



Applying a Human Rights-Based Approach and Mainstreaming Gender in Local Development Programming and Implementation

Joint Community of Practice Meeting
Gender, Human Rights, and
Local Governance and Decentralization

Yerevan, Armenia 13-15 June 2006

I. Introduction

UNDP Armenia and the Bratislava Regional Centre hosted the Joint Community of Practice meeting “Applying a Human Rights-Based Approach and Mainstreaming Gender in Local Development Programming and Implementation” to bring together experts from the Communities of Practice in Local Governance and Decentralization, Human Rights and Justice and the cross-cutting theme Gender Mainstreaming. The meeting was focused around the inter-linkages of the three areas and how human rights and gender can be easily integrated in local development programming and implementation.

The meeting’s participants included 15 officers from UNDP country offices from the Western Balkans and the Caucasus, RC Bangkok’s Regional Gender Advisor, two Cluster Leaders from RBEC New York as well as 6 BRC staff.



The following report summarizes the proceedings of the Joint Community of Practice Meeting on “Applying a Human Rights-Based Approach and Mainstreaming Gender in Local Development Programming and Implementation” (JCoP). It provides an overview of reasons and objectives of this meeting as well as the analytical conclusions that were drawn after discussions and working groups of practitioners and advisors. It will not give a verbatim of presentations or discussions, but rather synthesize the analyses and conclusions that were reached among participants. In the annex, it compiles links to relevant materials used and gives additional information about the meeting.

II. Background

For development practitioners world-wide, and especially for UNDP in the RBEC region, decentralization and integrated and sustainable development have been and continue to be a priority area. In the context of a historic legacy of centralization, the process of decentralization via fiscal, political, and administrative devolution can be seen as an effective way of addressing the needs of the citizens and of bringing public services closer to the people, thus leading to improved sustainable human development.

Gender mainstreaming and the human rights-based approach are two frameworks to guide local development efforts to ensure that they benefit those most in need of assistance and contribute to positive cooperation between duty bearers and claim holders of rights enshrined in international law.

Especially in the Western Balkans sub-region, successful efforts have been made to mainstream human rights and gender in local development programming to enhance results. Several programmes have had an explicit focus on human rights principles such as non-discrimination, participation, accountability and the rule of law. In other sub-regions, and notably in the South Caucasus and Western CIS, Community of Practice members have shown considerable interest in building on these experiences and applying similar methodologies in their national contexts.

While the Human Rights-based Approach and Gender Mainstreaming have the capacity to guide and enhance local development programming, concerns had been raised about a "*mainstreaming fatigue*" with too many issues to be mainstreamed. To counter-act this, the Joint Community of Practice was founded in order to provide members with easy to use, concise tools for mainstreaming gender and human rights into their local development efforts.

III. Objectives

The Joint CoP had clear objectives furthering the quality of programming and cooperation in the region and improving the inclusion of gender and human rights in local governance and decentralization. To this end, the meeting was aimed at gathering the relevant practitioners and advisors in RBEC to:

- (a) Discuss and review best practices exchange experiences and provide empirical evidence and lessons learned,
- (b) Plan knowledge products and facilitate knowledge transfer and learning
- (c) Clarify the direction of UNDP's work in the current programming cycle.

These objectives were attained through a combination of presentations, working group sessions and discussions always focusing on workable and user-friendly tools and their application. The particular traits of the approach used are highlighted below.

a. Innovative and Practical Approach

The innovative Joint Community of Practice Meeting was guided and characterized by the following elements: inter-disciplinarity, teaming up of east-east knowledge transfer with international expertise, a pragmatic approach to knowledge and experience sharing and output-focus.

Inter-disciplinarity

Participants of the workshop included a wide variety of Country Office practitioners from all of the areas involved in the meeting. Project Managers of local governance projects and Gender Advisors or Human Rights Officers shared their respective take on human rights- and gender-sensitive programming in a local development framework. Together with them experts in local governance and decentralization, gender and human rights from the Bratislava Regional Center provided the framework and guiding questions along the course of the meeting. Presentations on the linkages of local governance, human rights, and gender set the framework of the meeting and focused the discussions¹.

