Government’s Role in Realization of the Millennium Development Goals

by: Erna Witoelar
UN Special Ambassador for MDGs in Asia & the Pacific *
World’s Social Justice Challenges

**POVERTY:** More than one billion people in the world live on less than a dollar a day. Another 1.8 billion struggle to survive on less than $2 per day.

**EDUCATION:** Around the world, a total of 114 million children do not get even a basic education and 584 million women are illiterate.

**HEALTH:** Life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa is less than 55 years – and dropping.

**WATER AND SANITATION:** Four out of every ten people in the world don't have access even to a simple latrine; and two in ten have no source of safe drinking water.
Governments’ Commitments: The Millennium Declaration

At the UN Millennium Summit in Sept 2000, 189 member states adopted the Millennium Declaration, to cooperate among others on: development & poverty reduction; peace, security & disarmament; environment protection; human rights, democracy and good governance; etc.

The Declaration is translated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with specific, concrete and inter-related targets, indicators, and time frame to be achieved by 2015.
The MDGs are inter-related

1. Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger
7. Ensure environmental sustainability

2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality & empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria & other diseases
8. Develop a global partnership for development

→ many countries are on track in achieving the MDGs, some earlier than 2015, but others need more support & partnerships to achieve some Goals
Interdependence of MDGs:

**Holistic approach**: working towards achieving one Goal will make us closer to achievements of the rest & would reduce costs of achieving the others.

**Synergistic relationships** among goals: where a single intervention will achieve advances in multiple goals across sectors, it’s much more cost-effective than if applied in a single sector.

→ It needs improved governance to accommodate a holistic approach & pro-poor development.
The Millennium Development Compact

→ an action framework that builds on the deal, made at the Millennium Declaration, between developed and developing countries to achieve the Goals:

- Developing countries → **pro-poor policies in efforts to achieve goals 1-7**
- Developed countries → **pro-development policies to achieve goal 8**

→ **pro-poor policies & pro-development policies need different governance & wider political support**
Social services can be delivered by any sector, it’s the government’s role to build a conducive atmosphere for private sector & civil society participation in these deliveries.
Government’s Role as Guarantor of Social Justice

- Whoever are delivering the social services, ultimately it’s the government’s responsibility to ensure that these services are accessible & affordable for all the people, especially the poor & vulnerable, also those living in remote areas.
- Governments should not do what others (private sector, civil society & local governments) can do, but concentrate resources on regions / target groups not reached by others.
- Social Justice is more than social services alone, it’s also about human security; human rights and dignity; fairness and law enforcements; equality and equity.
GOVERNMENTS’ CHALLENGES IN MDGs’ REALIZATION

- Produce regular MDG Reports at national level, disaggregate at sub-national levels & by gender
- Integrate the Goals into national development plans & budget systems, develop nationally and locally owned strategies to achieve the Goals
- Improve governance and promote accountability in the use of donor assistance, take lead in donor harmonization for MDGs achievements
- Put the Goals at the center of the national and sub-national political agendas
- Encourage and maintain all stakeholders’ participation in actual realization of the goals
Good Governance:
an imperative for achieving MDGs

The Asia Pacific Regional MDG Report (2003) by UN ESCAP & UNDP identified four governance attributes to be vital for the achievement of the MDGs:

1. Efficient, effective & accountable administration;
2. Control of corruption;
3. Scrutiny of public sector management by an empowered civil society;
4. Decentralization.
MDGs & Good Governance

- Focused and well-targeted policies and programs need responsive, transparent and accountable administration at national as well as local levels.
- Most developing countries should be able to achieve most MDGs, nick-named *Minimum Development Goals* with own national/local budget by minimizing corruption at all levels.
- Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately: diverting funds intended for development, under-mining government’s ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign investment and aid.
- Rules of law, should be enacted without any reserves for anyone.
Decentralization is a process......

- subsidiarity principle
- local accountability & direct participation
- not just from central to local governments, but also from the public sector to other sectors if society
- from sectoral → holistic development
- break down into more manageable size challenges
- diversity of culture and resources

.......and a continuing challenge
The old paradigm of ‘community participation’ has now expanded to include many new ones ….

Increased challenge for governments to encourage & support wider civic engagement in realization of MDGs
Private Sector more Active Role in Realization of MDGs

- It makes sound business sense to contribute to the achievements of MDGs as business has a stake in social stability:
  - Investing in Sound Business Environment
  - Managing direct Costs & Risks
  - Harnessing new Business Opportunities

- The Millennium Goals are Corporate Social Responsibility’s and Corporate Citizenship’s challenges for some decades, sharing the same vision & values now gaining a new thrust from the global and national momentum of solidarity now gaining a new thrust from new partners, new approaches, new opportunities
MDGs & Local Governance

Poverty is very much a local issue: Political processes that matter most to the poor are at local level: without local accountability, there will be no effectiveness.

Well-informed engagement of citizens in decision-making process will ensure the sustainability of efforts to achieve the Goals.

Equally important is the role of local councils, provincial and national legislators in resources reallocation, and advocate for affirmative actions for poorer & more remote areas.

The real battle against poverty lies at the local level, but it requires pro-poor policies at national as well as provincial / state levels to support action at the city / district level.
World’s Social Justice Challenges

If the Millennium Development Goals are achieved:

- More than **500 million people** will be lifted out of extreme poverty and **250 million** will no longer suffer from hunger.
- **30 million children** will be saved who would otherwise die before reaching age 5 and **2 million maternal deaths** will have been averted.
- **350 million people** will have access to safe drinking water and **650 million people** will have access to basic sanitation.