



# Strengthening governance during the COVID-19 pandemic

A snapshot of UNDP's work across the globe

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The world is facing unprecedented pressures, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the climate crisis, political polarization and weakening multilateralism, reduced trust in governance systems both manifesting in and perpetuated by a rise in toxic information pollution, continued conflicts and displacement. These crises have exposed weaknesses in our systems and have compounded social, political and economic inequalities. They pose complex, multidimensional challenges that require systemic solutions.

COVID-19 is testing not only health systems and economies, but also the ability of public sector institutions to adapt and innovate in the inclusive delivery of services, while remaining accountable and transparent. The accompanying 'infodemic', with its enormous rise in the spread of misinformation and disinformation by both state and non-state actors has damaged public health initiatives, inflamed tensions and exacerbated stigma and discrimination.

Although these challenges are daunting, there is an important opportunity to make societies more inclusive and resilient through response and recovery efforts. UNDP's approach to longer-term recovery is premised on the necessity of accountable, inclusive and effective governance, based on human rights and the rule of law, and supporting institutional transformation and civic engagement. Now, more than ever, we need to ensure the functioning of checks and balances, democratic oversight and broad-based public participation.

UNDP is the largest deliverer of democratic governance support within the UN system, strengthening effective, inclusive and accountable governance at national, regional and local levels across 170 countries. This short publication provides a snapshot of governance challenges that our country partners have faced, the ways that UNDP is responding while navigating the specific issues that COVID-19 has brought, and the impact of our work across the five regions where we operate. Links to further information on each project are also available, including to UNDP's [Transparency Portal](#) and Country Office webpages.

You will see in the following pages how UNDP is working to support countries to address a diversity of governance challenges, including by supporting governments to address critical governance bottlenecks that constrain the delivery of essential services; supporting parliaments and other oversight institutions to operate remotely, as well as advising Election Management Bodies and other public authorities on modifications to electoral processes, where necessary; and promoting the dissemination of accurate information in order to enhance the pandemic response, and foster public debate, accountability and trust in governance systems.



# Empowering vulnerable and hard to reach communities with COVID-19 information in Ghana

## Governance Challenge

In Ghana, as in many parts of the world, COVID-19 has magnified existing vulnerabilities and inequalities experienced by marginalized populations. Public communications on COVID-19's risks have been primarily provided in English and a few local languages, tailored for urban settings and in formats that are not accessible for persons with disabilities. As a result, large segments of the general population, including persons living with disabilities, people in prison and persons in hard-to-reach areas, have limited access to reliable information on COVID-19.

## UNDP's Role

Implemented in partnership with the Ghana Health Service, UNDP Ghana's rapid response plan focused on providing vulnerable and at-risk populations with accurate and context-specific information on COVID-19, to enable informed decisions and strengthen protection efforts for both individuals and communities. This intervention ensured that vulnerable persons are equipped with accurate information to improve their understanding of and adherence to government and WHO safety and protection guidelines. As part of this initiative, tailored communication materials in accessible formats - including braille, audio and sign language - were produced and disseminated to those who are visually impaired, hard of hearing and/or deaf. These materials offered simple, explanatory messages on the recommended COVID-19 protocols such as physical distancing, mask wearing and hand hygiene. To facilitate adherence to the COVID-19 protocols, the project also provided face masks and hygiene supplies (soap, hand sanitizers, etc.) to vulnerable groups within the 165 districts across all 16 regions of the country. The rapid response plan's multi-pronged approach developed audience-specific strategies that focused on engaging key community leadership, civil society organizations, and prisons among others. This included providing safe spaces for vulnerable groups to ask questions and receive advice; education sessions for people living with disabilities including the production of an **animation** in several local languages supported by the UN system in Ghana; as well as specially-designed training programmes for prison officers.

**COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement rapid response plan**  
(May 2020- December 2020)

**Project information:**  
<https://open.undp.org/projects/00119292>

**UNDP Ghana:**  
<https://www.gh.undp.org/>



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By December 2020, more than 21,000 persons with disabilities in 165 districts across the country had been reached with relevant information in accessible formats on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus within their communities. In addition, more than 5,000 persons living with HIV were provided with public awareness information on sanitation, hand hygiene, mask wearing, respiratory etiquette and treatment adherence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prisons were able to curtail COVID-19 infection through the training of approximately 400 prison officials and wardens from 25 prison facilities on COVID-19 prevention.



## Fostering greater citizen participation in decision making in Liberia

**Strengthening inclusive decentralized service delivery and social accountability through citizens participation (2021-2022)**

**Project information:**

<https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/LBR/approved%20prodoc%20PBRSCP%202020%20-%202024.pdf>

**UNDP Liberia:**

<https://www.lr.undp.org/>

### Governance Challenge

At the end of Liberia's civil war in 2003, a national consensus emerged around the need for significant governance reforms to foster greater citizen participation to ensure equitable political, economic, and social development. Ensuring that Liberia's citizens were actively engaged in civic life called for legal frameworks to sustain decentralization reforms that would bring the government closer to the people, improve the delivery of basic social services, and broaden the space for civic engagement and participation.

