

POOR PEOPLE TELL LEADERS: FOOD, FUEL, CLIMATE AND FINANCIAL CRISES CANNOT BE THE LATEST EXCUSE FOR INACTION!

How poor people and citizens' groups think the MDGs can be achieved

Compiled by the UN Millennium Campaign and partners

Over 43 million people were mobilized on 17 October 2007 to Stand Up for the Millennium Development Goals.

Since then, the UN Millennium Campaign has worked with a range of grassroots-level people's organisations, social movements, faith-based groups, civil society organisations and local governments in over 20 countries mainly in Asia, Africa and Europe to find out what has worked in the first half of the MDG period (2000-8) and what needs to be done in the second half (2008-15).

In this document we have tried to distill the results of these efforts - which have included MDG Hearings/Tribunals with poor people themselves, independent MDG Progress Reports, focus group discussions, interviews etc. - into a clear set of policy recommendations for the MDG High Level Event.

The Addendum to the background note by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the High Level Event on the MDGs entitled MDG Action Points lists the key policy actions required at the global level on a sectoral or thematic basis.

The point of departure for poor people is that all MDGs are inter-linked and therefore require a cross-sectoral and integrated set of policy actions. Their recommendations are separated out for rich and poor countries to make the responsibilities more clear. And the actions have to be taken mainly at the national and local levels, so that is their main focus (separate documents are available for Asia, Africa and Europe). The recommendations are as much about the systemic and structural changes required as they are about the implementation and institutional bottlenecks that have to be addressed in order to achieve and sustain the MDGs. Without the accountability mechanisms that urgently need to be put in place, there can only be continued impunity on the MDGs, so their recommendations on monitoring are also loud and clear.

All the voices that we have heard want to see real tangible results at the local level, and the poorest people want to not only be part of the planning and implementation but also of monitoring performance.



WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY, GOVERNMENTS OF THE SOUTH (POOR AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES) MUST:

1. Give MDGs the highest priority in allocating domestic and external resources within annual budgets and Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks as part of the social contract with citizens.
2. Put in place clear MDG plans not just at the national level but at the sub-national and local levels as well, adapted to local realities.
3. Implement land reforms, progressive taxation, job quotas and affirmative action, subsidized farm inputs and social protection programmes for the poor to arrest growing inequality.
4. Have the full complement of trained staff in place – teachers, health workers, agricultural extension workers etc. — without any further delay.
5. Not abdicate their primary responsibility to finance and ensure the delivery of MDGs, even where private actors would like to play a role. Privatisation of any service that the poor need should be prohibited, where it puts the MDGs at risk. Free, accessible and accountable delivery of basic services is a moral and political imperative.
6. Fully empower local governments and communities in the planning and implementation of MDGs.
7. Aggressively fight corruption and set up mechanisms to end impunity.
8. Enshrine MDGs as socio-economic rights within national constitutions and laws and link them to existing human rights instruments. Access to quality agricultural land, forests and other livelihood-linked natural resources, drinking water, sanitation, education, health and housing are basic entitlements for the poor.
9. Demonstrate zero tolerance for all forms of discrimination against women, indigenous people, Dalits, ethnic and religious minorities and persons with disability through laws, policies and practises.
10. Resist foreign aid and trade agreements that do not help achieve the MDGs for the poor and undermine national ownership, policy space and capacity.
11. Periodically publish national (and in larger countries, sub-national) MDG progress reports and ensure a public debate with the media and civil society guaranteeing the active engagement of poor and excluded groups themselves.
12. Set up Parliamentary committees or use existing Parliamentary Committees to oversee MDG performance.
13. Put in place an inter-ministerial mechanism for MDG monitoring of both programme performance and budgetary allocations and actual expenditures with the active partnership of civil society.
14. Ensure Right to Information and MDG Information systems such as Community Notice Boards at the local level.
15. Enhance sub-regional and regional actions where appropriate to achieve the MDGs (e.g. SADC, SAARC).



GOVERNMENTS OF THE NORTH, WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY, MUST:

1. Establish intermediate country-wise targets to deliver on existing aid volume commitments and reaffirm timely implementation of their existing commitments.
2. Agree upon concrete measures for delivering on the three pre-conditions agreed at the Accra Aid Effectiveness meeting on predictability, accountability and cost effectiveness.
3. Debt relief must be additional to existing aid commitments and reach the poorest countries without further delay.
4. Announce concrete plans to complete the Doha Trade Round without further delay, with an outcome that will help poor countries and people achieve the MDGs. The elimination of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and the capping of domestic subsidies on products of importance to poor countries, coupled with genuine market access to poor countries, have all been previously promised but are yet to be delivered.

Ordinary citizens across the world are tired of more empty words and promises. They are demanding action from their leaders to deliver on the promises they have already made. The time for pilot projects and isolated village-level initiatives is over; their call is for large-scale national-level programmes on an emergency footing that will comprehensively address the MDGs in a sustainable manner. They are not willing to accept man-made crises caused by a handful of financial speculators, oil producers and greenhouse gas emitters to be allowed to become the latest excuse. Grassroots groups are demanding that world leaders meet to review MDG progress at the highest level not later than 2010.