East-East knowledge transfer

The largest part of the meeting was devoted not to theoretical discussions, but to the presentations prepared by the practitioners themselves, reflecting how gender and human rights influenced their local development programming and sharing with their colleagues from other countries the lessons learned, obstacles overcome and tools used in the process.

A particular focus in this exchange of knowledge and experiences was the rich expertise gained in the Western Balkans on the Human Rights-based Approach and gender sensitivity in programming. Here, the "Rights-based Municipal Development Programme"² from UNDP Bosnia and the "Tools for human rights and gender in local development"³ presented by UNDP Macedonia stood out as well developed examples, but all projects presented addressed the interlinkages in a creative, useful and adaptable manner. In a practical East-East transfer scheme, this knowledge was shared with colleagues from Country Offices from the Caucasus and Western CIS in order to enhance their ability to program in this relevant field of democratic governance. However, the meeting did not stop in a one-way transfer scheme, but also included presentations from all participating COs on their respective experiences.

¹ http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspc=practice-4_h_5_3

² <http://europeandcis.undp.org/files/uploads/Mozur/Rights-based%20Municipal%20Development%20Program%20RMAP%202006%20UNDP%20BiH.ppt>

³ <http://europeandcis.undp.org/files/uploads/Mozur/Tools%20for%20HR%20and%20Gender%20for%20Local%20Development%20UNDP%20Macedonia.ppt>

Pragmatism

In order to stay pragmatic and provide a useful platform for all participants, the focus was put on country-presentations and very specific tools that can be used in different stages of the programming cycle. In addition to the presentations mentioned above, UNDP COs from Armenia, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine analyzed and discussed projects from their portfolio.

In four working groups, particular tools were scrutinized for advantages and disadvantages and the possibility of transferring the use to other scenarios. The working group tools were also part of presentations and narrative case studies, which are published on a website dedicated to the follow-up of the meeting.

Output focus

An integral part of the meeting's activities was to identify what tools and material is most useful for practitioners to enable them to ensure gender-sensitive and human rights-based programming. In working groups and plenary discussion, the community of practice identified learning materials and tools that they consider the most useful. Among others UNDP BRC was asked to produce a generic presentation on the topic of the Joint CoP for teaching and awareness raising in the countries of the region. Also, a toolkit elaborating on the findings of the tools working groups was wished for by participants. Case studies and country presentations as well as expert exchange schemes are also high on the list of needed support.

b. Approach and Tools

In several interlinked and embedded presentations, BRC illustrated the framework for analysis. Starting with an overview of the role of Gender and Human Rights in UN and UNDP's mandate, the importance of human rights for national and local governments as duty-bearers towards the population, or rights-holders was described.⁴

Linking HRBA, GM and Local Governance

The four main interlinkages between local governance, human rights and gender equality are participation, accountability, non-discrimination and empowerment. While there is no automatic improvement of the protection of human rights and gender equality through the process of decentralization, it is clear that decentralization can improve the situation as long as it leads to more effective government, achieves economic and social development and rights and when it is designed in order to promote accountability. It can also lead to an improvement if it enhances the access of disadvantaged groups and increases local autonomy.



⁴ http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspc=practice-4_h_5_3

Threats to these positive effects are the re-empowerment of elites at the local level that capture decision-making, disempowerment of disadvantaged groups, if it increases inequality and lower standards of social and economic development.

The focus of UNDP programming should thus be on designing interventions that ensure that the benefits of good local governance are exploited to the full by focusing on the four interlinking principles and ensuring the application of human rights and gender analyses in project initiation, implementation and evaluation. One example highlighted the relevance of gender and human rights for public service delivery in the case of intermunicipal cooperation.

The different possible applications of gender mainstreaming and human-rights-based approach to local governance were illustrated by presentations from Country Office practitioners and fed into working groups, discussions and conclusions.

