



UNDP Coordination of UN Recovery Efforts in the Chernobyl Region

A broad range of United Nations initiatives have assisted those affected by the Chernobyl nuclear accident of 26 April 1986, from the immediate aftermath through the present. Two decades after the event, the focus of UN activities is now strongly on recovery—supporting the region and its people in their efforts to return to normalcy and prosperity.

In 2004, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced that the **United Nations Development Programme** would assume the responsibility of coordinating all UN system activities contributing to that recovery. UNDP is now coordinating the work of **FAO, IAEA, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNSCEAR, UNV, WHO** and other UN agencies in the affected region, and UNDP Administrator Kemal Derviş also serves as the UN-wide Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl.

This transfer of responsibility to UNDP demonstrated Secretary-General Annan's recognition that the challenges facing the communities in the region are best addressed through economic development and creation of new livelihoods, rather than emergency relief. UNDP seeks to counteract the lack of information, the culture of dependency, myths and misconceptions about Chernobyl, "victim syndrome," apathy and fatalism among the six million poor people in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine who feel the effects of the disaster to this day. Unsure how to solve their problems, many lose hope and resort to alcohol and drug abuse, violence and other high-risk behaviour. Through targeted assistance toward the most vulnerable groups of affected citizens, improved local living standards, new jobs, investment and growth, and restoration of community self-reliance and self-sufficiency, these people and communities will finally heal. Toward that end, UNDP and its UN system partners are working to help advance sustainable social and economic development in the area.

UNDP has identified three priority areas in its own operations in the region: **provision of information**, including promoting healthy lifestyles; **community-based social and economic development**, including encouraging activism and helping people overcome "victim syndrome" and its accompanying fatalism and hopelessness; and **policy advice**, aimed at maintaining governments' engagement with Chernobyl recovery. Just as it coordinates the work of other UN agencies in the Chernobyl recovery for maximum impact, UNDP strives to ensure that its own efforts work in complement with others. Similar efforts are taking place more broadly throughout the UN system as part of the "One UN" drive toward greater efficiency worldwide.

For years, Chernobyl's legacy has been one of victims and despair. UNDP and its partners are working to change that—to support the region's people as they push forward, out of victimhood, through healing, sustainable development, and finally, to prosperity. ■

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