the Political Commission has remained as an open space for egalitarian discussion among parties about political reform issues, contributing to improved public perception of political parties and their willingness to respond to public concerns.

Elections: Cambodia

Parties make the news

UNDP projects with parties in Cambodia have been tailored to different phases of the elections cycle. Before the National Assembly poll in 2003, the democratic governance programme focused initially on assistance to help review and amend the 1998 Electoral Law, which resulted in the formation of a new National Election Commission. Several major electoral management changes followed, including the creation of a permanent voter register, a new election security apparatus and a move to counting ballots at the commune level. UNDP also took the lead in coordinating development partners for the election preparations.

With the new National Election Commission up and running, UNDP partnered with the commission, the Ministry of Information and the state media on a project to introduce equitable coverage of parties' election campaigns. "Equity News" became a programme broadcast on the main state television and radio stations. It marked Cambodia's first comprehensive coverage of elections, and the first time that all parties, including those in the opposition, had an opportunity to make the news.

The project provided balanced coverage of campaigning based on the equitable distribution of airtime. Each party was assigned a quota linked to its past election performance, number of seats in the National Assembly, and current popularity and visibility. The quotas included all 23 contesting parties and were publicly announced in advance. Several organizations monitored adherence; the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia published its results weekly.

The participating broadcasters committed to two primary goals: keeping editorial opinions out of election reports, and understanding that impartiality does not imply refraining from investigative journalism that reveals important information, as long as it allows targeted subjects an opportunity to respond. At the start, the media sent out a request for cooperation to all registered political parties, spelling out the media's obligations, along with what political parties needed to do to ensure coverage—such as designating media liaison officers and disseminating information about events. For its part, UNDP, aware of the potential pitfalls of working on such sensitive issues, drew up a risk management matrix that assessed major risks, their probability, their impact and how to respond.

By the time the election concluded, Equity News was widely considered a success in Cambodia. The coverage broke away from the usual lineup of official meetings and included interviews with leaders, features on campaign issues and opinions from ordinary people. Politicians told journalists that members of the public were approaching them on the street for the first time. The final statistical analysis revealed much more balanced coverage of different parties than in previous campaigns, and a slew of e-mails from viewers were mostly supportive.

One political party did try to withdraw at one point from the project, complaining of bias. A meeting between party and television staff and UNDP smoothed out misunderstandings about technical problems, and helped party officials understand that the policy to include balanced criticism allowed different perspectives on the air, including the party's own points of view.

Since the election, UNDP has continued engaging with political parties through the National Election Commission, helping it improve its outreach to parties. One project assists the commission in training party electoral agents on electoral law and procedures, including voter registration. Another gathered representatives from 20 political parties and an array of civil society groups at a high-profile meeting in Phnom Penh to critique the commission's performance in the 2003 elections and offer ideas on future improvements.

Multiparty dialogues: Lesotho

Inclusive conversations foster political stability

Lesotho's history of post-electoral violence, including the political conflict that flared up after its 1998 election, underscored the urgent need for national discussion of the country's electoral model. Since its independence in 1966, Lesotho had used the first-past-the-post system, but there were concerns that this had led to one-party dominance of national voting, with the opposition ballot returning only a single candidate to Parliament in the 1998 general poll and none in the previous election in 1993.

In early 1999, UNDP Lesotho started bringing the opposition and the Government together to work through some of their

differences. In partnership with NDI, UNDP co-convened the National Forum on the Review of Lesotho's Electoral Model, a multiparty gathering to debate a review of the electoral system. The forum agreed to adopt a mixed member proportional model, where two-thirds of the National Assembly would be elected under the first-past-the-post method and one-third under proportional representation.

UNDP also began supporting the Interim Political Authority, formed with the assistance of the Southern African Development Community states of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe as part of the settlement of the 1998 post-election conflict. The authority comprised two representatives from each of the 12 parties that had contested that election. It worked out the details of the new electoral model, and submitted recommendations to the Government that Parliament enacted. The authority also provided an ongoing forum for inter-party dialogue on an array of issues, such as amending the Constitution to accommodate the electoral changes and leveling the campaign playing field.

"Inevitably there will be opposing interests and views to mediate," said N. S. Bereng from UNDP Lesotho in a contribution to the network discussion on political parties. "Engaging parties in multiparty forums can reduce acrimony, forge closer inter-party collaboration for the greater national good and strengthen people's confidence in negotiation over confrontation."

While tension flared at times between the Government and the Interim Political Authority, resulting in the two-year postponement of elections originally slated for 2000, an unprecedented level of political cooperation was reached, and the 2002 poll went smoothly. Lesotho has enjoyed peace and political stability ever since. The current Parliament has a record 10 political parties, becoming the most inclusive in Lesotho's history. After the election, Lesotho's parties were able to join forces around the country's biggest development challenge—HIV/AIDS. They adopted a common national policy and are currently cooperating on scaling up the national response to the epidemic.

"The Government and Basotho politicians rose to the occasion and engaged in long and hard negotiations to reach a settlement, agree on the way forward and strengthen the national culture of peaceful negotiation for settlement of disputes," Bereng said. "UNDP is proud and grateful for having been there to do what we do best—helping people help themselves."

A focus on the issues: Kosovo, Cambodia and Tanzania

Raising awareness of human development

Working with political parties on different human development issues has been a common practice in some UNDP country offices, often taking the form of providing information or convening parties to discuss a key development concern. This can inject new forms of awareness into the political system, and result in improved practices and/or policies.

As Kosovo readied itself for elections in 2004, for example, the UNDP office there invited parties to contribute to Kosovo's 2004 Human Development Report, *The Rise of the Citizen: Challenges and Choices*. Against the backdrop of Kosovo's recent conflict as well as the extraordinary financial, political and security investments that followed, the report analysed participation and representation, and stressed the need to coordinate action on development and conflict resolution. The report's preparation included household surveys and opinion polls, and the active involvement

of ethnic and women's groups, as well as the parties. They worked on identifying the theme for the report, reviewing its drafts and eventually launching it.

The process of inviting political party representatives—particularly those who are not yet senior leaders but show promise for the future—to discuss and shape the main findings of the report familiarized many with human development perspectives. This led to advocacy by party members that encouraged the Prime Minister to contribute an essay, "Democracy and Development," to the report's final version. During electoral debates, candidates used human development figures to evaluate progress by local governments. And after the elections, the government took steps to fulfil some of the report's recommendations, including passing a law for a new population and housing census, creating an Office for Public Safety to train government officials on security policy issues, and starting an employment generation programme.

The report itself included a special section on political parties. It noted that while parties are among the core institutions of democracy, they suffer from declining credibility in Kosovo, as reflected in low turnout at the polls. A major problem is that the political culture favours strong leaders over the parties themselves, which tend to be poorly organized, have few members or funds, and are perceived as elitist and patriarchal. The report called on parties to develop a more participatory political culture, and to turn political debates towards the everyday concerns of the majority of people. It also assessed the electoral system in Kosovo, delineating the disadvantages and advantages of proportional representation, and demonstrating how the current closed-list electoral systems have fostered a lack of democratic structures within parties.

The UNDP country offices in both Cambodia and Tanzania have turned to issue platforms when working with parties during election campaigns. Workshops with new and existing parties in Cambodia have promoted MDG awareness and encouraged parties to incorporate MDG themes into their 2003 election campaigns. In Tanzania, UNDP partnered with NDI on a series of workshops with parties on developing urgently needed HIV/AIDS strategies and responses.

Conflict management: Guyana

Steps towards social cohesion

Guyana's political system has become a forum for continually re-enacting a troubled colonial legacy of racial mistrust and animosity. Two parties, largely representing the two main ethnic groups, dominate the system. In an environment of political and racial mistrust, civil society typically finds itself divided. Violent crime is on the rise, and some observers predict that without serious attempts to reduce hostilities, Guyana could be on the road to civil warfare. All development programmes suffer from the ongoing political tension and paralysis.

Donors and UN agencies such as UNDP, concerned about carrying out their work, came together in 2003 around a joint strategy to improve social cohesion, human security and governance in Guyana. Under this umbrella, UNDP took on the administration of the Guyana Social Cohesion Programme, which comprises activities and partnerships with the media, civil society, the police, Parliament, arms of the regional and central governments, and political parties.

The party work began with supporting the joint participation of the secretary-generals of the two main

political parties in a UN training workshop in Curacao on early warning and conflict prevention measures. They returned convinced that the youth arms of their parties could benefit from a similar experience, so in late 2003, the Social Cohesion Programme organized a party youth leadership planning session. Participants did exercises to increase their capacities to identify threats to social cohesion, and opportunities to build it. They worked on developing a common vision for Guyana, and understanding how to factor different perceptions into working towards the future, but left the workshop frustrated because they could not reach consensus.

