

Advocacy: Making the Case for Change

The world may have opportunities, resources, incentives and practical solutions for achieving the MDGs. But in a time of many competing priorities, only strong and on-going advocacy will keep the goals flying high on political agendas, where they can become more than paper promises.

As one of the lead UN development agencies, UNDP is one of the primary advocates for the MDGs. Because we work on many levels, from the local to the international, and with an array of partners, we are able to extend MDG advocacy in diverse directions. Put together, this is snowballing into a global drive attracting new resources and yielding an extraordinary number of powerful alliances: among youth, sports stars, politicians, community leaders, journalists, business people, artists, academics, religious leaders, trade union members and civil society activists.

Country by country, UNDP also advocates for national governments and other partners to aim high and put in place sound policies and institutions to make real progress on the goals. We look for connections to the human rights and gender equality issues that may hold back the hopes of huge portions of societies, and which once addressed can catalyse rapid change.

“When you came for the first time to our village and talked about Millennium Development things or whatever, I did not trust you. When you talked about how to improve health and education for our children, I did not trust you. When you talked about how to protect nature, how to make government people work better, the same. I said in my mind: ‘This good boy is talking about things that need 1,000 years to occur.’ But now I have drinkable water and electricity in my home. If you called me at 12 o’clock at night, I will get up to work. I know it is in my interest.”

Kadife Gjana, an elderly woman in the Kukes region of Albania speaking to a UN Volunteer

MDG Campaigns: Reaching Out Around the World

With many people now active on the MDGs worldwide, the [UN Millennium Campaign](#) is multiplying the power of these individual initiatives by linking them through a global network. The campaign is financed by a trust fund administered by UNDP. In 2004, it worked closely with leading NGOs, churches and trade unions to help forge a civil society alliance known as The [Global Call to Action Against Poverty](#) (www.whiteband.org), which was formally launched by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Porto Alegre in January 2005. One of the largest and most diverse coalitions ever formed, it is united behind a common aim of achieving the MDGs. Members make appearances at high-level international political events, and are mobilizing citizens around the world to wear white armbands in a well-publicized act to inspire public attention and support.

Forty national MDG campaigns have also sprung up, joining civil society organizations, parliamentarians, trade unions, women's and youth groups, faith-based organizations and celebrities. Each is oriented around key issues in its country, but all focus broadly on getting governments to keep their millennium promises.

Developing Countries: Organizations in Uganda have advocated linking the goals and the national poverty reduction plan; for its part, the postal service has issued a series of MDG stamps. Over 50 groups in Zambia—church, gender, human rights, health and educational organizations—are collectively campaigning for more government accountability. In India, the *Vaada na toda* (Don't Break Your Promise) Campaign is strategizing to link the goals to the current national five-year development plan. In Indonesia, activist and UN Special Ambassador for the MDGs Erna Witoelar has mobilized a national coalition of civil society networks to question the process of MDG reporting; they have secured the government's commitment that future reporting in five of the poorest provinces will involve the participation of local people.

In El Salvador, 20 groups are backing a massive media campaign that includes TV and radio spots on the theme "Broken Dreams." They brought the MDGs into a presidential campaign, and secured the government's public commitment to create a mechanism for monitoring the goals. Brazil's campaign has put out the word about the MDGs through logos on shopping bags, bank statements and energy bills,

UN Volunteers: Global Advocates for the MDGs

Without the massive voluntary involvement of ordinary citizens, the chances of achieving the MDGs are remote. The [UN Volunteers](#) (UNV) programme works to channel this vast resource as part of the global effort to meet the goals. The volunteers contribute to and advocate for the MDGs in all aspects of their work. Working directly with local people allows them to mobilize, campaign and organize events around local progress on the goals.

In 2004, UN Volunteer Peter Claesson rallied 56 artists to depict the MDGs through murals and sculptures in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. During the two weeks it took to complete the project, some 500 people came together to create 45 pieces of artwork. Many politicians and businesses supported the endeavour by donating meals, hotel rooms and materials. The city's population can now see—in tangible terms—what is meant by each goal. Other examples of innovative advocacy can be found in Viet Nam, where a contest organized by UNV helped Vietnamese youth travel to rural areas to foster discussion on the goals.

International Volunteer Day, celebrated around the world on 5 December, has become a key occasion to recognize volunteer contributions to the MDGs. Since the start of the

UN Millennium Campaign, more and more citizens are using the day to demonstrate what they can do to help make the MDGs a reality.