On a policy note, participants evaluated different approaches and concepts of social inclusion. EU Social Inclusion policies are of particular relevance to the countries inside the EU and those aspiring to become EU members. For UNDP, social inclusion is a wider theme associated to the corporate focus on poverty reduction and the most vulnerable groups. Some of the lessons may be applicable beyond the immediate framework to countries in which EU aid is being disbursed.

To facilitate the application of a human-rights-based approach and mainstreaming gender in local development programming, BRC identified particular tools that have already been tested and successfully applied in the Western Balkans or on a RBEC regional level to be discussed and reviewed in working groups. These tools were vulnerability assessment techniques, checklists, baseline studies and participation mechanisms.

aa. Vulnerability assessments

The first Working Group on “Vulnerability Assessments” analyzed the different applications and usage for qualitative and quantitative analysis methods in assessing the vulnerability of groups on the basis of examples taken from the poverty practice’s regional report on Roma⁵. The Roma report was the first regional concerted approach to data collection on the reality of Roma in RBEC region. Its use of particularly adapted data collection techniques to give an in depth picture of the Roma community in several countries and draw comparisons is the first of its kind.

The need to undertake vulnerability assessments exists because programming without in depth analysis of the development situation would be arbitrary. The collection of data through quantitative and qualitative approaches is essential to make informed choices about programming objectives and tools. Both data collection methods have advantages and disadvantages and should be used depending on the type of information necessary for the project under consideration.

⁵ The report can be retrieved at <http://roma.undp.sk/>. The material used in the working group is available at http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspc=practice-4_h_5_4.

Analysis of Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative approach to data collection is theory driven and needs measurable indicators, which are collected on a large sample, i.e. include a large number of observations. Quantitative research is representative and comparable. It is used for causal analyses or to identify in this case inequalities within or between groups. The researcher collects data through pre-determined mechanisms that leave little scope for interaction. The inferences made from the data are based on statistical analysis, i.e. they are ideally replicable on the basis of statistical calculations.

Criticisms of quantitative research are that it is too distanced from real life and is too reductive. Also, a recurrent criticism is linked to the limited participation of the object of research itself.

Analysis of Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative research on the other hand is aiming at discovering social reality and constructs of a given problem. Its principal aim is to identify from interaction and observation underlying mechanisms of social structures. It usually is based on smaller numbers of observations, .

Qualitative research is interactive and interpretative. It is used to develop theories rather than to test them. It is a more open and dynamic process than quantitative data collection. The conclusions made on the basis of qualitative research are criticized for its small sample size and resulting lack of representativity of findings, and thus the fact that it cannot make generalizations on the basis of its findings.

Working Group Conclusions

For UNDP programming, the benefits of quantitative analysis are that it is user-friendly, facts-based (convincing advocacy tool for partners) and comparable. On the other hand, the working group found quantitative analyses to be time-consuming, dependent on external providers and its limited scope due to pre-defined surveys. Disaggregated data is one key to identifying vulnerable groups and targeting policy more precisely towards those most in need.

For UNDP programming, the working group noted the depth of information gathered through qualitative processes and that it was a good instrument to identify conceptions and attitudes. However, it was also found to be a difficult process to be set up; the problem of replicability was raised linking to reporting requirements over the course of a project. In addition, this methodology may need the support of different specialists, and may be personnel intensive.

bb. Checklists

“Checklists” were the main object of analysis in another working group. Checklists are systematic collections of indicators and legislation checklists that are developed by multi-disciplinary teams in order to identify targets and measure progress in a comparable way. To illustrate checklists, examples from the RMAP Bosnia programme in several policy fields were used.⁶ The RMAP Programme applies the Human-Rights-Based Approach to local development through the application of sector checklists, legal background studies,

⁶ http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspsc=practice-4_h_5_4 ; <http://www.undp.ba/?PID=25&RID=2>

vulnerability assessments and an implementation manual. RMAP used a multi-sectoral approach involving economists, human rights lawyers and local governance specialists in integrating human rights in the local development planning process.