At a follow-up workshop in 2005, the youth arms delved into specific conflict management techniques, looking at reactions and approaches to conflict, and practising communication and trust-building skills. This time, having been able to achieve a greater level of trust, the two parties committed themselves to developing a joint calendar of activities on 'non-contentious' issues, and to resorting to dialogue as a first response to disagreements.

On another front in 2005, Guyana's Ethnic Relations Commission—established during the 2001 constitutional reform to address issues including ethnic peace and harmony—partnered with the Social Cohesion Programme to bring together leaders of parliamentary political parties and civil society. Representatives from parties cooperated on deciding the format and content of a workshop to explore ideas to move Guyana forward. Roelf Meyer, a former South African politician who served in the cabinets of both President F. W. de Klerk and President Nelson Mandela, acted as an international resource person.

The workshop, attended by high-level representatives from the Government and parliamentary parties, featured exercises to explore new ways of understanding conflict, perceptions and attitudes. Participants identified some of the main obstacles in Guyana as the lack of trust, weak relationships, a future too overshadowed by past history and the current leadership culture. They agreed that leaders, for example, need to do more to assume responsibility for problems, learn to compromise and defuse conflicts. An exercise on the path to the future encouraged participants in four groups to explore a common vision. While differences were wide on some issues, there was support for the creation of a multi-stakeholder forum to convene representatives from government, parliamentary parties and civil society. The forum could meet on an ongoing basis, with the goal of seeking consensus on the needs and interests of the nation, and provide a safe space away from the usual political contest in Parliament and within party structures.

For many participants, the workshop was a rare opportunity to have an open discussion with members of other parties. One person pointed out that much of the political dialogue has taken place among a very small group of party leaders, whereas people at other levels in the parties did not know each other well. Another noted the breaking down of habitual psychological barriers and stereotypes. Others spoke positively of leaving the past behind, the benefits of talking, making a difference together, and being cautiously optimistic, although they were also realistic about the need to translate ideas into implementation.

With the Ethnic Relations Commission, the Social Cohesion Programme is now holding consultations to organize the multi-stakeholder forum, along with a

workshop for women parliamentarians. Activities to reduce tension are planned for the run up to the 2006 elections, and the party youth arms are finalizing their programme of joint activities. "One has begun to hear the echoes in the press releases of the political parties: We need to work for cohesion, we need to think of what happened in the past, and so on," said Chris Spies from UNDP Guyana. "A new reality has been created that no one can dare to criticize or distance themselves from: People are talking!"

Working in one-party states: Vietnam

With the party but not for the party

One-party states present unique issues for political party assistance. Lenni Montiel at UNDP Vietnam pointed out that no donor overtly supports the Communist Party there. But with nearly 100 per cent of elected representatives belonging to it, all forms of governance support in the end assist the party.

Following Vietnam's political 'renovation', which began with the 1992 Constitution, UNDP in 1998 initiated the first ever internationally funded project to support the capacity development of local People's Councils. The programme was designed to bolster grass-roots democracy by improving participation in council activities and the responsiveness of local authorities, including through closer links to constituencies, and better managerial and communications skills. It also sought to strengthen information flows between the councils and the national Government. A newer project that followed in 2003 has enlarged the scope of this work to include capacity development of both the councils and the National Assembly. It focuses on activities to help improve legislative processes and parliamentary administration, develop regular public consultation processes, strengthen coordination of sectoral work on issues such as poverty and HIV/AIDS, and establish a strategic training programme for deputies at central and local levels.

In a submission to the network discussion, Montiel shared his impression that improved governance is in many ways related to the understanding of policy issues among officials at different levels. However, in part because UNDP doesn't officially support Vietnam's Communist Party, people working exclusively within party structures tend to have less exposure to policy information than those working within government institutions. "Developing policy dialogues and facilitating exchanges of experiences directly with party structures would certainly be a good contribution to the improvement of governance and the fight against poverty in Vietnam," Montiel said. "If we have an explicit mandate to work on political party capacity development, and if the Vietnamese Communist Party would accept our assistance, we could develop innovative activities with a win-win approach. This of course would have to be done cautiously and with great involvement of country office senior management."

Women's political participation: Kyrgyzstan and Sudan

Moving towards gender equity in parties

While a number of UNDP country programmes work on increasing women's political participation, some have started specifically targeting women's positions in political parties, an acknowledgment that improvement of the almost universally low percentages of women in legislatures and other branches of government needs to include all the mechanisms that put candidates into office.

In Kyrgyzstan, the last parliamentary election resulted in a legislature with not a single woman representative. Parties have regularly mouthed promises about

what they are doing for women, but the years of transition have also brought a resurgence of traditional notions about women's roles. Nevertheless, women have been prominent in civil society organizations and have led some of Kyrgyzstan's 44 political parties.

Working with the Swedish International Development Agency, UNDP helped devise a programme to develop women's capacities to work effectively within their parties, and advocate gender equality both in the parties and in public political discussions. Political parties were invited to submit names from their party lists for a series of workshops. Women and some men from 19 political parties—186 in all—came forward. They included not only parliamentary candidates, but also representatives from local councils, ministry staff and women running for local government positions. A networking strategy called for mixing women from different parties at the meetings.

Two initial seminars for people from different sets of oblasts or districts focused on advocating for gender within parties. Participants learned how to analyse documents from a gender perspective and considered which gender equality advocacy strategies that have been successful in other parts of the world would be suitable in Kyrgyzstan. They studied the legalities of campaigning for gender, and debated introducing quotas for women on candidate lists. Agreeing that party documents have a poor record on gender, referring mainly to women in terms of traditional stereotypes, they committed to being more proactive in introducing gender issues at party meetings and conferences.

A second component of the programme involved preparatory round tables for the Genderstan 2004 conference, a regional meeting of women from across Central Asia and other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States where the issues included democracy and women's leadership. At the round tables, participants compiled gender advocacy strategies related to party building, elections and campaigning, and assessed the strong and weak points of their parties in terms of gender. The final programme activity was a workshop on strategies for female leadership in parties. It debunked stereotypes about the political roles women can play, analysed how women's active involvement in politics improves the status of women in general, helped participants develop arguments for gender equality in their parties, and featured specific skills training, such as on public speaking.

Because of its remote location and political transition, Kyrgyzstan has been somewhat isolated from current thinking in the rest of the world. It was clear during the course of all of these activities that many women lacked basic knowledge about the status of women in their country, about the positions of their parties on gender, and about how to introduce and advocate gender-equality strategies. The workshops provided a first opportunity for women from parties to come together, and instilled a new sense of unity and common purpose.

Despite the turmoil of Kyrgyzstan's revolution in early 2005, women who participated in the workshops have been active on several fronts, building on some of the cross-party ties that grew out of the networking strategy. Two political parties have implemented gender analysis in their programmes; several women decided to run for office or for a higher office; and the interim president invited participants to make proposals for strengthening institutional mechanisms

on gender equality. With the Constitutional Assembly having initiated amending the Constitution to allow more parliamentary seats, mixed proportional and majority elections, and a redistribution of executive and legislative power, women have lined up to support the shift to proportional elections, which can help increase women's participation, and have called for putting more women into seats.

UNDP Sudan has also opted to work on issues related to women in political parties, starting with a short-term Women in Politics project in 2004 that was funded by the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund. Women's political participation varies across the country, but women's impact on political decisions is generally limited. Men dominate legislative councils at all levels, as well as traditional and customary law mechanisms, even as women have shouldered many social and economic responsibilities during Sudan's longstanding conflict.

The project was premised on the notion that civil society is not defined merely by NGOs, but by all those entities that exert a strong influence on Sudanese society, including religious figures, academic institutions, students, parties and the media. It defined politics broadly, with a comprehensive emphasis on social awareness, the ability to participate in decision-making, and the capacities of both individuals and institutions.

The first part of the Women in Politics project involved establishing a series of forums comprising women in parties, civil service officials, university students and journalists, in which the members could dialogue on issues related to gender and political participation. The forum for women in parties brought together representatives from 15 parties. Its activities included cross-party discussions on subjects such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and how it relates to Sudanese and Islamic laws. The forum met with international organizations involved in the Joint Assessment Mission on Sudan's post-conflict development needs to discuss mainstreaming women and gender into mission reports, and the inclusion of perspectives from opposition political groups and civil society organizations.

Another part of the project offered capacity development support to women nominated by 25 parties. A group to carry out training was chosen in collaboration with the women in political parties forum. The training covered issues such as strategic thinking, campaigning techniques and engendering the Constitution. A third project component involved raising awareness of women's political participation through the media and a national conference on the Advancement of Women's Role in Politics. The latter featured a presentation on how political parties can help advance women's political role in Sudan, delivered by the deputy secretary of the Umma party.

The momentum that began to gather from these activities resulted in a three-year expansion grant from the Netherlands Ministry of International Cooperation. Shortly thereafter, Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed. It calls for the "equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights", and an increase in their participation in both political mechanisms and the peace process. The follow-up UNDP programme, Good Governance and Equity in Political Participation in Post-Conflict Sudan, aims to establish a cadre of women, from villages to the national level, who can take leadership roles in the civil service, local government, the legislature and the judiciary.