In international forums, UNV continues highlighting what can be done to fully realize the potential contribution of volunteerism to development. A partnership with UNDP and Pakistan's National Commission for Human Development, for example, resulted in the first International Conference on Volunteerism and the MDGs in Islamabad in December 2004.

In 2004, its seventh consecutive year of growth, the UNV programme, which is administered by UNDP, mobilized some 7,300 volunteers, representing 166 nationalities, who served in 140 countries. It also engages thousands of other individuals in the work of the UN as online volunteers, and manages the [WorldVolunteerWeb](#) (www.worldvolunteerweb.org), a global volunteering portal that serves as a resource for knowledge on campaigning, advocacy, information dissemination and networking.

“In the past we could say that we did not have the technology or resources to meet the basic needs of all human beings. That is simply not the case any more. We are running out of excuses. We know what needs to be done.”

Salil Shetty, Director, UN Millennium Campaign

and at Rio's world-renowned Carnival. Organizations in Mexico have drafted proposals for budget indicators to track MDG-related spending.

Developed Countries: The United Kingdom's [Make Poverty History](#) campaign unites 200 charities, trade unions, faith groups and celebrities in the country's largest ever advocacy movement to end global poverty, with a special focus on the leaders of the Group of 8. Spain's *Sin Excusas 2015* (No Excuses 2015) campaign has convinced municipalities and regional governments to adopt resolutions supporting the goals, while the Web site of the Italian campaign has attracted over

a million signatures for a Goal 8 online petition. MTV Italy recently committed to 10 years of programming on the MDGs. The Catholic development agency Trocaire mobilized the [Keep Our Word](#) campaign in Ireland, which is generating thousands of e-mails to Parliament.

In 2004, the UN Millennium Campaign launched a Web site (www.millenniumcampaign.org) to track ongoing MDG advocacy activities. It provides a globally accessible resource for ideas and inspiration. A special online section for youth attracts more than half a million visitors per month, while a partnership with the World Scouts is spreading news about the MDGs to 28 million youth in 216 countries and territories. Other forms of outreach come through collaboration with celebrities and UN Goodwill Ambassadors, and media organizations such as the BBC, CNN and Nickelodeon TV. “Only with Your Voice” video spots are urging citizens around the world to raise their voices against poverty. As knowledge about the goals ripples outward, more and more people will bring them home through actions that benefit countries, communities and individual lives.

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O Grupo Pão de Açúcar tem o prazer de participar e divulgar as 8 Metas de Desenvolvimento do Milênio, um pacto firmado pela ONU e 191 países. Como empresa cidadã, faz questão de apoiar a defesa e importância dessas Metas, estimulando a conscientização e a participação de todos, assim faz parte da nossa responsabilidade social e do nosso objetivo de ser melhores.

UN
GRUPO PÃO DE AÇÚCAR

Brazil's largest supermarket chain, Grupo Pão de Açúcar, published a public service advertisement on the MDGs in a prominent magazine on corporate social responsibility. It reads in part, “As a corporate citizen, we have decided to help promote the importance of these Goals, so as to stimulate everyone's awareness and participation.”

Philippines: Everybody Gets on Board

Energy and enthusiasm about the MDGs is running high in the Philippines, where a concerted advocacy campaign is convincing Filipinos to get involved and make the goals their own. While the Philippines is considered a country at the mid-level of development, it faces instability in the south, and a fiscal crisis that struck in 2004. Wide disparities persist between regions.

Under the coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator, who is also the UNDP Resident Representative, the UN Country Team kicked off the campaign in 2004 by reaching out to diverse groups. With UN support, legislators sponsored a series of roundtables on the goals, and then went on to create the Special Committee of the House of Representatives on the MDGs. It discusses national issues related to the goals, at times in consultation with the Country Team, and recently embarked on a review of HIV/AIDS legislation to ensure it fully contributes to progress on Goal 6.

Meetings with business leaders, co-hosted by the UN and the Prince of Wales Foundation, have resulted in agreements to highlight the MDGs as part of ongoing corporate social

responsibility and social investment programmes. Sessions with civil society have motivated organizations, nationally and locally, to actively monitor progress on the goals, and to add their voices to national and international policy debates. The Country Team has offered prizes to youth organizations contributing to the MDGs, and worked with journalists to raise awareness of stories that can be covered in the media.