Analysis of Checklists

Particular strengths of using checklists consist of the clear identification of obligations (“identifying the so-called duty-bearer”) and the usefulness in justifying local needs. Due to their systematic nature, reporting is made easier against a checklist representing the targets and indicators of a given development issue. Targets or development goals in UNDP are human sustainable development goals and fully achieved human rights. This represents an ideal case scenario. Against this, indicators measure the progress made towards the attainment of human rights in practice. Indicators can be quantitative or descriptive and most checklists will contain both types of data.

In addition, comprehensive checklists are an educational tool for staff as well as outsiders, as it presents a roadmap and guiding instrument on advancing human rights in a local context. Depending on design, it can be used as a multidisciplinary tool and include different types of indicators. A checklist can identify UNDP’s or other donors’ duties, and thus also serve as an instrument for donor coordination.

However, while checklists bring the above mentioned benefits, the working group also noted that indicators are difficult to weigh and prioritize in the existing framework. Further improvement would seek to address this question of weighing, and also would further break down indicators to enable measurement at the local level. Also, capacities at the local level might not be sufficient to carry out independently a full scale analysis based on the checklist approach.

Working Group Conclusions

For UNDP purposes, the working group’s members noted that it is a mechanism that is transferable to other country offices and can be re-designed and adapted to a wide variety of local needs and situations, while still retaining an element of comparability across countries. It can be used not only in responsibility analysis, but also as a tool in assessing the capacity for the implementation of human rights standards.

cc. Baseline studies

The third Working Group on “Baseline Studies” highlighted the need for baseline studies to assess the situation on the ground. It combines qualitative and quantitative methodology (presented under the vulnerability assessments tool). Baseline studies are a good way to map the need for data and analysis in the process of municipal development planning.⁷ In Macedonia, a baseline study identified the vulnerable groups in three municipalities through structured interviews and household surveys. Local leadership groups consisting of local representatives from NGOs working with vulnerable groups, from private sector and the public sector are established in order to ensure participation and a connection to the local level. Local coordinators link up the local leadership

⁷ http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspsc=practice-4_h_5_4; <http://www.undp.org.mk/>

groups directly to the municipal self-government units and provide an institutionalized participation mechanism.

Analysis of Baseline studies

Baseline studies also uses a process that in itself is a valuable part of good governance as it provides the opportunity to voice issues for the members of the community. This can be an integrative element in the planning process. The survey methodology used in the Macedonian case is also easily adaptable to other cases and countries. The working group acknowledged the transferability of the material developed.

Baseline studies also fulfill an essential function in monitoring and evaluation, providing the reference point for future work and evaluation in a programme. IT represents the status quo, which is supposed to be changed to reach certain human development goals, in particular local targets of the MDGs. Due to the application of multiple research techniques, it is a measurement tool easily sensitized and adjusted to take account of all dimensions of human rights and gender in a given region and social group.



Baseline studies are not without problematic areas either. The working group highlighted the fact that the surveys are based on needs rather than rights, thus may neglect the situation as it should be over the status quo. Also, some baseline studies focus on socio-economic factors and variables and thus may not reflect the importance of political participation and rights to a sufficient degree. This is a matter of careful design. Sampling for baseline studies needs to be done carefully in order to ensure to capture the relevant information and gender sensitivity of the measurements. It may be valuable to include a process of capacity building so that the analytical part of the baseline study is done in the country and community rather than outsourced to experts abroad. In this way baseline studies can also produce capacity development effects on the local level.

Working Group Conclusions

Baseline studies are an important tool to identify the local situation from different perspectives and to capture a real picture of the local development situation. They are a flexible tool that can be adapted to many situations. Also, baseline studies already provide the starting point for continuous monitoring of

results and provide mechanisms for participation of the target group and all concerned stakeholders.

dd. Participatory mechanism/participation

A working group analyzed methodologies and tools for participation in local development planning. Participation is an essential element for all analyses used to determine intervention. It was presented as a principle just as much as a tool for better programming. The types of participatory mechanisms used must also be adapted to local cultures and customs, and also take into account the aim of the intervention. This is especially valid for programming aimed at integrating gender and human rights in the local development planning. Participation should be active, meaningful and free in order to bring benefits to the planning process. It is already in itself a manifestation of respect for human rights principles. An illustration of practical application on the local level was given by UNDP Armenia's capacity development project for women in local elections. Combining training elements on cross-cutting capacities and campaign management, the project accompanied potential council members; the project aided an increase in female representation in local councils on different levels and raised awareness on the role of women in local community mobilization and politics.

