



PRESS RELEASE

ANNOUNCING THE 2004 UNDP AWARDS FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**Outstanding Achievement in Addressing Human Needs is Recognised;
Honourees are from Latin America, South Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe**

NEW YORK – 15 December, 2004 -- Argentina, Colombia, Latvia, West Bengal, Zambia and the Roma people of Eastern Europe are among those being honoured by the United Nations Development Programme in recognition of their excellence in the field of human development. The 2004 UNDP Awards for Human Development Reports will be presented during a special ceremony in New York on 15 December, 2004. At the same time, the Mahbub ul Haq Award for Outstanding Contribution to Human Development will go to **Mr. Fazle Hasan Abed, founder of Bangladesh's BRAC** (formerly know as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee).

What is a Human Development Report? It is a roadmap toward improving the lives of millions of people through a highly integrated assessment and accounting of basic human needs on the ground, combined with innovative, often groundbreaking proposals to tackle the perennial challenges of poverty and lack of opportunities and choices.

These important documents are not produced simply to gather dust on the bookshelf. They bring public debate and political attention to the pressing needs of people in developing countries. They urgently and eloquently call on the global community to take action to help meet these challenges. More importantly, they propose concrete solutions to mobilise the resources, policies and political will to overcome poverty and create growth, equality, freedom, and investment in basic needs.

This year's awards for excellence in Human Development Reports will be presented to the following:

***West Bengal Report 2004 -- Land Reform and Decentralisation; "EXCELLENCE IN QUALITY OF Analysis Award,"* accepted by Ashok Gupta, Chief Secretary of West Bengal, India**

West Bengal ranks in the middle in per-capita income in India, but has life expectancies far above national averages, with infant mortality among the lowest in India. Far-reaching land reform has expanded farm output dramatically, and members of the lowest Hindu caste now have their own land for the first time. The Report offers policies for development that emphasise job creation and literacy, especially among females and the lowest castes.

***Roma in Central and Eastern Europe 2002 -- Avoiding the Dependency Trap; regional winner of the "Excellence in Policy Impact Award,"* accepted by Andrey Ivanov, Lead Author.**

Based on the first comprehensive survey of the Roma minority in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, this Report reveals chronic hunger and widespread poverty. They are victims of a dependency trap, leading to inequality, discrimination and virtual exclusion. This Report warns that the potential for political extremism and human misery could worsen without intervention. It calls for integration of

Roma into society through non-segregated schools, anti-discrimination measures, access to job training, and greater political participation.

Argentina Report 2002 -- Contributions to Human Development; national winner, “Excellence in Policy Impact Award,” (tentatively) accepted by Roberto Lavagna, Minister of the Economy, Argentina.

Even amid political and economic turmoil, it is essential to address human development needs. Argentina’s economy is deteriorating, fuelling a crisis of inequality, malnutrition and falling incomes, especially in northern provinces, where 30-40% of the people cannot meet basic needs. Faith in the nation’s political institutions has faltered, yielding widespread cynicism and despair. The Report offers 18 “Proposals for Human Development” for economic integration, democratic reforms, improved education and more public participation in political life.

Colombia Report 2003 -- The Conflict, a Way Out; “Excellence in a Participatory and Inclusive Process Award,” accepted by Hernando Gomez Buendia, noted political analyst and Lead Author.

After 40 years of conflict, the war in Colombia has failed. With seemingly no exit from the struggle, this unblinking examination of violence in Colombia proposes one: human development. War must be curbed at its roots. Ways out include: alternatives to dissuade youth from recruitment into violence and taking up arms, cutting off funding sources for war (kidnapping, money laundering, gem trafficking), demobilisation, state-provided public security and better education. To fight drug production, it proposes debt cancellation for crop eradication and royalties for preserving fragile ecosystems.

Latvia Report 2002-2003--Human Security; “Excellence in Human Development Innovations–Concepts or Measurement Award,” accepted by Mara Simane, Lead Author.

A development success story, Latvia has “graduated” to membership in the European Union. Yet the country’s transition over the past 15 years from oppressive rule to democracy has polarised society and created high levels of insecurity. The Report identifies health, economics, and personal security as the main challenges facing the population, compounded by fear of drug trafficking, HIV and AIDS and ecological degradation. Award judges commended it for challenging the traditional focus on military and police security.

Zambia Report 2003 -- Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger; Winner of the “Excellence in Support of the Millennium Development Goals Award,” accepted by Muyunda Mwanalushi, Chancellor, Copperbelt University.

Despite its relatively liberal economy and natural resources, most Zambians struggle in poverty, with two-thirds facing food insecurity. This Report finds that poverty and hunger, while still predominantly rural phenomena, are now rising in urban areas. A weak economy and inadequate access to infrastructure are largely to blame, though drought, livestock disease and HIV and AIDS also contribute. Innovative technologies such as conservation farming, however, show great promise for economic stabilisation.

Fazle Hasan Abed - Founder, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, (BRAC) Winner of the Mahbub ul Haq Award for Outstanding Contribution to Human Development.

Fazle Hasan Abed is being recognised for his extraordinary achievements in helping the rural poor to combat hunger, disease and illiteracy on a massive scale, BRAC is a non-governmental organisation working in every district in Bangladesh with people

whose lives are dominated by extreme poverty, discrimination and exploitation. More than \$2 billion in BRAC micro-loans have been disbursed with no collateral, with a 98% repayment rate. To link rural producers with expanding urban markets, BRAC operates commercial ventures, including the second largest dairy in the country. Their programmes in health and nutrition have reached 31 million, many in the most remote and marginalised areas. This work has made a significant contribution to Bangladesh's achievement of the fastest decline in infant mortality rates in Asia.

Final selections for the awards were made by a group of eminent scholars including Mahnaz Afkhami, President, Women's Learning Partnership and former Minister of State for Women's Affairs in Iran; Princess Basma Bint Talal of Jordan; Kwesi Botchwey, Executive Chairman, African Development Policy Ownership Initiative, and former Minister of Finance in Ghana; and Moisés Naím, Editor, *Foreign Policy*, and former Minister of Trade and Industry in Venezuela. The audience for the awards ceremony will include important figures from the business, diplomatic, media, philanthropic, UN and university communities, and from immigrant communities of the Northeastern United States.

“The goal of human development is to put people back at the centre of the development process,” said **UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown**, who will host the proceedings on **15 December, at 6:30 PM**, along with **Juju Chang**, the Emmy Award-winning correspondent for ABC News and “20/20” Reporter. “It is about expanding choices for people, to enable them to enjoy long and healthy lives, knowledge, fair access to the resources and the ability to participate in the life of the community.”

UNDP has helped more than 135 developing countries and five regions to produce their own national and regional Human Development Reports. These Reports, written by local experts, spur public debate and bring political attention to pressing development needs. They propose concrete solutions to mobilise the resources, policies and political will to overcome poverty and bring about growth, equality, investment in people's basic needs, and freedom. They also help donor governments measure the impact of aid dollars.

To attend, or to request more information on the UNDP Awards or **interviews with any of the awardees, please contact David Kirby at 212-906-3693 or david.kirby@undp.org.**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the global development network of the United Nations. UNDP advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP is on the ground in 166 countries, working with people on their own solutions to global and national development challenges.