### UNDP's Role

Strengthening Liberia's County Service Centers (CSC), the principal mechanism for service delivery in the country, is the primary focus of UNDP's support. UNDP is piloting a digital platform (mobile and web-based) that receives, compiles, analyzes and responds to citizens' perceptions of public services standards in real time. The analysis is also instrumental in monitoring the performance of public officials thereby strengthening accountability. To address the ongoing challenge of regular and sustainable access to energy, which affects citizens and government officials alike, UNDP is installing hybrid solar systems at eight CSCs which will both improve service delivery and generate revenue. The CSCs are also providing business coaching and mentorship (in partnership with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry) and psychosocial services to women, who are the main users of CSCs.

### IMPACT >>

In a very short time, UNDP Liberia's efforts are making an impact on accountability for service delivery at the highest level. Concerns and issues gathered through the Citizen Feedback Mechanism now form a part of the President's Cabinet Agenda. In early 2021, the President issued a strongly worded statement on performance based on a briefing received from the Director General of the Cabinet informed by data gathered through the digital platform.



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# Empowering women and youth in local development in the Democratic Republic of Congo

## Governance Challenge

Gender inequality and a dearth of women and youth active in local governance is a pervasive problem in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), despite the ratification of conventions and protocols affirming the State's obligation to guarantee equal opportunities for women and youth participation in all areas, including the political and economic arenas. Fragility remains high due to an ongoing cycle of conflict, especially in the North Kivu region, further compounding the challenges, especially for women and girls.

## UNDP's Role



UNDP DRC's approach of "governing for peace while strengthening the social contract" is working to improve social cohesion in three stabilized areas of North Kivu, using targeted initiatives designed to improve social service delivery and citizen participation, particularly among women and youth. Multifunctional centres partner with local civil society organizations to provide vital skills training that help women and young people develop and pilot income generating projects. Advocacy training is

an essential component, helping participants become more aware of and feel more confident in exercising their rights to public services and local governance participation. UNDP also works closely with local and subnational governments to strengthen their capabilities for development planning and participatory decision-making processes, processes that ensure the voices of women and young people are heard. Through its work with civil society organizations, UNDP is promoting tax literacy among local citizens to bolster tax collection thus securing the funding of public services.

**Strengthening women and youth leadership for inclusive, participatory and sustainable local governance in North Kivu**

**Partner:** Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)

**Project information:**  
<https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/COD/PRODOC%20KOICA%20NK%20sign%C3%A9.pdf>

**UNDP DRC:**  
<https://www.cd.undp.org>

While only halfway through the project, the communities are already benefiting from the strengthened capacities of community services, including the creation of local youth councils, collectives of women's associations, and local peace and development committees. The multifunctional centres are providing women and girls with frameworks for sensitization, as well as information and training on women's rights. Various vocational training courses are contributing to women and girls' sense of individual agency, including by building the entrepreneurial capacities of more than 2,500 women and girls. Moreover, through the participation of men in these activities, men's harmful perceptions of women's roles in rural activities have evolved, which should contribute to a positive change in the economic activities of the entities.

IMPACT



## Promoting peace justice and inclusion in Tunisia

**Sustaining Peace through the promotion of a peaceful, just, and inclusive society in Tunisia – SDG16+ Portfolio (2018-2022)**

**Partners:** The Netherlands

**UNDP Tunisia:**

<https://www.tn.undp.org/>

### Governance Challenge

Despite the significant progress made by Tunisia in realising the aspirations of the 2011 Revolution, events in mid-2021 suggest that these achievements are fragile, and potentially reversible. Many of the reforms of the democratic transition, such as in the justice and security sectors, anti-corruption, decentralisation, and the legal and institutional framework, remain incomplete. Moreover, even where progress is being made, the Tunisian people are not seeing the benefits. The social and economic situation remains dire (exacerbated by COVID-19), and there are persistent regional inequalities.

### UNDP's Role

Since 2018, UNDP Tunisia has supported its government partners to reinforce the fragile achievements of the country's democratic transition, and support its efforts toward a peaceful, just, and inclusive society. To do this, UNDP is engaging in a whole-of-government approach involving various state institutions at the national and sub-national levels, complemented by a whole-of-society focus involving non-state actors (principally civil society organizations) to respond to the ongoing challenges and maintain service delivery to the country. The programme targets three of the country's more marginalized regions – Medenine, Tataouine, and Gabes. Working with its partners, UNDP aims to strengthen key governance institutions and processes in an effort to promote democratic governance, consolidate the rule of law, and foster active citizenship. This includes working to ensure communities, in particular youth, women, and vulnerable groups, benefit from, and contribute to local development, so as to strengthen access to justice and human security, and to foster social cohesion.



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP sharpened its focus on strengthening governance systems

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[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_11436](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_11436)

