

Institutional Accountability in pro-human rights growth policies: the UNDP perspective

Introduction:

UNDP like the other UN institutions and agencies takes its core mandate from the founding charter of the United Nations. The promotion of human rights and human liberties are possibly some of the main justifications for the establishment of the United Nations Development Programme. The development assistance programmes carried out by UNDP in the 166 countries where it has operations are to promote human rights by directly impacting government policy, resource distribution, capacity as well as addressing human deprivations which prevent many populations in developing countries from enjoying their full human rights.

UNDP recognizes that the ultimate objective of socio-economic growth policies should be to ensure an equitable and full fledged participation of all members of the society. Pro-human rights approach to growth and development thus should ensure the participation of all the citizenry, as both participants and beneficiaries, guided by a government whose policies are to enforce the legitimate concerns of the population.

This is achievable by emphasizing the centrality of people in all development interventions through conscious attempts by governments and partners to tailor development and economic growth programmes to address ignorance, illiteracy, ill health, poverty and other deprivations which curtail the enjoyment of full human rights.

UNDP supports pro-human rights development and has in the last decades stridently espoused the development implications and linkages between human rights and for instance poverty reduction and pro-poor growth policies.

More poignantly, the Human Development Reports of 2000 and 2002 continued to affirm the inter-relations between human rights and development. They also highlighted the importance of human rights for growth and the attainment of full human development

Human rights, socio-economic growth and development:

The key message in the Human Development Report 2000 was to stress that the elimination of poverty is an entitlement and a human right. In that regard, the argument was made for development frameworks, at both national and international levels, to incorporate respect, protection and promotion of human rights. In its advocacy for inclusion and human rights, UNDP has noted that:

- economic growth should be pro-poor to address the needs of the most deprived in our communities;
- national budgets should adequately support priority human concerns and thus promote the enjoyment of human rights by all populations;
- political space should be expanded as an important element of good governance and to ensure participation;
- protection of environmental and social capital of the poor should receive attention from government;
- the removal of all forms of discrimination and the incorporation of human rights into law are essential to guarantee the fulfillment of human development.

UNDP is a key member of the UN family and is *committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want* as stated in the Millennium Declaration.

In stressing the right to development, UNDP is guided by the following principles:

First, universality and indivisibility: No statement aptly captures the message of this principle better than the words of the UN Secretary-General when he indicated that *"what begins as a failure to uphold the dignity of one life, all too often ends as a calamity for entire nations"*. UNDP thus strives to ensure that every woman, man and child is entitled to enjoy her or his human rights simply by virtue of being human. This principle requires and ensures that no group or community is left out in the reach of development assistance and public policy. Furthermore, the enjoyment of one right is indivisibly inter-related to the enjoyment of others. The enjoyment of the right to health is related to the right to education and information. They are mutually reinforcing and UNDP supports government and partners to understand and promote these relationships.

Secondly, equality and non-discrimination. Human rights are for every one, rich and poor; urban and rural; remote and accessible and UNDP strives in its programmes to ensure the application of this principle. In working on promoting equality and non-discrimination, UNDP aims to accelerate the elimination of arbitrariness and institutional capriciousness. UNDP encourages the enforcement of non-discrimination against people based on any grounds such as sex, ethnicity, color, language, religion and political affiliation, which it reflects in own development programmes. UNDP advocates for equality requiring that all persons within a society enjoy equal access to available goods and services that are necessary to fulfill basic human needs and works to prohibit discrimination in law or in practice in any field regulated and protected by public institutions through advocacy and development programmes. In many countries such as Angola and Rwanda, UNDP has worked with local institutions and government to ensure that

discriminatory language regarding women's access to capital and ownership of property are removed.

Third, participation and inclusion: UNDP stresses the need for participation not merely for reasons of ownership and sustainability but to underscore the important principle of international human rights that every person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy civil, economic, social cultural and political development in which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realized. Participation is important for decision making and power and also ensures that everyone contributes their maximum potential to development. For example, through the Africa 2000 programme in Burkina Faso and Senegal, UNDP has promoted the role of local communities in the promotion of development programmes that respond to local needs as well as feed into national MDG-based development strategies.

Fourth, accountability and rule of law. Through its democratic governance interventions, UNDP supports countries to create the enabling environment in which all people can enjoy their human rights. It also provides support to countries to ensure that respect for human rights norms and principles are integrated into policy and governance. UNDP strives to facilitate the roles of duty holders as well as pursue efforts that strengthen the law's protection of all rights of all citizens through capacity building and training programmes that promote the rule of law and this is very well articulated in UNDP's Practice Notes on Access to Justice and Human Rights. Also in Swaziland, for instance, UNDP has supported the drafting of a new constitution that emphasizes the rule of law.