Analysis of participation

That participation is not for free is one of the main results of the analysis undertaken by the working group. It requires skills and knowledge on the side of the participants, time, and it is connected to opportunity costs for participants as well. From these costs derives one of the major challenges of participation: ensuring the inclusiveness of the process and avoiding elite capture. Obviously, elites will be in a better position to afford the costs connected to participation better than marginalized or vulnerable groups. It is UNDP's duty to ensure a real participation for target groups, regardless of status.

Requirements of participation

For organizers, participatory mechanisms need time and effort to build trust in/with the community in question. The design of mechanisms needs to make sure that the result of participation feeds into the entire programming cycle from project initiation to monitoring and evaluation. A common failure of project design is the lack of institutionalization for participatory mechanisms and the resulting marginal role it plays in the execution of the project. Also, UNDP should strive to strengthen the awareness of municipal partners of the need for participation in order to introduce this important concept into everyday local governance.

Bosnia's experience in participation underscores the importance of an analysis, which takes into account the different interests of stakeholders, their added value to the process and their scope of influence. Particular mechanisms for participation for the disadvantage need to be designed and followed through to ensure equal access. In addition, the process needs to be designed as to include participants in the implementation of the project.

Working Group Conclusions

Participation is a necessary way of operating programs aimed at promoting human rights and gender, especially at the local level. The design and

implementation of participatory mechanisms need to be strategic and thought through to include all groups and especially disadvantaged ones with less access to “traditional” forms of participation.

IV. Conclusions and Way Forward

a. Joint CoP conclusions

As major conclusions from the Joint CoP meeting emerged the need to enhance the effectiveness of available expertise and knowledge by providing tools that are easily transferable and usable across different national and local settings.

The use of in-house expertise in mainstreaming gender and promoting human rights should be used more effectively through the use of staff exchange schemes, advice from the Regional Centre and regular sub-regional meetings.

Experiences in the region need to be shared and made accessible on a more systematic basis including sharing materials developed in more advanced programmes. While sharing experiences and insights outside of UNDP, e.g. with local partners, it is important to convey the messages without excessive use of jargon and in a clear and easily accessible language.

The role of gender and human rights in monitoring and evaluation is still not fully developed and needs further elaboration.

b. The value added

The meeting concluded that the added value of working in an integrated manner in the area of local development and decentralization could be identified both during the implementation process as well as outcome level.

The integrated approach provides tools and guidance which takes into consideration a multitude of local development aspects, such as: socio-economic, institutional and political participation, and which facilitates the identification of relevant target groups. The outcome would be grounded in internationally recognized normative standards made accessible for the whole population.

The flexibility of integrated local developments allows addressing a wide variety of development challenges and also to mainstream human rights and gender into this variety. For the local population, this may mean a better focused assistance for vulnerable groups. It addresses shortcomings in the economic situation as much as it aims at rectifying the lack of political influence of disadvantaged groups. In that way, it makes a central difference in the many dimensions of vulnerable parts of the population.

c. Challenges

Approaching local development in an integrated manner also causes challenges such as lack of capacity available in the local administration, civil society, and at the individual level. An integrated approach to local development is very

demanding, as it is multi-dimensional and needs expertise in law, politics, administration, business, health and other sectors.

In order for integrated local development to take place, the capacity of the stakeholders identified need to be strengthened and continuously supported throughout the process. Their knowledge of and sensitivity towards vulnerability and poverty need to be strengthened to ensure the sustainability of interventions for the disadvantaged.

Also, challenges persist for development practitioners who will have to build teams that encompass all the different areas of intervention and tune the activities towards a common goal. It is necessary to develop a clear and understandable language, which can reach the local population as well as practitioners, in order avoid falling into a jargon trap.

d. The road ahead - forging an output oriented JCoP

On the basis of the meetings proceedings and in particular working group results the members of the Joint Community of Practice agreed on the following items as follow-up products on the meeting.

