

11 Localising the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Asia-Pacific Region

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent a global partnership that has emerged from the commitments and targets established at the world summits of the 1990s. Responding to the world's main development challenges and to the calls of civil society, MDGs promote poverty reduction, education, maternal health, gender equality, and aim at combating child mortality, AIDS and other diseases. With 2015 as the deadline for their achievement, the MDGs are an agreed set of goals that can be achieved if all actors work together and do their part. Poor countries have pledged to govern better and invest in their people through health care and education. Rich countries have promised to support the poorer countries through development aid, debt relief, and fairer trade.

When the *Millennium Development Declaration* was signed in September 2000, 191 United Nations member states agreed to try to achieve the following goals by the year 2015:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

Clearly UN-HABITAT, with its mandate for poverty alleviation and promoting sustainable human settlements that can contribute to human well-being, now and in the future, has thrown its full support behind this long overdue global effort. Specifically, it has focused its efforts on *Target 11*:

"By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, as proposed in the 'Cities Without Slums' initiative."

Recognising that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were formulated in a "top down" manner by UN member governments in 2000, UN-HABITAT has been helping to translate the MDGs into relevant local priority goals, because, ultimately, MDGs can only be achieved at local levels where people live and work in villages, towns, and cities around the world.



Achieving significant improvements in the lives of some 100 million slum dwellers requires large financial resources.

Given its role as the UN agency for local authorities, UN-HABI TAT has been conducting a pilot programme *Localising the Millennium Development Goals* (LMDGs) that engages local authorities, community leaders, and civil society in formulating their own local action plans to meet MDG targets. In Asia, UN-HABI TAT's pilot programme has been focusing on three countries, namely Vietnam, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka.



Community leaders discuss how to achieve MDGs in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

“Localisation” in this programme essentially recognises the key role of the city as the economic, social, cultural, and creative hub of human activity that will lead the concerted effort to achieve the MDGs by interpreting the set of eight global goals into practicable local actions. Strategically, the programme gives due recognition to the exemplary initiatives of some cities in the region to progressively realise the MDG targets in their poor local communities where it matters most.

The programme also facilitates exchange visits to such cities by multi-stakeholder groups from other cities that are only starting their localisation process. In countries where there are poverty alleviation and settlements improvement policies under formulation or review, the programme also sensitises and informs government policy-makers on the MDGs to ensure that the new policies support them.

ROAP–Fukuoka’s Support to MDGs

The Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and the Habitat Agenda issued at the Habitat II Conference in 1996 constitute a global contract towards improving the living conditions in the world’s cities, towns and villages. Together they assign UN-HABI TAT the mandate of coordinating and assisting all states to make a concerted and sustained effort to achieve adequate shelter for all. An additional goal is to make human settlements safer, healthier and more liveable, equitable and sustainable. The Habitat Agenda requests UN-HABI TAT to “act as a catalyst in the mobilisation of technical cooperation and in promoting integrated and cohesive policies at all levels aiming at achieving adequate shelter for all”.

Recognising that the implementation of Habitat Agenda clearly contributes directly to several MDG goals and targets, the

ROAP-Fukuoka has been able to draw upon its detailed knowledge of the extent of urban poverty and its considerable experience in working with its partners at all levels to identify ways and means of implementing activities to achieve the goals of both in parallel. At the same time, rigorous local level data collection and reporting on city-level data are unique features of the ROAP-Fukuoka’s monitoring activities for the Habitat Agenda and the MDGs.

Achieving significant improvements in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers requires large financial resources. Therefore the ROAP-Fukuoka’s funding strategies are focusing on localising the MDGs and stimulating innovative approaches to pre-investment and project preparation to leverage international and domestic resources to expand and accelerate slum upgrading activities in this region.