In addition to work on constitutional

reform, service delivery and customary law, there will be activities to increase party receptiveness to gender equity and women's participation, including through continued interaction with the women in political parties forum. An early focus will be on identifying capacity deficits and constraints that parties face, and sharing best practices from within Sudan and the surrounding region. Other initiatives will comprise gender sensitization sessions, including for party leaders, and technical assistance on customary law interpretation and the implementation of gender strategies.

Working with youth: Nicaragua

The next generation articulates its needs

In Nicaragua, two decades of a painstakingly slow struggle against poverty and inequality have fomented a growing dissatisfaction with political institutions that don't seem to be keeping up. Citizens have bluntly reported in surveys that they view political parties as interfering in the working of state institutions, and lacking leadership and strategic goals. Negative perceptions and a sense of alienation are particularly prevalent among young Nicaraguans.

To help reverse some of these trends and move towards stronger and more democratic political institutions, UNDP—working in close consultation with parties, political analysts, civil society groups, and external partners including the IMD, the InterAmerican Development Bank, the OAS, and the British, Danish, Dutch and Swedish Governments—has created a three-pronged initiative that includes modernization of the National Assembly, building political leadership among youth and modernization of political parties.

In mid-2005, a first step forward was to ask the eight political parties that met the criteria of being represented in the National Assembly and/or the Regional Councils from the Autonomous Regions along Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast to nominate liaisons to participate in a group to steer the programme. One of the first activities that the group has taken on has been the organization of a Political Youth Forum, a recommendation of a preparatory assistance survey carried out by UNDP and other partners. The forum is intended to encourage younger party members to articulate their needs to political leaders and society at large. Training sessions are now being held to cultivate political skills, with an emphasis on the protection of human rights. In providing the leaders of the future with access to innovative ideas and practices, the sessions will contribute to the modernization of parties and political participation in general.

Thirty young political leaders from across the country and the political spectrum have already participated in an initial two-week workshop—most were mid-level youth political secretaries in their cities or departments. They studied classical and modern political theory on democratic institutions, good government and local development—the first time many had done so—and looked at ways to integrate what they learned into their party work. At a second workshop, they learned practical tools, such as survey analysis and political marketing.

Other aspects of the youth programme will include internships and an awareness-raising campaign to project positive images of the ways politics can be changed, and the roles young political leaders can play in shaping more democratic political practices that benefit society at large. It will run in tandem with the political party segment, which embraces a medium- to long-term strategy

that covers the 2006 national elections, and includes a mix of activities common to all parties and those targeted to some parties' specific needs. Its emphasis is on cultivating capacities that the parties themselves have acknowledged are falling short—including to draft national policy proposals that respond to citizens' concerns, manage local cadres, increase internal democracy and improve relationships with the media.

Sharing knowledge: Mongolia

'Soft' assistance to help a coalition form

In Mongolia, recent experiences with political parties have involved offering 'soft' assistance to difficult political negotiations for forming a national unity government after the 2004 parliamentary elections. This assistance has been mainly in the form of knowledge resources. The process has served as an entry point for closer dialogue and engagement with political parties, and as a step towards deepening and consolidating democracy.

Mongolia brokered a comparatively smooth transition from a one-party totalitarian regime to a multiparty parliamentary democracy in early 1990, with the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) yielding its 70-year monopoly on power. In the 1992 national election, the party won a majority of parliamentary seats, but it lost to the Democratic Union Coalition of opposition parties in 1996, only to regain its power with an overwhelming victory in 2000. In 2004, for the first time, two major political forces—the MPRP and the Motherland-Democracy Coalition (MDC)—obtained an almost equal number of seats, and no party or coalition could claim a clear majority. A deadlock set in during July and August, with the main issue being how to establish a grand coalition in order to form a government.

Representatives of the two major political forces approached the UNDP country office on a very informal basis, seeking information on other country experiences with political negotiations that successfully produced a grand coalition. The country office quickly reviewed resources available within the office, and sent relevant materials to the two groups for their internal review. UNDP Mongolia also posted a query on the issue on UNDP's Democratic Governance Practice Network and received a number of useful and interesting responses with related practical resources from around the world. These too were immediately forwarded. At the request of national counterparts, UNDP subsequently organized a rapid learning mission. An equal number of representatives from both political forces traveled to another country in order to get hands-on experience with coalition-building under similar circumstances.

In September, with various forms of information on hand, a sensitive political negotiation process that included informal dialogues and formal meetings finally produced three consensus agreement documents. These included a joint decision on power-sharing within a grand coalition, and on the key principles of new parliamentary and government structures. Another important official document was a joint MPRP-MDC declaration—"For Mongolia Together"—that set forth the coalition's framework Program of Action for 2004-2008. UNDP could claim a 'success' story in this case, including the fact that throughout it, all political forces continued to perceive the organization as a neutral partner helping to promote political dialogue and share relevant best practices.

"(The) strengthening of political parties is a priority for democracy."

The Organization of American States
in its new Inter-American Democratic Charter

SECTION 6:

WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED?

Who Else Is Involved?

Traditionally, political party support has been the terrain of a few bilateral agencies and organizations mainly associated with Western political parties. Bilateral organizations associated with the British, Canadian, Dutch, German, Scandinavian and US governments have been involved—the US Agency for International Development (USAID), for example, has played a prominent role in the field. Party-affiliated groups like NDI and IRI have links to the US Democratic and Republican parties, respectively, while the German *Stiftungen* (or political foundations) are associated with German parties (for example, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung with Germany's Social Democratic Party, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung with the Christian Democrats and the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung with the liberal Free Democratic Party). Other players include the party internationals, which are organized more around political ideology than specific institutions. They include Socialist International and the conservative International Democrat Union.

The initiatives of these organizations have generally followed either the fraternal party method or the multiparty approach. The former usually involves a relationship based on a similar political philosophy between a party or foundation in a donor country and a single party in a developing country. Under the multiparty method, a party aid organization engages with a number of parties at once.

In recent years, new sources of political party assistance have emerged. One of the most significant and active organizations is the Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD), which is run by all the political parties in the Netherlands. Slightly older is the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, which is funded by the British parliament and governed by its parties.

Very few groups to assist parties have been based in the South. In South Africa, the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa runs a political parties programme that offers technical support between elections. It aims to promote party development and also emphasizes skills required for coalition building. The Centre for Democracy and Development in Ghana researches democratic development issues, mainly for West Africa.

Some regional political and parliamentary associations have taken up issues related to parties. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association holds trainings for newly elected parliamentarians that include guidance on the roles of government and the opposition, while the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has held regional events on the rights and duties of the opposition. In 1999, IPU partnered with UNDP to convene the Parliamentary Seminar on Relations Between Majority and Minority Parties in African Parliaments in Libreville, Gabon. The parliamentarians who attended produced guidelines on the rights and duties of the opposition in parliament.

Along with an increased understanding of the need to work with parties as components of functioning democracies has come a call for greater involvement by multilateral organizations. Donor governments and bilateral agencies have expressed an interest in this direction, on the assumption that the trusted and non-partisan standing of multilaterals could put them in a better position to work effectively with governments and across the party spectrum.

UNDP, the OAS and IDEA have been among leading multilateral organizations working with parties, activities which are particularly developed in Latin America. The OAS has set up the InterAmerican Forum on Political Parties. Its recent work has included convening nearly 50 party and civil society leaders from the Caribbean to debate how to strengthen parties in the region, touching upon core issues such as constitutional reform, and political party and campaign financing.

IDEA is compiling comparative knowledge on internal functioning and legal regulation of political parties, first having analyzed worldwide provisions for funding of parties and election campaigns, and how quotas for women are used.

WHEN TO PARTNER

While UNDP's reputation for impartiality may be of benefit in political party assistance, this publication and the network discussion have also underscored the need to safeguard that reputation. Some participants in the network discussion suggested that judicious partnerships could help bolster UNDP's expertise and diffuse concerns about UNDP being too directly involved with the political apparatus. In its capacity development for political parties project, UNDP Tanzania recognized from the start that it had limited experience in working with parties, and so went through a competitive and transparent process of selecting a partner. The country office chose NDI, which is well respected in many corners and has been involved with party work for two decades. "We believed we would manage to get the required outputs and at the same time not expose ourselves to any antagonisms," said Lucie Luguga.

She also pointed out that the University of Dar es Salaam has a Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania programme that annually engages with political parties to review the state of politics. Luguga maintained that these consultative processes have helped shape the thinking of the parties. In the future, she proposed, "such organizations can be implementing arms for UNDP on programmes that are too hot to handle. What is required is to work together when developing the programme so that it is directed towards the intended outcomes. By the use of national organizations like this one, there is a possibility of facilitating home-grown solutions to some of the problems within our many mushrooming political parties."