Institutional accountability: UNDP perspective

Emanating from the above and UNDP's adherence to the principles of human rights and their application to development, it is evident that UNDP strives to ensure that its programmes and staff play an important role in advocacy, programme development and implementation. UNDP programmes stress the importance of human rights, the duties of the government and the empowerment of the citizens to safeguard against human rights abuses and the enjoyment of human rights by all.

In its work, the Organization solicits and uses the services and expertise of civil society organizations, professional associations and other UN agencies and departments building strong partnerships at the national and international levels. UNDP has a very strong partnership with OHCHR and through the joint UNDP-OHCHR Global Human Rights Strengthening Programme (HURIST) continues to promote and expand human-rights based approaches in all areas of its work. As of today, 13 UNDP country programmes have been reviewed from a human rights based approach and recommendations are being implemented.

Also through, programme monitoring and reviews, UNDP assists governments and programme countries to assess and measure the impact of policy and programmes in areas such as basic education and health contributing to policy change and programme implementation that ensures that large sections of our programme country populations enjoy basic rights. Through national MDG and human development reports, UNDP constantly demonstrate to the governments and programme countries the repercussions of basic human rights deprivations on socio-economic development as well as ways to correct them and encourages the adoption of policies that

enhance the enjoyment of human rights while promoting a balanced and sustainable development.

UNDP thus acknowledges the important institutional responsibility of the UN agencies to the UN charter and encourages the adoption of the following six principles in its development programming efforts:

First, governments and all actors are supported to adopt a human rights-based approach to development. This transcends all our programmes from promoting good governance to poverty eradication. UNDP also ensures that poverty eradication programmes incorporate the Millennium Development Goals and through programmes such as Capacity 2015 and Africa 2000, local communities are trained and encouraged to be active partners in the development effort. UNDP Practice Note on Poverty Reduction and Human Rights is currently being field tested in selected countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Secondly, UNDP allocates significant resources to capacity building efforts. Capacity building efforts of duty-bearers such as government institutions and staff are important to ensure that they inculcate in their functions and programmes their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of all citizens. On the other hand, UNDP programmes also target rights-holders ensuring that they also demand and receive what is legitimately theirs whether it is the establishment of a primary school or a health post, or even an access road that will ensure that a remote part of a country is linked to a market.

Thirdly, UNDP continues to stress in its programmes and advocacy efforts the importance of democratic governance, including an active civil society for poverty reduction. UNDP thus supports programmes in effective local

governance and decentralization, capacity building for human rights organizations, training of judiciary system staff and community development programmes as means of ensuring effective participation that addresses concerns and strengthens relations between duty-bearers and rights-claimants.

Fourthly, UNDP engages and encourages all its country offices to participate in the activities of UN agencies charged with advocating and advancing human rights. Furthermore, it seeks to use recommendations from UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies to review and improve programme development, ensuring that our programmes are consistent with UN principles.

Fifthly, UNDP participates in and encourages right-sensitive participatory assessment methodologies that ensure that development practice is global. Some important examples of this approach are promotion of the human development index, gender development index and others which have brought a different perspective to the concept of development and have contributed to the ascendancy of rights-based approaches to development and poverty reduction particularly for marginalized groups.

Lastly, UNDP as a learning organization continues to build in-house capacity to understand these important issues for its development work, and in particular, the use of multi-disciplinary reviews and analyses which ensure that human rights and the right to development are addressed in development assistance programmes and are adopted by programme countries and partners.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, UNDP supports the United Nations founding charter and the universal declaration of human rights. UNDP's membership of the UN family implies that it is accountable for ensuring that pro-human rights approaches are inculcated in development programmes. Also, UNDP has an obligation to underscore that its staff is exposed to human-rights training to ensure that in both advocacy and programme roles, staff understand and apply the inter-relations between human rights and development.

UNDP will continue to work with all UN agencies, partners and countries to ensure that pro-human rights approaches are adopted in the quest to attain the Millennium Development Goals which in themselves highlight the importance of promoting human rights in national and global settings. Pro-human rights approaches to growth and development programming will be beneficial to all countries as they will encourage the participation of all the available human resources in the development effort and UNDP will continue to work towards that goal.

Thank you.