



United Nations Development Programme
United Nations Capital Development Fund



SCALING UP INTEGRATED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT INNOVATIONS

A GLOBAL PROGRAMME PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL

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“Focusing on fulfilling local needs is another way to bridge the MDG gap... UNDP will provide support through a new global initiative and funding framework to scale up MDG interventions and efforts at the local level in partnership with UNCDF and building on successful global platforms such as GEF Small Grants Programme during 2009-2013.”

‘UNDP’s MDG
Breakthrough Strategy’

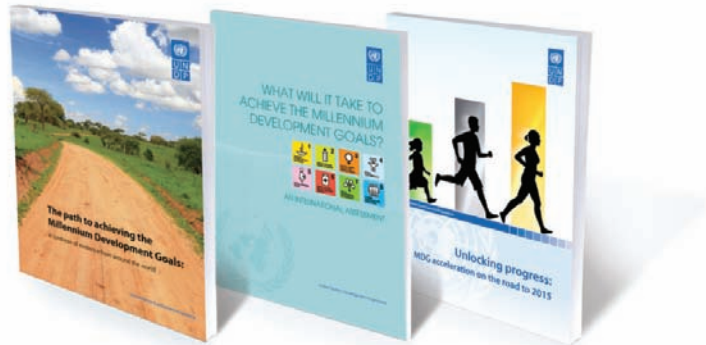
I. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

With just five years until the 2015 target date, many countries have made substantial progress toward achieving their nationally set targets. Before 2008, many developing countries enjoyed strong economic growth that helped reduce poverty and strengthen public service delivery. Even with the recent economic downturn, “progress on poverty reduction is still being made,” and “the developing world as a whole remains on track to achieve the poverty reduction target by 2015” (UN MDG Report, 2010). Major advances are being made in increasing primary school attendance even in the poorest countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Improvements have been made in key health interventions, such as malaria control and HIV prevention and treatment, and provision of immunization (UN MDG Report, 2010). The wide application of technology such as mobile phones has improved access to information, markets and services for many of the world’s poor. Evidence from the past decade confirms that, even in the most challenging circumstances, the MDGs are achievable if they enjoy sustained commitment from governments and international partners.

However, progress toward the MDGs has been uneven, and large disparities still persist among and within countries. The recent financial crisis and the resulting global economic recession, as well as climate change, are directly harming the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable. In many fragile states, least developed countries (LDCs), and countries in or emerging from conflict, there is a real threat of halt or reversal of the progress made toward the MDGs. As a result of the recent economic crisis, an estimated 50 million more people will fall into poverty by the end of 2010 and one third of the world population—about 2 billion people—remains in poverty, living on \$2 or less per day (WB Global Monitoring Report, 2010). The impact of the crisis is felt deeply across other MDGs: under-five child mortality could reach 1.2 million, some 350,000 children will fail to complete primary school, and 100 million more people will lose access to safe drinking water (Global Monitoring Report, 2010). Furthermore, the economic crisis and climate change disproportionately affect women, children and vulnerable groups.

Progress toward the MDGs continues, but there are persisting and increasing inequalities “between the rich and the poor, between rural populations or those living in slums and better off urban populations, and those disadvantaged by geographic location, sex, age, disability and ethnicity” (UN MDG Report, 2010). Lack of access to essential public services such as health and education, infrastructure facilities such as water and sanitation, productive assets such as land, and limited opportunities to be engaged in decent employment threaten to perpetuate poverty across generations. The recent MDG International Assessment reported that countries with greater inequality are more likely to make slower progress toward the MDGs, and poverty, measured at \$1.25 per day, tends to be 42% higher in such countries than in countries with lower disparities. Disparities in nutrition between rural and urban children have increased in Latin America, the Caribbean and parts of Asia. In Southern Asia, 60% of children in the poorest regions were underweight, compared with 25% in the richest households (UN MDG Report, 2010). Disparities in access to quality education and health services disproportionately affect the poor, especially women and girls. Three fourths of those who do not have access to water live in rural areas (UNDP International Assessment (IA), 2010).

TURNING EVIDENCE INTO PRACTICE



Almost all countries, including LDCs, low-income countries (LICs), and even middle-income countries, have individuals and groups who have been excluded from the benefits of development by reason of their geographic location and ethnicity. Often, these are indigenous populations and/or people living in remote areas. In Nepal, for example, “individuals from lower caste and indigenous ethnic groups are disproportionately poorer” than other groups (MDG Synthesis Report, 2010). In Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, groups and individuals are often isolated and do not benefit from the development processes, which are concentrated in the capital cities (MDG country case studies). In Namibia and Mozambique, rural inhabitants often lack access to essential services, and in Bhutan, most people in rural areas rely on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods.

Evidence across the board shows that MDG strategies are much more likely to succeed when national governments work closely with local governments, civil society, and the private sector (IA, 2010). When participatory, MDG-based local plans more accurately reflect realities, needs and demands, allowing more effective targeting of excluded individuals and groups. When national and local governments cooperate, MDG localization can result in quick impacts through targeted transfer of resources and capacity investments. It is evident that, in conflict and post-conflict settings, local-level, non-state actors, community-based approaches and informal institutions play a critical role in service delivery and peacebuilding efforts (IA, 2010 and Somalia country case).