Partnerships, however, require some of the same considerations about perceptions of impartiality as political party work in general. Partners can come with strings attached, and these need to be understood and evaluated before projects begin. One such experience involved a project where UNDP partnered with the democracy unit of a national university on a preparatory assistance project for developing a long-term party support programme. The programme specialist in charge recounted, "The fact that the preparatory project was financed by an institution associated with the former colonial power was in itself reason for suspicion by certain political parties of 'external interference'."

Donors Discuss Their Different Contributions—and How They Can Work Together

Linda Maguire from the Democratic Governance Group at UNDP New York describes the evolution of a working group on political parties:

As UNDP begins developing a policy framework for political party work based on its accumulated experiences, it has been helpful to join multilateral, bilateral and other organizations that also provide such assistance to compare notes and better understand what each brings to the table.

Since early 2005, UNDP has participated in a working group on political parties first convened at a USAID-hosted meeting of donor organizations and institutions that support political parties. The group's purpose is to provide common ground for the exchange of information on political party work and assessment and evaluation methodologies, and to serve as a mechanism for eventual joint activities in the field. At this point in time, the working group almost exclusively comprises donors, as the focus is on sharing their perspectives. However, some members, including UNDP, straddle the line between donors and implementers of party assistance. The group will likely eventually expand to encompass a wider spectrum of party actors.

Within the working group, there is an emerging recognition that UNDP may be poised to play a unique role in political party support, with its multilateral, human development approach, and strong relationships with programme countries. National counterparts may give UNDP a benefit of the doubt not otherwise afforded to bilateral actors and their agents. As Thomas Carothers pointed out in the USAID meeting, "National counterparts may be confused when UNDP says it wants to work with political parties, but they will not suspect that UNDP wants to get a certain party into power." At the same time, he cautioned UNDP not to squander this capital by simply adopting the same approaches that have been used by others for years.

From discussions within the working group and with a wider complement of partners, it is becoming clear that one of UNDP's biggest comparative advantages may lie in facilitating consensus among the various actors regarding the rules and legal frameworks required to make parties more accountable, democratic and representative. The working group information exchanges have underscored that the political party institutes have a niche in capacity development and the party internationals in the development of ideology with likeminded parties. The bilaterals have a particular role in advocating certain positions consistent with their states' global interests. UNDP's primary role could thus be in establishing environments that support the effective functioning of political party systems, without limiting ourselves to just this, of course. The party-based actors and bilaterals have a hard time doing this, just as UNDP would have a hard time copying some of their initiatives, which may be perceived in some quarters as having a political cast.

While UNDP has had collaborative relationships with NDI and IRI in several countries, in four countries in politically complex Central Asia, both organizations were recently subject to constraints that have essentially shut down their operations.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy: The Way Forward

Traditionally, international development cooperation has shied away from involvement with political parties. However, the last decade has seen considerable emphasis put on governance issues and on creating or recreating state capacity. And in post-conflict societies, development work inevitably includes state-building. In addition, there has been a growing momentum for democracy promotion to be mainstreamed in international cooperation more generally.

There is an emerging consensus that mainstreaming party support in democracy assistance has to be the new frontier. Parties have been called the weakest link in the democratic process. It is time to move the focus of attention beyond elections, to explore ways of maintaining and building party organizations that are democratically organized and representative of society, serving democracy between election campaigns too. They should gain in public trust and support as a consequence.

It is important to note that representatives of democratic political forces in emerging democracies are themselves calling for more international support for their efforts to build viable parties and sustainable party systems, in the cause of democratic advance. The demand is there, and it is authentic.

Although the general direction is clear, there are probably still more questions than answers about the best way to go forward. But a significant number of organizations in international development cooperation and democracy promotion are coming to the view that delay will push back—perhaps terminally—the advancement of sustainable democracy. The relevant question then is not about whether party support is desirable but about how to do it, and where to start. For there is so much to do; and so much that can be done.

As international party support increases, both the need and the opportunity to share experience will increase. Parties, especially fragile new parties, have limited capacity to develop quickly. Improved dialogue and coordination among democracy foundations can make life easier for them. Naturally, different foundations might want to offer their own distinctive approach, as befits each organization's individual mandates, strengths and traditions. There is talk of developing a specifically European profile. At the same time, and in the words of a leading American player (NDI President Kenneth Wollack), "there is more that brings us together than divides us."

It is important not to inflate expectations about how much party support can achieve and how quickly. In some places durable results will need a lengthy and sustained commitment. At the same time, it will be increasingly necessary to demonstrate results. That means devel-

oping the methodologies for evaluation, which in turn rests on having a clear sense of the objectives. Different regions and countries pose different scenarios and call for differences of approach, so a good understanding of the local specifics is absolutely essential. For example, in Russia the challenge right now is to keep opposition parties alive; whereas in Africa there is scope for inter-party dialogue over how to move beyond the dominant party situation. By contrast, in Latin America there are entire party systems in retreat, and needing reconstruction.

Providing training opportunities is one obvious approach to the weaknesses that afflict individual parties, but it is no panacea. Attention must also be given to the underlying conditions that hold back the development of coherent and effective party systems as a whole.

Everywhere, the purpose should be to provide support to local initiatives, not to export some model of a party or party system that may reflect an image that no longer exists—perhaps never did exist—even in the well-established democracies. The goal is to share democracy's values and democratic principles, not to transfer party blueprints or models. And for democracy assistance organizations to go out 'party hunting' would make no sense at all.

Party work should not be conceived in isolation but must take account of the relationships with other major components of the political system as a whole, including civil society, the media and legislature. Bringing parties and parliaments into policy deliberations with donors on strategies for pro-poor development offers opportunities to bring democracy and development agencies closer together. This will help parties improve their capability to analyse policy. And because building parties and party systems that can sustain democracy is a long-term commitment, the democracy foundations themselves need an appropriate and secure financial base.

—Excerpted from a 2004 conference report from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy entitled "Building Better Democracies: Why Political Parties Matter," commissioned from and written by Peter Burnell.

SECTION 7:

MONITORING AND EVALUATING POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE

"Assessing assistance is difficult, and assessing development work aimed at supporting democratic development in other countries is even harder."

Political Parties and Democracy Assistance: An Overview of Support," SIDA Department for Democracy and Social Development

7

Monitoring and Evaluating Political Party Assistance

In providing political party assistance, UNDP has an interest and obligation to know whether that assistance is effective, and to understand why it is or is not. In 2001, UNDP overhauled its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policies and procedures to ensure alignment with results-based management, promotion of evaluative knowledge and learning around results, and simplification. The current policies, including a new 2005 Evaluation Policy Statement, are available from the UNDP Evaluation Office.

The shift away from monitoring and evaluating activities and outputs—and towards monitoring and evaluating results—stems from the realization that producing good 'deliverables' is not enough. In some cases, even efficient or well-managed projects or outputs do not have any discernable effect on development at the end of the day.

Monitoring and evaluating political party assistance faces many of the same, as well as some unique, challenges as monitoring and evaluating democratic governance assistance overall. For one, it usually involves a higher quotient of capacity development assistance, which includes, but is not restricted to, policy advice, dialogue and brokerage. Capacity development efforts are usually different from programmes that focus on defined products and services, as is the case in many 'traditional' UNDP projects.

In political party programming, the objective of a capacity development effort is not necessarily to supply a service or help produce something tangible, but to foster the development of specific individuals and organizations. As such, capacity development cannot be 'done' by outsiders. A change agent or facilitator (e.g., UNDP) can only promote or stimulate capacity development and provide information, training and other types of support through advocacy, dialogue and so on. But an external agent should not attempt to lead an organization's capacity development effort or take responsibility for it. Leadership must emerge from within the organization (in this case, the political party), and the organization's members should do most of the required work and must be in the driver's seat. Capacity development of political parties thus raises particular issues in terms of monitoring, evaluating and measuring the effects of political party assistance and the changes it produces.

Most monitoring and evaluation of political party work will be captured through the normal programming arrangements and their M&E components—i.e., the UN Development Assistance Framework, the Country Programme, the Country Programme Action Plan and the Annual Work Plan. These represent the current minimum programme standards, though some country offices will also continue to have individual projects. Where projects over $1 million or lasting more than 10 years once required mandatory evaluations, only a certain number of outcome

evaluations are currently required for country offices. This depends on the size of the Country Programme.

The current arrangements are designed so that the focus is on the outputs created and outcomes influenced by the full range of UNDP actions. In this way, results achieved by a variety of methods are captured, including those from a traditional project, and from policy advice and dialogue, advocacy and brokerage that the country office or senior management might undertake outside the project's scope.

Measuring the effectiveness of political party assistance requires both monitoring and evaluation. M&E should provide a record of how political party work supported by UNDP and other development partners had a significant impact—positive or negative, intended or not—in a given country, and qualify and quantify this impact with a fair degree of plausibility. Crafting monitoring and evaluation systems that capture both the country context and the specificity of UNDP's contributions is key to measuring change, as is selecting good indicators.

