

The UNCT in Kuwait welcomed two new resident agencies in 2008. The World Bank office in Kuwait opened in August 2008, with the fielding of a Country Manager and additional international and national staff. The World Bank office will work primarily with the Ministry of Finance, providing technical assistance and advisory support to Kuwait on macroeconomic and financial policy.

In November 2008, UN-HABITAT formally opened a regional office in Kuwait, which is housed within the Arab Towns Organization. The UN-Habitat Office will partner together with ATO to promote sustainable urbanization and to achieve adequate human shelters for the growing population of city-dwellers throughout the Arab Region.

The UNRC Office provided a broad range of support to both offices to support them in their critical start-up phase.

Summary on progress towards UNDAF outcomes

The UNCT agencies in Kuwait engaged in 2 joint programmes in 2008. The first joint programme was in the gender thematic area, and was undertaken in partnership with key civil society groups, to co-sponsor the highly visible Family Law Awareness campaign to raise knowledge and understanding amongst the public of how existing laws impact women and men differently. Following up on this joint programme, the UNCT established for the first time in Kuwait an inter-agency Gender Thematic Group which seeks to share information on gender issues and establish coordinated support mechanisms. Additionally, UNDP Kuwait launched a long dormant project on Equitable Participation – which aimed at identifying constraints for women as candidates and as voters.

The second joint programme in 2008 was the UNCT-sponsored humanitarian reporting workshop for journalists which was co-organized by the United Nations Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), with expert representation also from UNICEF and UNHCR. The inter-agency workshop succeeded in familiarizing journalists with the international humanitarian system, provided reference points and suggestions for possible stories, and stimulated debate about the UN and the media's role in humanitarian crises, particularly those in the region.

Additionally, in 2008, the UNCT Kuwait, under the leadership of UNHCR co-sponsored an educational event on World Refugee Day with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society highlighting the situation of refugees throughout the world. Also, on the occasion of United Nations Day, all UNCT members participated in a joint press conference to share information and raise awareness on their agency's activities and accomplishments in Kuwait. Arabic language materials, including 60 ways the United Nations makes a Difference were distributed.

On the security side, all CSMT members received UNDSS security management training on risk management approach to security; SRA's were reviewed and enhanced for Kheitan-UNAMI compound, new UN House building, and new UN Habitat Office. Through long process of negotiation with host government, the new UN House was finally made MOSS-compliant in 2008 through building of concrete barrier wall to provide necessary stand off zone; and coordination mechanism with host government was implemented in 2008 to share information on potential security threats to the United Nations.

In 2008, collectively the UNCT members published 22 articles/news stories on UN Agency's activities in Kuwait on the UNCT website, including contributions from all 6 UNCT member agencies.

Summary on progress in UN Reform

In 2008, the UN Country Team supported the Supreme Council for Planning and Development in its efforts to formulate a National Development Plan for Kuwait, the first such national plan to be formulated since the 1980s.

Originally, the National Development Plan was meant to be submitted to the National Assembly in October 2008, however, due to numerous changes in the Government and the dissolution of the National Assembly in March 2008, this deadline has not been met.

The UNCT, primarily through technical support from UNDP, is continuing to support the Supreme Council for Planning and Development on the National Development Plan which is now scheduled to cover the period FY 2009 - FY 2013. The plan is being revised taking into account the dramatic decline in the price of oil, which accounts for most of the government's revenues.

The plan will serve as a foundation for future UNCT work in Kuwait.

Key aspects of the proposed 2009 workplan

UNCT joint activities in 2009 will focus on gender equality and labour issues. These two areas are critical to the mandate of the UN Agencies resident in Kuwait and are also key areas where Kuwait needs support in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Gender mainstreaming training will be conducted for all UNCT agencies during the year.