At a Consultative Group meeting of the donor community in the Philippines, the Country Team prepared a special session on the goals chaired by the government's Secretaries of Social Welfare and Education. Donors, members of Congress, high-level government officials, and business and civil society leaders reviewed how the Philippines was doing on the goals overall, and emphasized the need for greater attention to education and health.

Other forms of UN support build on advocacy, such as a project to help the national government monitor progress on the MDGs through new mechanisms in the National Statistical Coordination Board. In late 2004, UNDP and UN Habitat began assisting local authorities in 12 pilot cities to devise local MDG strategies, referring to a guide to policy options issued by the national Department of the Interior and Local Government. The city of Calbayog has now gone public with plans to focus on Goal 2, on education, and Goal 7, on environmental sustainability. It intends to raise its budget allocations for school facilities and increase the number of coastal reservation projects. In the city of Iligan, where Goal 1, on reducing poverty is a paramount concern, more farm-to-market roads are in the works.

Future UN advocacy will work in turn to ignite public support behind these local projects, fusing local and national momentum around the MDGs. If the goals become an item on every policy agenda and a by-word in every home, they can become a reality for all Filipinos, on time for 2015.

“The United Nations is one with all of you in the effort to achieve the MDGs. Together we must confront the challenge of achieving the MDGs, we must own the MDGs, we must take responsibility for them, we must make them part of our lives.”

Deborah Landey, UN Resident Coordinator, Philippines

Albania: Communities Make the Goals Their Own

In the 12 regions of Albania, the MDGs are much more than a set of numbers. They are about strengthening the capacity for democracy and local governance, and about local people speaking up and being heard.

Albania is one of continental Europe's poorest countries. While substantial progress has been made in recent years after five decades of totalitarian rule, the pace of reforms has been slow and often tangled in bureaucracy. However, everyone also understands the benefits if Albania can qualify as a member of the European Union. Many of the national development efforts are focused in this direction.

UNDP was already supporting the national government on integrating the MDGs into its poverty reduction and EU accession strategies when it became clear that this process would receive a boost if regional and local governments came on board. There were multiple challenges: fractured systems of governance, sharp political differences between regions and the centre, and most of all, the deep distrust in local communities of any form of government. But UNDP could build on a network of existing local relationships, and make the case that the MDGs are focused on people, not politics.

Our [local governance programme](#) began a series of advocacy campaigns that demonstrated how achieving the MDGs would help national EU accession, and translated the goals into easily understood local terms. What does Goal 7, on environmental sustainability, mean to the citizens of the Kukes region? The answer was displayed on posters across the region: a clean Valbona River that will attract tourists and improve local livelihoods. Around the country, MDG Goodwill Ambassadors, all well-known Albanian personalities, also spread the word. In 51 villages, UNDP helped form community development associations to show concretely what development can mean—within six months, the Kukes village of Gabrice had running water and electricity in nearly every home, for the first time ever.

UNDP then encouraged regional and local governments, NGOs and members of communities to come together, assess current regional standing on the MDGs, and compile data and other findings into regional MDG reports. By comparing where the regions are now with where they need to go to achieve the goals, the reports could serve as blueprints for future actions.

With examples like Gabrice in mind, public interest and participation was high. Town hall meetings between the public and local officials began taking place. Radio stations broadcast regular updates. Where regional data proved to be poor



In the Kukes region, women from different communities came together to discuss how to insert targets and indicators on gender in a regional plan for achieving the MDGs. All aspects of the final strategy reflect their concerns. One target calls for increasing the capacity among local authorities and civil society to stop violence against women. An overall goal to improve governance measures progress by a more balanced ratio of men and women in regional public services.

in quality, local groups volunteered to carry out polls and surveys to fill in the gaps.

Supported by UNDP, regional and local governments learned to manage these newly democratic exercises, and incorporated the development priorities identified by communities into the reports. UNDP and the UN Volunteers offered training on how to tailor the MDGs to local concerns, and to set targets and indicators in sync with national poverty reduction and EU accession priorities.

In some regions, the reports included detailed development strategies based on the MDGs that are being used for development fundraising. Several have now attracted outside assistance, including from the European Commission. Community-based organizations have been at the forefront of carrying out an initial round of new projects, like the recently opened medical centre in the village of Osmanaj, just west of Gabrice. And the strategies have helped regional and local governments decide what else should be in the pipeline, from cleaning up the environment to supporting the small livestock industry. What does it mean when people take charge of their development? For Albanians—convincing results and a stake in the future.