Political party assistance should lead to outcomes, and indicators can signal progress towards these outcomes. What is required in selecting indicators is a good understanding of the result desired, the steps needed to get there, and the type of assistance to be used. Even where political party assistance contributes to outcomes in an unplanned and unexpected way, previously selected indicators within the Country Programme or the Country Programme Action Plan might still be usable. When selecting indicators, programme managers should apply the SMART criteria, meaning that indicators should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and trackable (see box below for an example). Further guidance is available from the Evaluation Office.

Impact or human development indicators can also be developed and used at the national level to track progress in political party development, reform and other processes. There are currently no UNDP universal indicators, but guidance on results indicators is under review at the time of the publication of this handbook. For information on how other organizations are working with political party development indicators, see the IMD publication *A Framework for Democratic Party Building: A Handbook* and *USAID's Handbook of Democracy and Governance Programme Indicators* in the Further Resources list in Section VIII.

Steps to Assess an Indicator

Selection criteria	**Outcome**	**Poor proposal for an indicator**	**Why indicator is inadequate**	**Possible refinement of indicator** *(within a given timeframe)*
Attainable or 'clear direction'	Transparency in political party financing	Reduced number of political party financing corruption cases reported	Transparency may (at least initially) lead to number of cases going *up* not *down*; no baseline/target.	Policy and practice changed to make sources of political party income available for public inspection (yes/no)

MONITORING

A good monitoring system capable of capturing the effects of political party assistance will:

- ✔Follow and assess political party development, reform and other processes in a sustained manner over time at the national, regional and local levels
- ✔Describe the relative importance of multiple policy reform and other initiatives
- ✔Assess the effectiveness of the political party assistance strategy and interventions pursued by UNDP
- ✔Periodically assess results in relation to the initial objectives and expectations
- ✔Include stakeholders
- ✔Acknowledge the contributions of other development partners in the area and use networks with and of partners
- ✔Measure the success or failure of the political party assistance provided by UNDP via projects/programmes
- ✔Capture unplanned political party assistance provided by UNDP
- ✔Highlight the need for political party assistance in areas where none is presently being offered

The building blocks of a good monitoring system capable of capturing the effects of political party assistance are:

- ✔Good baseline data
- ✔Efficient and effective information-gathering methods that focus on inputs, outputs, performance and outcomes
- ✔Qualified country office personnel who possess in-depth understanding of the national political scene, including parties and how they operate
- ✔Cultivation of good stakeholder relationships
- ✔Cultivation of good donor relationships

EVALUATING

In political party assistance, evaluation can assess the major capacity, policy, legal and other changes at the national level related to political parties; determine how they affect the state of democratic governance; and depict UNDP's role in the change. However, it may not always be possible to draw a clear causal relationship between UNDP's action and the resulting change. What becomes important then is the credibility of the link between the change and UNDP.

Before deciding on the need for an evaluation, it is useful to run through a number of questions designed to tease out the rationale and potential uses of such an exercise. A guiding list of these questions follows.

1. **Relevance:** Is the evaluation addressing the right things? To what extent is there a well-considered justification for an evaluation, including for its timing?
   - To what extent is the evaluation consistent with the understanding of and rationale behind outcome and other evaluations as defined in the policy documents?
2. **Coherence:** Is the evaluation clear?
   - Is the objective, or set of objectives, for the evaluation clear?
   - Is a clear scope presented, one that defines what the evaluation will and will not cover, and why?
3. **Credibility:** Is the evaluation trustworthy?
   - Is the methodology well considered and plausible, outlining how results

will be assessed, and how UNDP's contribution to outcomes will be measured?

4. **Engagement:** Does the evaluation involve key stakeholders?
   - Is there evidence of engagement with and consensus among key stakeholders (e.g., civil society actors) regarding the objective and rationale for the evaluation?
5. **Pragmatism:** Can the evaluation be implemented?
   - Is there a set of clear implementation arrangements (who is going to do what, and by when)?
   - Do the arrangements (including time and resources) look achievable?
6. **Utility:** Will the findings be usable?
   - Is there an outline of what product or products will be delivered as a consequence of the evaluation (taking into account political sensitivities, etc.)?
   - Is there evidence of how these may be utilized, and by whom?

Once the decision to conduct an evaluation has been made, certain elements are critical in order to evaluate party assistance effectively, regardless of the particular type of evaluation (e.g., project, cluster, outcome, country programme, etc.). These are similar to the essential elements of good monitoring, as follows.

During project/programme formulation and implementation:

✔Get good baseline data. In evaluating political party support, baseline data can be even more important than usual, since the cause and effect linkages are often harder to establish. Questions to ask include: How many parties are there? What is their relative condition in terms of membership, representation in the legislature, influence, financing, etc.? What are their platforms? What is the legal framework for parties?

✔Craft good indicators. Good indicators go hand in hand with good baseline data in situating UNDP's intervention and charting its effect. Good indicators are SMART indicators.

✔Research and follow political, social, economic and other developments in the country. Knowing a country's context, and how decisions about political parties and other issues are made and implemented, are crucial to influencing these decisions.

✔Research and follow what your partners and other donors are doing. An accurate assessment of the nature and relative success of the political party efforts of partners and other donors is essential for assessing progress toward outcomes.

Immediately before and during the evaluation:

✔Include political party assistance in the terms of reference. If the evaluation is a project evaluation, and the project a political party one, this will be obvious. If, however, it is an outcome evaluation, the evaluation team should know from the outset that political party assistance will fall within the purview of the evaluation.

✔Secure the appropriate expertise. Get evaluators who understand political parties and the challenges they face, as well as the challenges of providing political party support.

✔Focus beyond beneficiaries. Beneficiaries might not always be aware that UNDP political party assistance contributed to an outcome, and that political party assistance can take years

to bear fruit. Any evaluation of political party assistance needs to look beyond perceptions to documentation and quantification.

After the evaluation:

✔Make the lessons learned and best practices work for you. If an evaluation reveals that the design of UNDP's political party assistance in a given country is sound, but is not reaching the right stakeholders, UNDP should change its approach.

HOW TO APPROACH POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE WITHIN AN EVALUATION

Political party assistance can be evaluated with any of the UNDP evaluation tools, although some types may lend themselves more readily to party work. For example, outcome evaluations are particularly conducive to evaluating party assistance because they focus on the development change of capacities, policies, regulations, laws, etc.

Whatever the type of evaluation used, however, there are several ways of approaching political party assistance within the context of a given evaluation. These are similar to the quantitative and qualitative approaches to monitoring.

Tools to help discern the effects of political party assistance:

Perception: Focusing on perceptions—of stakeholders (partners, beneficiaries and 'losers'), donors and citizens—will help gauge whether UNDP political party assistance has had an effect, be it positive or negative. Stakeholder perceptions can reveal information that other tools miss. Some methods for assessing perceptions are:

- In-depth interviews with key stakeholders
- Systematic observations of participant perspectives and experiences
- Surveys, questionnaires and focus groups

Quantification: This involves tracking the number of political party laws, policies, charters, trainings and other events or changes that have taken place since the inception of UNDP's political party assistance. Combined with qualitative analysis provided by documentation, quantification can provide a useful objective yardstick of performance. Some methods include:

- Information on the number of political party policy, legal, etc. changes gathered via monitoring tools
- Information on the number of interventions UNDP made with the intention to affect a certain outcome
- Information on the types and number of interventions made by partners in the same area

Documentation: Documentation on the 'before and after' status of political parties and the environment within which they operate will help to determine whether or not UNDP's interventions have had a tangible effect on institutions and processes, at least in the short term. Some sources of documentation are:

- Information on the quality and relative importance of political party changes gathered via monitoring tools
- Information gathered/reported in the Results-Oriented Annual Report
- Information gathered in other reports (other evaluations, tripartite reviews, annual progress reports, annual

reviews, country reviews, etc.)

- Case studies that compare political party development across countries and regions

Each of these tools can be integrated into an evaluation plan to help measure the effect of political party assistance on hard outcomes.

CAVEATS

- Political party assistance can take years to bear fruit. M&E tools need to take this into account. Programme managers need to be patient.
- Direct and quantifiable attribution of outcomes to political party assistance is usually impossible. M&E tools need to be flexible enough to capture intended and actual results—particularly outcomes—over time, and analyse each.
- As noted elsewhere in this handbook, political party assistance is almost by definition highly political. Various stakeholders could perceive UNDP's assistance as partisan. UNDP needs to be prepared to accept and manage the responsibility that comes with involving itself in national processes, while at the same time being clear that UNDP supports these processes, not individual parties. UNDP should also be conscious of supporting processes that are truly participatory and do not run counter to human development goals and principles.
- As also noted in this handbook, crisis and post-conflict contexts present unique challenges to political party assistance; the same is true for monitoring and evaluating in these situations. Staff should consult as relevant the guidelines to assess programmes in crisis and conflict countries that UNDP's Evaluation Office and the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery have developed.
- Political party assistance can be ineffective if solely driven by donors. UNDP's products and services will bear fruit only if they respond to a real need at the country level.
- Political party support, like most democratic governance interventions, creates winners and losers. Not all stakeholders will therefore support a political party programme advocated by UNDP.