- a) Developing a Website for collecting not only meeting materials, but also information, tools, presentations etc. related to human rights and gender in local development programming**
- b) Drafting a generic presentation on HRBA, gender and LGD for advocacy and educational purposes**
- c) Elaborating on the tools reviewed during the meeting in a concise and practical toolkit**
- d) Reviewing current policies on staff and expert exchange schemes and disseminating the information among members of the JCoP**

Annex

Overview Lessons Learned Presentations (see below)

[Case Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Armenia](#)

[List of Participants](#)

[Concept Note](#)

[Annotated Bibliography](#)

Overview Lessons Learned Presentations

The following presentations can be viewed in their entirety at the site:
http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspc=practice-4_h_5_6

**1. Tools for Human Rights and Gender for Local Development
UNDP Macedonia**

UNDP Macedonia outlined several specific tools for HRBA and gender in local development as well as how they are implementing these tools in UNDP programming. They noted that, though Macedonia has a national legislative framework for human rights, local officials' low awareness of the needs of vulnerable groups, and an insufficient commitment to participatory planning are obstacles to implementing HRBA and gender mainstreaming approaches.

**2. Rights-based Development Program, RMAP_2006
UNDP Bosnia & Herzegovina**

UNDP BiH began implementing an RMAP strategy on a local level as early as 2002. Based on prior success, they recommend specific applications of HRBA to local development planning, specifically in terms of assessment and implementation. The presentation included several slides of specific rights-based checklists, placing particular emphasis on participation and inclusion (EU social inclusion agenda), and concluded with a summary of the National Capacity Development Programme future initiative.

**3. Applying a Human-Rights Based Approach and Mainstreaming Gender in
Local Development Programming and Implementation: Case of Municipal
Governance and Sustainable Development Programme (MGSDP) of UNDP,
UNDP Ukraine**

UNDP Ukraine incorporated HRBA and gender mainstreaming approaches in a recent MGSD Programme. In a list of lessons learned, they identified these approaches as an education process and noted that demonstration effect is the best motivating factor. In the future, UNDP Ukraine plans to continue to implement awareness activities, conduct impact assessments, establish multi-sector cooperation and develop success stories for replication of best practices.

**4. Gender Mainstreaming Training Sessions in the Regions (Marzes) and
Public Awareness Building on National Action Plan (NAP)
UNDP Armenia**

UNDP Armenia implemented a project that supported Armenia's adoption of the "NAP on the Improvement of Women's Situation and Enhancement of their Role in Society 2004-2010." The programs utilized training workshops and roundtables to increase awareness and produced ToRs, a manual, and a database for NAR Focal Points to overcome the challenge of lack of capacity for participation and access to information.

**5. Human Rights and Gender for Local Development Agenda
UNDP Moldova**

UNDP Moldova presented their local development portfolio with application of gender mainstreaming and the human rights based approach. They outlined the assumptions and approaches, and also defined entry points and evaluation strategies, specifically defining ex-post and ex-ante approaches. Future steps include further increases in awareness, inclusion, and capacities for gender expertise.

**6. Introduction of Performance Budgeting (PB) Mechanism at the
Community Level to Support the Achievement of MDGs
UNDP Armenia**

Performance/results-based budgeting is a system by which results are measured regularly and linkages are created between inputs and implementation. The process begins with a strategic planning process, followed by prioritization, budgeting, execution, and auditing and evaluation. There are many links between PB and HRBA including principles of participation, empowerment of individuals, and the encouragement of transparency and compatibility.

**7. UNDP Georgia's First Regional Development Initiative
UNDP Georgia**

UNDP Georgia implemented a regional development initiative in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Imereti regions with the goal of enhancing the capacity of local governments, creating mechanisms of donor coordination, raising human rights awareness, addressing gender inequalities and improving socio-economic conditions through training, particularly of women, and promoting transparency, accountability and anti-corruption.