

A UNDP HOW-TO GUIDE

**LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS** 

BUILDING A RESILIENT FOUNDATION FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

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**COVER:** Villagers discuss community affairs in Bangladesh. (Photo: DRIK by Shehah Uddin)



# BUILDING A RESILIENT FOUNDATION FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT



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#### AUTHORS AND PROJECT TEAM

The author of the Guide is Nicolas Garrigue. Jago Salmon and Amita Gill have also contributed textual inputs to this Guide.

The project team consisted of Eugenia Piza-Lopez, Jairo Acuña-Alfaro, Nicolas Garrigue, Jago Salmon, Amita Gill and Kodjo Mensah-Abrampa. Benjamin Rogers and Samuel Gerstin provided valuable research and editing support during the drafting process. Gillian Chalmers was immensely helpful in overseeing the design and production stages of the Guide.

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- El Salvador: Marcella Smut, Daniel Carsana and Jenny Espinosa (UNDP El Salvador)
- Colombia: Paloma Blanch (UNDP Colombia) and Lurdes Gomez (UNDP New York)
- Liberia: Jago Salmon (UNDP New York)

- Somalia: Kodjo Mensah-Abrampa (UNDP New York)
- Sri Lanka: Rajendrakumar Ganesarajah (UNDP Sri Lanka) and Amita Gill (UNDP New York)
- South Sudan: Kwabena Asante-Ntiamoah and Tapiwa Kamuruko (UNV Bonn)
- Mozambique: John Barnes (UNDP Mozambique)
- Palestine: Sakher Al Ahmed, Ahmed Shurafa, Ibrahim Bisharat and Abla Amawi (UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People)

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## **FOREWORD**

The 21st century has ushered in a new era of global threats to peace and security. In 2015, over a quarter of the world's population live in fragile and conflict-affected settings, and the number of displaced persons has reached levels comparable to those recorded after the Second World War. The interpersonal, criminal and political violence they face does not only threaten their safety, but also the enjoyment of their inherent political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The nature of fragility and conflict is increasingly complex, context-specific and protracted. With short-term, security-focused policies proving ineffective, and at times counterproductive, there is a growing recognition that multi-dimensional approaches are more attuned to helping restore a robust social contract between the state and its people, which is an essential foundation for durable peace and sustainable development.

Given that local institutions, systems and processes represent for most people the daily interface between state and society, local governance is a critical arena for these efforts. Inclusive and accountable local governance can help restore social cohesion in divided communities, facilitate participation in public life, distribute resources and opportunities equitably, safeguard minority rights, and test new forms of decision-making that blend formal and informal processes of representation and participation.

UNDP strongly advocates for more focused policies and a greater share of development resources to be allocated to building responsive local governments and inclusive local governance systems. Such investment is especially needed in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where communities drained by the debilitating effects of conflict and insecurity will face additional challenges in realizing the ambitious goals set forth by the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Accordingly, UNDP has also adjusted its own programming, with UNDP interventions in the governance sector in crisis-affected countries dedicated increasingly to local governance interventions. For example, in war-torn Somalia, UNDP and its partners are helping

to rebuild a functional local administration that collects taxes and delivers services. In Lebanon, UNDP supports municipalities in maintaining social cohesion in communities challenged by the arrival of more than one million Syrian refugees. In Colombia, UNDP helps build inclusive territorial alliances for peace to support the implementation of a much-anticipated peace accord.

The challenges and risks associated with local governance programming in the immediate aftermath of conflict or in contexts of systemic fragility, unbridled criminal violence or protracted conflict, remain immense. UNDP's support to local governance in these settings needs to be guided by a set of options and a theory of change cognizant of the complex political economies that influence the pace and trajectory of development outcomes in such environments. The Guide on Local Governance in Fragile and Conflict-affected Settings: Building a Resilient Foundation for Peace and Development is UNDP's first comprehensive effort to respond to these programming needs.

The Guide draws upon the extensive experience of UNDP and the United Nations system in working with local governance institutions in fragile and conflict-affected settings. It emphasizes the need to secure a strong social contract at the local level for building state legitimacy, improving livelihoods, and ultimately, strengthening resilience against the recurrence of violence and conflict

I hope that users of this Guide, within but also outside of UNDP, will find it to be a valuable tool in support of their efforts to effectively respond to the immediate needs of vulnerable populations in situations of fragility and conflict, while laying the foundations for resilient local governance systems over the long term.

**Patrick Keuleers** 

Director, Governance and Peacebuilding Bureau for Policy and Programme Support United Nations Development Programme

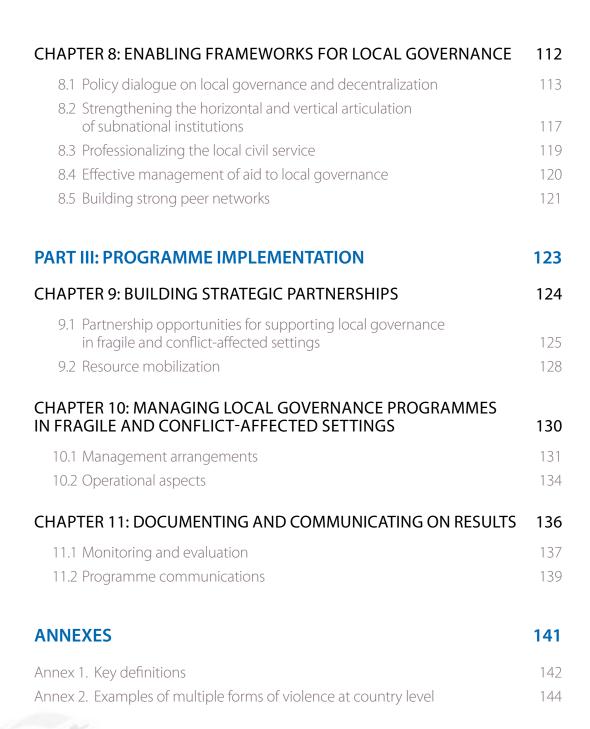
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