SECTION 8:

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

8 Tools and Resources

Many international, regional and national organizations now work on different aspects of governance; some have an explicit mandate for political party assistance. The following list includes many of those who are either directly or peripherally involved with party issues. Lists of UNDP resources and further readings include sources of research, analysis and practical experience.

ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES

Multilateral support

InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB): The IDB is the main source of multilateral financing for economic, social and institutional development projects as well as trade and regional integration programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its governance work focuses on judicial reform, public sector management and social sector projects involving civil society. In 2003, the IDB's Modernization of State Strategy stipulated working indirectly with parties to strengthen democratic systems. Projects with a political party component include a partnership with UNDP and other organizations in Nicaragua (see page 67-68). The IDB is also engaged in a technical cooperation project with the OAS to study political party systems in the Andean countries and Central America. For more information: http://www.iadb.org.

Organization for American States (OAS), Unit for the Promotion of Democracy: This wing of the OAS supports democratic consolidation in member states in the Americas. Its activities include support to improve democratic institutions and processes, election observation, and assistance with national reconciliation and peace-building. The OAS has established the InterAmerican Forum on Political Parties, and has partnered with UNDP on party work in Guatemala (see page 12) and Nicaragua (see page 67-68). For more information: http://www.upd.oas.org/lab/aboutudp.html.

Intergovernmental organizations

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association: The association consists of the national, provincial, state and territorial parliaments and legislatures of the countries of the Commonwealth. Members share the association's mission to promote knowledge and understanding about parliamentary democracy, and respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms. For more information: http://www.cpahq.org.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA): With a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide, IDEA connects those who analyse and monitor trends in democracy, and those who engage directly in political reform or act in support of democracy at home and abroad. Its political parties' programme aims to contribute to an informed debate on how parties – governing and opposition alike – can become better at communicating with

their members, representing their constituencies, organizing their internal affairs and securing sustainable funding. Research and dialogue with political parties is in progress, having begun in more than 60 countries in Latin America, Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and South Asia. For more information: http://www.idea.int.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU): The IPU is the primary international organization of parliaments, and a focal point for worldwide dialogue and the exchange of knowledge on parliaments and representative democracy. Its Promotion of Representative Democracy programme emphasizes advancing parliamentary knowledge, assisting parliamentary elections and supporting parliamentary institutions. For more information: http://www.ipu.org.

Parliamentarians for Global Action: This network of over 1,300 legislators from 114 parliaments is engaged in promoting democracy, peace, justice and development throughout the world. For more information: http://www.pgaction.org.

Regional political organizations

African Parliamentary Union: Based in Abidjan, the union is a continental interparliamentary organization involving 35 national parliaments. Besides bringing together African parliaments, the union also facilitates ties to parliaments in other regions, and contributes to promoting democracy and reaching the objectives of the Organization of African Unity. For more information: http://www.parliament.gh/APU/APU.htm

Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union: With 22 member parliaments, the union's mandate includes strengthening contacts and promoting dialogue among Arab parliaments; coordinating the activities of Arab parliaments in various international forums, and with different regional organizations, particularly within the framework of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; and working on enhancing democratic concepts and values in Arab countries. For more information: http://www.arab-ipu.org.

Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum: The forum seeks to provide opportunities for parliamentarians from 27 member countries to identify and discuss matters of common concern and interest. It promotes greater regional cooperation particularly on: the further advancement of peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity; the expansion of free trade and investment, and sustainable development and sound environmental practices; and regional peace and security. For more information: http://www.appf.org.pe.

Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas: The forum has 26 member states that work on common objectives such as strengthening the role of the legislative branch in democracy and human rights; promoting the development and harmonization of legislation among member states; and contributing to integration towards sustainable and harmonious development in the hemisphere. For more information: http://www.e-fipa.org/news_en.htm.

Inter-Parliamentary Organization of the Association of South East Asian Nations: This eight-country organization promotes closer cooperation among member parliaments on issues related to achieving the objectives of ASEAN, namely, peace, stability and progress. For more information: http://www.aipo.org/.

Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum: The forum brings together 12 parliaments from Southern

Africa to support the growth of democracy in the region, motivated by a legacy of struggle against the deprivation of human rights and civil liberties. Forum activities include those related to election observation, conflict resolution and raising the number of women in parliaments. For more information: http://www.sadcpf.org

Bilateral support

Among the bilaterals, USAID has traditionally had the most focused political party assistance programme. Other agencies are involved in a broad spectrum of governance issues, listed here for reference:

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA): CIDA supports programmes for democratic development and good governance, with activities related to elections, civil society participation, a free media, public sector development, effective urban government, and other issues. Its funds help back the party-related work of the OAS and IDEA. For more information: http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/index-e.htm.

Danish International Development Agency (Danida): Danida assists efforts to promote freedom, democracy and human rights. A cornerstone of its governance work is the Wider Middle East Initiative—Partnership for Progress and Reform. For more information: http://www.um.dk/en.

Department for International Development (DFID): DFID aids a range of civil society and democracy projects on issues ranging from electoral support to civil society empowerment to the promotion of women's rights. For more information: http://www.dfid.gov.uk.

German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ): Work on good governance includes a political reform programme, with initiatives on democracy and the rule of law, decentralization, corruption, public finance, urban and municipal development, public sector reform, regionalization and social development. For more information: http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/857.htm.

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA): SIDA takes a rights-based approach, focusing on civil and political rights, including the right to life, freedom of expression, the right to vote, personal safety and integrity. For more information: http://www.sida.se/.

US Agency for International Development (USAID): Political party assistance is a USAID policy priority. Primary goals are to develop and consolidate representative democracies; develop transparent political environments; establish viable democratic parties; and ensure conduct of free and fair elections. USAID programmes support representative, multiparty systems, and do not seek to determine election outcomes. For more information: http://www.usaid.gov.

Groups associated with individual governments

The Democracy Canada Institute: In 2004, the Canadian Government began considering supporting the Democracy Canada Institute as a non-profit, non-governmental organization within the fledgling Canada Corps. In an organizational blueprint, the Institute for Research on Public Policy proposed that the new organization have an exclusive focus on democratization, and assist in coordinating international initiatives among political parties and existing organizations. For more information: http://www.irpp.org/miscpubs/archive/wp/wp2005-02.htm.

National Endowment for Democracy (NED): This non-profit US organization aims to strengthen democratic institutions around

the world through non-governmental efforts. It supports and was part of the founding of the IRI and NDI, which are linked to the major US political parties. With its annual appropriation from the US Congress, the NED makes hundreds of grants each year to support pro-democracy NGOs. It also works on election monitoring, and facilitating links between parliamentarians and constituents. For more information: www.ned.org. The Endowment's International Forum for Democracy Studies produces the Journal of Democracy, one of the most widely read and cited publications on the problems of and prospects for democracy around the world. For more information: http://www.journalofdemocracy.org.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy: Funded through grants from the British Government and accountable to Parliament for its resources through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy assists projects to build pluralist democratic institutions. Initiatives generally fall into one of eight sectors: civil society, human rights, legal organizations and reform, independent media, parliaments and other representative institutions, political parties, trades unions, and women's rights and political participation. WFD does not engage directly with individual parties, although it does support cross-party projects. Otherwise, it relies on the British political parties to establish contact with, offer assistance to and strengthen individual political parties or movements with which they have a political affinity. For more information: http://www.wfd.org

Groups associated with one or more political parties

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung: Linked to Germany's Social Democratic Party and funded through the German Government, the foundation works in all areas of governance, including by providing training and technical assistance to political parties in emerging democracies. For more information: http://www.fes.de.

Friedrich Naumann Stiftung: An independent foundation that works in 60 countries, the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung is committed to initiatives that foster liberalism, defined as advances in individual freedom. Its mandate calls for strengthening democratic structures, reducing state interventionism, advocating decentralization and privatization, and cutting bureaucratic regulations. For more information: http://www.fnst.de.

International Republican Institute (IRI). The IRI is linked to the US Republican Party, and was created with support from USAID and the NED. IRI programmes are non-partisan and adhere to the principles of individual freedom, equal opportunity and the entrepreneurial spirit that fosters economic development. In more than 55 countries, IRI conducts international programmes that include training on such issues as civic responsibility, the legislative process for newly elected government officials, and the mechanics of organizing political parties and election campaigns. For more information: http://www.iri.org.

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung: Affiliated with the Christian Democratic movement, the foundation offers political education, conducts scientific fact-finding research for political projects, grants scholarships to gifted individuals, researches the history of Christian Democracy, and supports and encourages European unification, international understanding and development policy cooperation. For more information: http://www.kas.de.