It has been proven that local actors (governments, communities, the private sector, and non-government organizations) play a crucial role in the achievement of the MDGs. Many countries, even the poorest and most vulnerable ones, have shown that when investments are made at the local level, progress toward the MDGs is more sustainable and faster. For example, a national reforestation programme succeeded when land ownership and responsibilities were transferred to local communities (MDG Synthesis Report, 2010). Local authorities and regional governments in Peru, Egypt and Niger have

BOX 1

Rationale for Investing in MDGs at the Local Level

MDG 1: Poverty, Employment and Food Security. Successful poverty alleviation, employment generation and food production efforts need to be based on local realities and initiatives and require the participation of and ownership by local governments and communities. Often, local-level MDG initiatives fall prey to endless piloting, without any real commitments by central governments and donors to scaling up and sustaining the results.

MDGs 2–7: Service Delivery for Education, Health, Water and Sanitation. Setting up and maintaining delivery mechanisms for essential MDG services such as primary health care, education, and basic infrastructure are the main responsibility of decentralized local governments. Yet, local governments everywhere are chronically underfunded, both by central governments and donors. Evidence from the field suggests that capacity development efforts at the local level are often overlooked, dismissed or mismatched with real needs, resulting in disparities and inequalities.

MDG 3: Gender Empowerment. Women and youth are catalysts of change in their households, communities and districts. Investing in efforts that directly target women, youth and children, such as primary health care, clean water and green energy, girl-friendly schools and small, sustainable agricultural practices, can immediately improve the well-being of everyone. Often, empowering women at the local level leads to better educated and nourished children, better management of natural resources, and stronger local ownership and accountability of development results.

MDG 7: Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability. Community adaptation and mitigation efforts to minimize the negative effects of climate change are effective when implemented at the local level in combination with MDG interventions. All public investments in MDGs, whether for employment generation through sustainable agricultural practices or development of green energy sources for clinics, schools and households, can greatly benefit efforts to preserve the environment and protect ecosystems.

MDG 8: Local Capacity Development. Developing local capacity is essential for ensuring aid effectiveness and sustainability of efforts supported by development partners. A global partnership becomes concrete by delivering basic services at the local level. Governments, service delivery agents, civil society organizations and private sectors working together are key for guaranteeing buy-in and sustainability of local development processes.

successfully implemented integrated anti-poverty and nutrition programmes. Morocco reduced poverty in certain localities by as much as 95% through its targeted national initiative for human development, which local municipalities implemented. In Nepal, enrolment rates substantially increased in targeted areas when education responsibilities were transferred to locally elected committees. In conflict-ridden Somaliland and Puntland, local transitional authorities have been the only channels of delivery of essential services and protection to communities. Rwanda is making progress in maternal and child health by transferring responsibilities and funding for health services to local communities. Despite years of conflict, Sri Lanka succeeded in maintaining essential health services, and thus progress toward MDGs 4 and 5, by investing in rural health personnel. Box 1 above summarizes the primary reasons for investing in MDGs at the local level.

II. INVESTING IN MDGS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The increasing recognition of widening disparities in achievement of the MDGs calls for interventions that are better tailored to address development needs and priorities at the subnational level. Even in countries that are on track to achieve all or most of the MDGs at the national level (Mexico, Vietnam), there is an acknowledged need to emphasize more nuanced interventions, to go beyond ‘one-formula-fits-all’ approaches, and to recognize the role that local actors can play in addressing development challenges that do not simply conform to ‘average’ countrywide prognoses (GDHS, Mexico, 2006; MPI, Vietnam, 2009).

Local governments, in particular, have a critical role to play in addressing disparities in progress toward the MDGs¹. By virtue of their mandate, proximity, accountability to local constituents, and convening role, local governments are often pivotal in identifying and delivering locally relevant MDG interventions (Helling et al., 2005). Roles and responsibilities vary across countries according to systems of subnational governance, as decentralized systems of delivery can range from the highly devolved to the deconcentrated (see Box 2)².

BOX 2

Decentralized Delivery: Three Approaches

The transfer of functions from the central to the local level can take three forms (most countries exhibit two or more types of decentralized delivery):

- **Deconcentration:** Responsibility remains with the central government, but is dispersed from central government officials located within the capital to central government officials located outside the capital, or at the regional or local level. Responsible officials remain employees of, and accountable to, the central government.
- **Delegation:** The central government temporarily transfers management responsibilities to local organs on an agency basis or through a contract-type arrangement. Local entities have some operational autonomy, but their performance remains accountable to the central government. The central government provides the required resources and retains ultimate responsibility for the function being delegated.
- **Devolution:** Decision-making authority and resources for the devolved function are transferred to local governments, which become fully responsible for delivery and directly accountable to local constituents.

¹ The term ‘local government’ here is used to refer to subnational government: the regional/state/provincial level, as well as the municipal/district level. The number of government tiers varies from country to country.

² Despite such variability, it is generally acknowledged that there are broadly defined roles that different tiers of government are better positioned to play: (i) Central government: policy and legal/regulatory frameworks, national standards of service and performance; (ii) Provincial/state government: oversight and strategic interventions at provincial/state level; (iii) Municipal/district-level government: delivery of basic services and basic infrastructure (adapted from Shah et al., 2006). In reality, however, functional assignments across tiers of government rarely conform to such a neat division of labour. Adapted from Litvak and Seddon (1999) and UNCDF (2009).



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