

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



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Civil Society and Civic Engagement in the Latin America and Caribbean Region

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works with a diverse range of civil society organizations (CSOs) at regional, national and local levels in Latin America and the Caribbean to help lift people out of poverty, build strong, independent and resilient communities, promote human rights, and thereby advance the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To this end, UNDP helps to facilitate dialogue between governments and civil society to enhance partnerships and ensure civic participation in policy planning and reform and foster an environment where civil society can develop and operate.

UNDP in action

- In **El Salvador**, the [Young Entrepreneurs Safer Cities](#) programme, a community-driven initiative targeting men and women who neither study nor work is improving the life skills and family relations of young Salvadorians, promoting school reintegration, employability and entrepreneurship. The programme was developed in collaboration with governments at the national and local levels, civil society and the private sector, in Sonsonate and Santa Tecla. Between 2012 and 2013 it has helped to reduce the number of homicides in these towns from 44 to 12 and 23 to 14 per 100,000 respectively.
- In **Haiti**, UNDP and other UN agencies partner with the Government's ["16/6" Neighbourhoods Rehabilitation](#) programme to ensure community-led neighbourhood reconstruction efforts. More than 12,200 families have benefited from housing solutions or repaired housing. About 2,000 jobs were created (more than half of them for women) and three kilometres of roads built for neighbourhood access.



More than 1,000 civil society representatives from Colombia joined key international leaders and mediators to share experiences in bringing peace and democracy to conflict-torn society. Photo: UNDP Colombia

- In **Colombia**, UNDP is working to ensure that the peace talks take into account the voices of citizens, especially those who are most affected by conflict. UNDP and other UN agencies organized 19 [Regional Dialogues and three National Forums](#), with more than 9,700 victims of armed conflict who are part of 4,600 CSOs. Many of their proposals, delivered to peace negotiators, were incorporated in agreements covering rural development and political participation.
- UNDP is helping to improve responses to [HIV](#) and other health challenges in 17 countries in the region. UNDP has supported the first [Regional Network of Transgender People](#) (REDLACTRANS), increasing the participation of transgender people in decision-making spaces such as the Global Fund Country Coordinating Mechanisms, boosting leadership skills, and mobilizing resources to advance legal protection for transgender people. As a result of advocacy efforts by REDLACTRANS, a Gender Identity Law was passed in **Argentina** in May 2012. The law allows anybody to change their name on their documents to one that reflects their gender identity, without their having to undergo gender reassignment surgery.

- Since 2010, the regional initiative [Transparency and Accountability in Local Governments](#) has strengthened the capacity of nearly 200 civil society actors to ensure transparency, integrity and accountability in public decision-making processes. With the Latin American Capacity Building Network (comprising more than 30 CSOs) and the Stockholm Institute in Water Integrity, UNDP trained 25 Trainers of Trainers from 12 countries including **Brazil, El Salvador and Paraguay** on accountability and [integrity in water resources management](#) in 2014. As a result, participants have trained others in their countries, forging more than 25 alliances with CSOs, producing case studies, civil society mappings and manuals.

- The online platform [JuventudConVoz.org](#), managed by young leaders, has helped to raise the participation of young people, particularly women, indigenous peoples, afro-descendants and LGBTI. With more than 45,300 unique visitors in 2013, the online platform has encouraged young men and women to participate in debates on the post-2015 development framework and helped to build a regional youth agenda with the Ibero-American Youth Organization and Spain's International Agency for Cooperation.

- The UNDP [Youth Innovation](#) initiative (Youth-IN) has helped to train more than 1,700 youth in entrepreneurship. Youth-IN has partnered with the CARICOM Secretariat to promote entrepreneurship among 150 youth in **Jamaica, Belize, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Dominica** and the **Bahamas**. Of the 20 finalists in the Youth-IN and CARICOM Caribbean Innovation Challenge, six are eco-friendly start-ups, focusing on sustainable farming, solar and wind energy, eco-tourism and recycling.

- In **Mexico**, 127 youth CSOs, with training from UNDP and other UN agencies, contributed to the formulation of the National Youth Programme 2014-2018. UNDP also partnered with 42 CSOs to support the implementation of "ConstruyeT" (a partnership with the Ministry of Education) to help students and faculty tackle the underlying causes of addiction, pregnancy and violence in 2,500 schools.

- Through the [UN-REDD programme](#) UNDP promotes human rights, with special emphasis on the rights of indigenous peoples, in countries such as **Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay** and **Suriname**. UNDP facilitates dialogue

between representatives of governments, civil society and indigenous peoples, focusing on the right to free prior and informed consent.

- In **Bolivia** over 4,600 indigenous women have become entrepreneurs as a result of training and microloans from a UNDP/UN initiative with governments at the national and local levels. The [microcredit scheme "Semillas"](#) (seeds) is financed by the Government of Spain and supported by the Bolivian Ministry of Justice.

- UNDP is helping young leaders to enhance their capacity to design and implement [social audit processes](#), as practical tools to evaluate and/or audit government's performance. Since 2011, there have been two regional training of trainers' workshops, one for **Latin America** and one for **the Caribbean**, altogether involving 20 Country Offices. Also there have been five national replications of the workshop. UNDP has enhanced the capacities of nearly 200 young leaders (mostly young women) representing 80 youth civil society organizations. As a result youth organizations have performed social audits and engaged policy-makers in key areas, such as education, elections, and budget. Similarly, youth have created national and regional networks of social auditors.

For more information:

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