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). The NDI is the US Democratic Party counterpart to the IRI. It

provides non-partisan assistance to help build political and civic organizations, safeguard elections and promote citizen participation in over 70 countries. In selecting parties to support, NDI assesses the socio-political environment and attempts to identify all democratic, non-violent and viable parties. The institute narrows its targets based on a set of standards established on a case-by-case basis, and reflecting political realities and resources. For more information: http://www.ndi.org.

Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD): An independent organization created by a coalition of all Dutch political parties and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the IMD's activities focus on strengthening the capacities of political parties and groups in young democracies. Support is provided for developing internal party capacities, enhancing inter-party cooperation, and enlarging people's participation in the political decision-making process. Focus countries include Bolivia, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. For more information: http://www.nimd.org. A more complete list of party foundations is found at: International IDEA | Political Parties Links (scroll down to Political Party foundations).

Party internationals

Centrist Democrat International: This is an international association of political parties and groups adhering to Christian humanist and Christian democratic ideology. For more information, see: http://www.idc-cdi.org.

International Democrat Union: The union is a working association of over 80 Conservative, Christian Democrat and like-minded political parties of the centre and centre right in 60 countries. For more information: http://www.idu.org.

Liberal International: The world federation of liberal political parties embraces the principles of human rights, free and fair elections, multiparty democracy, social justice, tolerance, a social market economy, free trade, environmental sustainability and a strong sense of international solidarity. For more information: http://www.liberal-international.org/.

Socialist International: This worldwide organization brings together 161 social democratic, socialist and labour parties and organizations. For more information: http://www.socialistinternational.org/main.html.

Non-governmental resources

Carter Center: The Carter Center's Peace Programs include the Americas Program, on improving the quality of democracy, thwarting corruption, increasing transparency, and decreasing social inequities in the Western Hemisphere. Activities under the Democracy Program include observing elections, strengthening the capacity of civic organizations and promoting the rule of law. For more information: http://www.cartercenter.org.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: This private, non-profit organization is dedicated to advancing cooperation between nations and promoting active international engagement by the United States. Activities include research, publishing, convening people, and, on occasion, creating new institutions and international networks. One programme focuses on democracy and rule of law. Carnegie Endowment scholar Thomas Carothers has played a prominent role in research on political party assistance. For more information: http://www.carnegieendowment.org.

Centre for Democracy and Development:

The centre aims to promote the values of democracy, peace and human rights in Africa and especially in the West African sub-region. It works through advocacy, training and research in the areas of governance, human rights, peace and security, environment, gender, and social and economic development. For more information: http://www.cdd.org.uk/index.html.

Centre for the Study of Global Governance: Based at the London School of Economics, this is an international institution dedicated to research, analysis and dissemination of information about global governance. It encourages interaction between academics, policy makers, journalists and activists, and conducts research on such key facets of globalization as global governance, global civil society and global security. For more information: http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/.

Council for a Community of Democracies: The council seeks to strengthen collaboration among governments and democracy advocates in building an effective worldwide community of democratic nations, based on agreements at the June 2000 Warsaw Community of Democracies Conference. Its mandate includes promoting partnerships in support of democratic practices among democratically elected parliaments and delegations to the United Nations, and international organizations. A Democracy Library, accessible through an online request, features an array of related resources. For more information: http://www.ccd21.org.

Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA): EISA's mission is to strengthen electoral processes, good governance, human rights and democratic values through research, capacity development advocacy and other targeted interventions. The organization works with governments, electoral commissions, political parties, civil society groups and other institutions operating in the democracy and governance fields throughout Africa. EISA's political parties programme offers technical support to parties between elections. It aims to promote party development at strategic, organizational and structural levels by developing leadership through youth empowerment and equipping party leaders with the skills to represent the interests of their constituents in an effective and democratic manner. EISA also helps parties to improve their understanding of and the requirements for party coalition building. The institute's extensive research is available online. For more information: http://www.eisa.org.za/.

International Foundation for Electoral Studies (IFES): IFES provides targeted technical assistance to strengthen transitional democracies, including through support for political party development and post-election institution building. IFES has implemented comprehensive, collaborative democracy solutions in more than 100 countries. For more information: http://www.ifes.org.

Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael): The Clingendael promotes understanding of international affairs, particularly on the issues of European integration, transatlantic relations, international security, conflict studies, policy-making related to national and international energy markets, negotiations and diplomacy, and the United Nations and other international organizations. For more information: http://www.cligendael.org.

Open Society Institute (OSI): Backed by the Soros Foundation, the Open Society Institute aims to shape public policy to promote democratic governance, human rights, and economic, legal and social

reform. Within nations, the institute pursues a range of initiatives to support the rule of law, education, public health and independent media. Across borders and continents, OSI works to build alliances on issues such as combating corruption and rights abuses. For more information: http://www.soros.org.

Local organizations

Some of the following organizations may be useful for decentralization or local governance programmes.

Commonwealth Local Government Forum: The forum has been actively involved across the Commonwealth in encouraging and developing local elections and systems, election monitoring, and capacity development support for councillors and councils. For more information: http://www.clgf.org.uk/.

Federación de Municipios del Istmo Centroamericano (FEMICA): This group works in Central America on issues related to municipal finance, local economic development and transparency. For more information: http://www.femica.org.

Federación Latinoamericana de Ciudades, Municipios y Asociaciones (FLACMA): The federation's objectives include helping to deepen decentralization in its associate Latin American countries; to promote respect for municipal autonomy; and to facilitate the exchange of experiences between local governments, and municipal associations and institutions. For more information: http://www.flacma.org.

International City/County Management Association (ICMA): ICMA is the professional and educational organization for managers, administrators and assistants in cities, towns, counties and regional entities throughout the world. For more information: http://www.icma.org/main/ sc.asp.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG): This is the largest local government organization in the world, with a diverse membership that includes both individual cities and national associations of local governments. As the main local government partner of the United Nations, UCLG promotes the policies and experiences of local governments in key areas such as poverty, sustainable development and social inclusion. Regional branches are active in Africa, Asia Pacific, Central America, Europe, Latin America, the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, and North America. For more information: http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/index.asp.

UNDP RESOURCES

Democracy in Latin America: Towards a Citizens' Democracy. A report published in 2004. [http://www.undp.org/democracy_report_latin_america].

Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World. [http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2002/en/].

UNDP's Engagement with Political Parties. A mapping of UNDP's work with political parties published in 2005 by the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, Bureau for Development Policy. [http://portal.undp.org/server/nis/4649027220126077?hiddenRequest=3Dtrue].

"UNDP Practice Note on Electoral Systems and Processes." Issued in 2004. [http://content.undp.org/go/practices/governance/docs/?d_id=164291].

"UNDP Policy Guidance Note on Parliamentary Development." Issued in 2002. [http://www.undp.org/policy/docs/policynotes/parliamentarydevelopment.pdf].

Democratic Governance Work Space: See

the news, e-discussions, consolidated replies and rosters of partners under each service line for information related to political party assistance. Requires a password. [http://practices.undp.org/democratic-governance/].

OTHER KEY REFERENCES

The following resources were important in the preparation of this handbook.

Axworthy, Thomas S., Leslie Campbell and David Donovan. 2005 "The Democracy Canada Institute: A Blueprint." IRPP Working Paper Series no. 2005-02a. Institute for Research on Public Policy, Montreal. [http://www.irpp.org/miscpubs/archive/wp/wp2005-02.htm.]

Carothers, Thomas. n.d. "Analyzing the Goals and Methods of Political Party Aid." Background paper prepared for the United Nations Development Programme, New York.

———. 2004. "Political Party Aid." Paper prepared for the Swedish International Development Agency. [http://www.idea.int/parties/upload/Political_Party_Aid_by_Carothers_Oct04.pdf].

Democracy Agenda: Alliance for Generating a European Network for Democracy Assistance. 2004. "The Hague Statement on Enhancing the European Profile in Democracy Assistance." [http://www.democracyagenda.org/index.php].

Doherty, Ivan. 2001. "Democracy Out of Balance: Civil Society Can't Replace Political Parties." *Policy Review*, April/May. [http://www.accessdemocracy.org/NDI/library/1099_polpart_balance.pdf].

IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance). 2005. *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*. [http://www.idea.int/publications/esd/new_en.cfm].

IMD (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy). 2004. *A Framework for Democratic Party Building: A Handbook*. [http://www.nimd.org/upload/publications/2004/imd_institutional_development_handbook-a4.pdf].

———. 2005. "Support for Political Parties and Party Systems: The IMD Approach." [http://www.nimd.org/default.aspx?menuid=17&type=publicationlist&contentid=&archive=1].

NDI (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs). 2001. *A Guide to Political Party Development*. [http://www.accessdemocracy.org/library/1320_gdeppdev_102001.pdf#search='ivan%20doherty].

———. 2004. Political Party Capacity Building Programme Manual. [http://www.accessdemocracy.org/library/1719_na_politicalpartiesmanual_060104.pdf].

