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United Nations Development Programme

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.
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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.

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	ix
INTRODUCTION	x
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	xiv
PART I: CONCEPTUAL AND PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORKS	1
CHAPTER 1: UNDP'S APPROACH TO LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS	2
1.1 Clarifying terminology and concepts	3
1.2 Theory of change: How transforming local governance can contribute to building resilient peace and restoring development pathways	7
1.3 Dealing with the diversity of contexts	32
1.4 An integrated framework for action for local governance in fragile and conflict-affected settings	34
CHAPTER 2: ASSESSING LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SITUATIONS OF FRAGILITY AND CONFLICT AND DESIGNING A PROGRAMME: PRINCIPLES AND TOOLS	40
2.1 Situation analysis	41
2.2 Building the programme strategy	44
2.3 Cross-cutting considerations	49
2.4 Identifying and mitigating risks in programme design	54
2.5 Setting targets for meaningful results	58



PART II: REVIEW OF PROGRAMME COMPONENTS	63
CHAPTER 3: BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITIES FOR SERVICE DELIVERY	64
3.1 The restoration or upgrading of local government operational capacities, including staffing	66
3.2 Building core capacities of local governments	69
3.3 Support to local service delivery systems	70
3.4 Improving local finances	72
3.5 Fighting corruption in local governance	72
CHAPTER 4: VOICE AND PARTICIPATION	76
4.1 Building local civil society capacities for voice and participation	77
4.2 Establishing viable mechanisms to increase participatory local governance	78
4.3 Social accountability	80
4.4 Access to public information	80
CHAPTER 5: MANAGING LAND, NATURAL RESOURCES AND LOCAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY	84
5.1 Spatial planning and territorial management	85
5.2 Local economic recovery	89
5.3 Natural resource management and the extractive industries	93
CHAPTER 6: LOCAL POLITICAL PROCESSES	96
6.1 Promotion of inclusive politics	97
6.2 Local electoral processes	100
6.3 Parliamentary development in local representative councils	101
CHAPTER 7: MANAGING LOCAL CONFLICTS AND INCREASING COMMUNITY SECURITY	104
7.1 Support to local peace committees and their networks	105
7.2 Community-based reconciliation and transitional justice	106
7.3 Community security and social cohesion	108
7.4 Fighting sexual and gender-based violence	109
7.5 Increase access to justice for all	110



CHAPTER 8: ENABLING FRAMEWORKS FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE 112

- 8.1 Policy dialogue on local governance and decentralization 113
- 8.2 Strengthening the horizontal and vertical articulation of subnational institutions 117
- 8.3 Professionalizing the local civil service 119
- 8.4 Effective management of aid to local governance 120
- 8.5 Building strong peer networks 121

PART III: PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION 123

CHAPTER 9: BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS 124

- 9.1 Partnership opportunities for supporting local governance in fragile and conflict-affected settings 125
- 9.2 Resource mobilization 128

CHAPTER 10: MANAGING LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAMMES IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS 130

- 10.1 Management arrangements 131
- 10.2 Operational aspects 134

CHAPTER 11: DOCUMENTING AND COMMUNICATING ON RESULTS 136

- 11.1 Monitoring and evaluation 137
- 11.2 Programme communications 139

ANNEXES 141

- Annex 1. Key definitions 142
- Annex 2. Examples of multiple forms of violence at country level 144

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

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