USAID (United States Agency for International Development). 1998. *Handbook of Democracy and Governance Programme Indicators*. [http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/pnacc390.pdf].

———.1999. *Political Party Development Assistance.*

[http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/pnace500.pdf].

———. 2003. "USAID Political Party Assistance Policy."

[http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABY359.pdf].

Westminster Foundation for Democracy. 2004. "Building Better Democracies: Why Political Parties Matter." Report prepared by Peter Burnell on the conference "Achieving Sustainable Political Change in Emerging Democracies: The Political Party Challenge," 15-17 March, Wilton Park, United Kingdom

FURTHER READINGS

Some of these are cited in the handbook; colleagues and contributors suggested others.

Anheier, Helmut, Mary Kaldor and M. Glasius, eds. 2004. *Global Civil Society 2004/5*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Bevis, Gwendolyn. 2004. "Civil Society Groups and Political Parties: Supporting Constructive Relationships." USAID Occasional Paper Series. US Agency for International Development, Washington, DC.

Burnell, Peter. 2000. "Promoting Parties and Party Systems in New Democracies: Is There Anything the International Community Can Do?" Paper for the Political Studies Association-UK 50th Annual Conference, 10-13 April, London. [http://www.psa.ac.uk/cps/2000/Burnell%20Peter.pdf].

Canada, Parliament of. 1988. "The Opposition in a Parliamentary System." Paper prepared by Gerald Schmitz, Political and Social Affairs Division. [http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/bp47-e.htm].

Carbone, G. M. 2002. "Developing Multi-Party Politics: Stability and Change in Ghana and Mozambique." Crisis States Programme Working Paper No. 36. Development Studies Institute, London. [http://www.crisisstates.com/download/wp/wp36.pdf].

Carothers, Thomas. 1999. *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

———. 2004. *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Caul, Miki. 1997. *Women's Representation in Parliament: The Role of Political Parties.* Irvine, California: Centre for the Study of Democracy, the University of California at Irvine. [http://www.democ.uci.edu/ democ/papers/caul.htm].

The Commonwealth. 2005. Annnotaed agenda from the Workshop on Government and Opposition: Roles, Rights and Responsibilities, 26 July, Port of Spain. [http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=144615].

Diamond, L. and Richard Gunther. 2001. *Political Parties and Democracy.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

Erdmann, Gero. 2005. "Hesitant Bedfellows: The German *Stiftungen* and Party Aid in Africa: An Attempt at an Assessment." Paper prepared for the workshop "Globalising Party-Based Democracy," 7-8 July, Warwick University.

Gershman, Carl. 2004. "Democracy Promotion: The Relationship of Political Parties and Civil Society." *Democratization* 11(3).

Hameso, Seyoum. 2002. "Issues and Dilemmas of Multi-Party Democracy in Africa." *West Africa Review* 3(2): 1-26.

IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance). 1999. *Code of Conduct for Political Parties: Campaigning in Democratic Elections.* [http://www.idea.int/publications].

———. 2002. *Democracies in Development: Politics and Reform in Latin America.* [http://www.idea.int/publications].

———. 2003. *Funding of Parties and Election Campaigns Handbook.* [http://www.idea.int/publications].

———. 2004. *From Regulations to Good Practices: The Challenge of Political Funding in Latin America.* [www.idea.int/publications].

_____. 1998. *Women in Parliament: Beyond the Numbers* [http://www.idea.int/publications/wip/index.cfm].

IMD (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy). 2004. "A Report on the Evaluation of the IMD Programme in Bolivia." [http://www.nimd.org/default.aspx?menuid=17&type=publicationlist&contentid=&archive=1].

———. 2004. "A Report on the Evaluation of the IMD/IEA Programme in Ghana." [http://www.nimd.org/default.aspx?menuid=17&type=publicationlist&contentid=&archive=1].

IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union). 1999. "Guidelines on the Rights and Duties of the Opposition in Parliament." Unanimosly adopted by the participants at the Parliamentary Seminar on Relations Between Majority and Minority Parties in African Parliaments, 17-19 May, Libreville, Gabon. [http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/gabon.htm].

Janda, Kenneth. n.d. "Adopting Party Law." A paper prepared for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Washington, DC. [http://www.ndi.org/globalp/polparties/programspp/research.asp].

———. 2005. "Party Law and the Goldilocks Problem: How Much Is Just Right?" A paper prepared for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Washington, DC. [http://www.ndi.org/globalp/polparties/programspp/research.asp].

Jesse, Macy. 1974. *Party Organization and Machinery.* New York: Arno Press.

Johnston, Michael. n.d. "Political Finance Policy, Parties, and Democratic Development." A paper prepared for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Washington, DC. [http://www.ndi.org/globalp/polparties/programspp/research.asp].

———. 2005. "Good Politics Is Good Government: Parties, Political Finance, and Democracy." A paper prepared for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Washington, DC. [http://www.ndi.org/globalp/polparties/programspp/research.asp].

Kaldor, Mary. 2002. "Civil Society and Accountability." Background paper for the 2002 *Human Development Report*. United Nation's Development Programme, New York.

———. 2003. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Katz, R. and P. Mair. 1994. *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies*. London: Sage.

Kethysegile, Juru, and Monica Bookie. 2003. "Intra-party Democracy and the Inclusion of Women." *Journal of African Elections* 2(1): 49-62.

Kumar, Krishna. 2004. "International Political Party Assistance: An Overview and Analysis." Working Paper 33. Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael) Conflict Research Unit, The Hague. [http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2004/20041000_cru_working_paper_33.pdf].

Mair, Stefan. 2004. "Multi-Partisan or Bi-Partisan Co-operation: What Is the Best Solution for Democracy Assistance?" Paper presented at a conference on the enhancement of the European profile in democracy assistance, July, The Hague. [http://www.democracyagenda.org/papers/3.4_Mair.doc].

Mathisen, Harald, and Lars Svarsand. 2002. "Funding Political Parties in Emerging African Democracies: What Role for Norway?" Chr. Michelson Institute, Bergen. [http://www.cmi.no/publications/2002/rep/r20026.pdf#search='political%20party%20development].

McKinnon, Don. 2005. Speech by the Commonwealth Secretary-General to the Workshop on Government and Opposition: Roles, Rights and Responsibilities, 26 July, Port of Spain. [http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=144841].

Michels, Robert. 1958. *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of Oligarchies in Modern Political Parties*. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.

Moar, M. 1996. *Political Parties and Party Systems*. London: Routledge.

Netherlands Institute of International Relations. (Clingendael). 2004. "Lessons Learned in Political Party Assistance." Seminar report, 4 November, The Hague. [http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2004/20041100_cru_proc_schoofs.pdf#search='political%20party%20assistance].

Norris, Pippa. n.d. "Developments in Party Communications." A paper prepared for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Washington, DC. [http://www.ndi.org/globalp/polparties/programspp/research.asp].

———. 2005. "Strengthening Party Communications." A paper prepared for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Washington, DC. [http://www.ndi.org/globalp/polparties/programspp/research.asp].

Randall, V., and L. Svasand. 2002. "Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Africa." Democratization 9(3). [http://www.essex.ac.uk/ecpr/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/grenoble/ws13/randall_svasand.pdf].

Sabatini, Christopher. 2003. "Lost Illusions: Decentralisation and Political Parties." *Journal of Democracy,* April 2003.

Salih, Mohamed M. A. 2003. *African Political Parties: Evolution, Institutionalization and Governance*. London: Pluto Press.

Scarrow, Susan E. n.d. "Implementing Intra-Party Democracy." A paper prepared for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Washington, DC. [http://www.ndi.org/globalp/polparties/programspp/research.asp].

———. 2005. "Intra-Party Democracy." A paper prepared for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Washington, DC. [http://www.ndi.org/globalp/polparties/programspp/research.asp].

SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). 2002. "The Political Institutions: Parties, Elections and Parliaments." [http://www.undp.org/governance/docspublications/policy_dialogue/23_Political_Institutions.pdf].

Smith, B. C. 2003. *Understanding Third World Politics: Theories of Political Change and Development*. See the chapter "'Political Parties and Party Systems." Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Southall, Roger. n.d. "Beyond Hit and Hope? Party Assistance and the Crisis of Democracy in Southern Africa." Unpublished paper.

Teorell, Jan. 1999. "A Deliberative Defense of Intra Party Democracy." *Party and Politics* 5: 363-382.

United Nations. 2005. *In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All.* A report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for decision by Heads of State and Government in September 2005. [www.un.org/largerfreedom].

———. 2005. "World Summit Outcome." Draft resolution referred to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly by the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. A/60/L.1*. [http://www.un.org/summit2005/].

Williams, R. 2002. "Aspects of Party Finance and Political Corruption." [http://www.palgrave.com/pdfs/0333739868.pdf].

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.

United Nations Development Programme
Democratic Governance Group
Bureau for Development Policy
304 East 45th Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10017
F: (212) 906-6471
www.undp.org

05/06 Design: Cynthia Spence