

# HOW TO ACCELERATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS



On 5 April 2013, the world's largest and most successful anti-poverty campaign reached the 1,000-day mark toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The MDGs were established in 2000, when leaders gathered at the United Nations to pledge to cut global poverty and hunger by half, fight disease, reduce child mortality rates, and expand education and economic opportunities for girls and women.

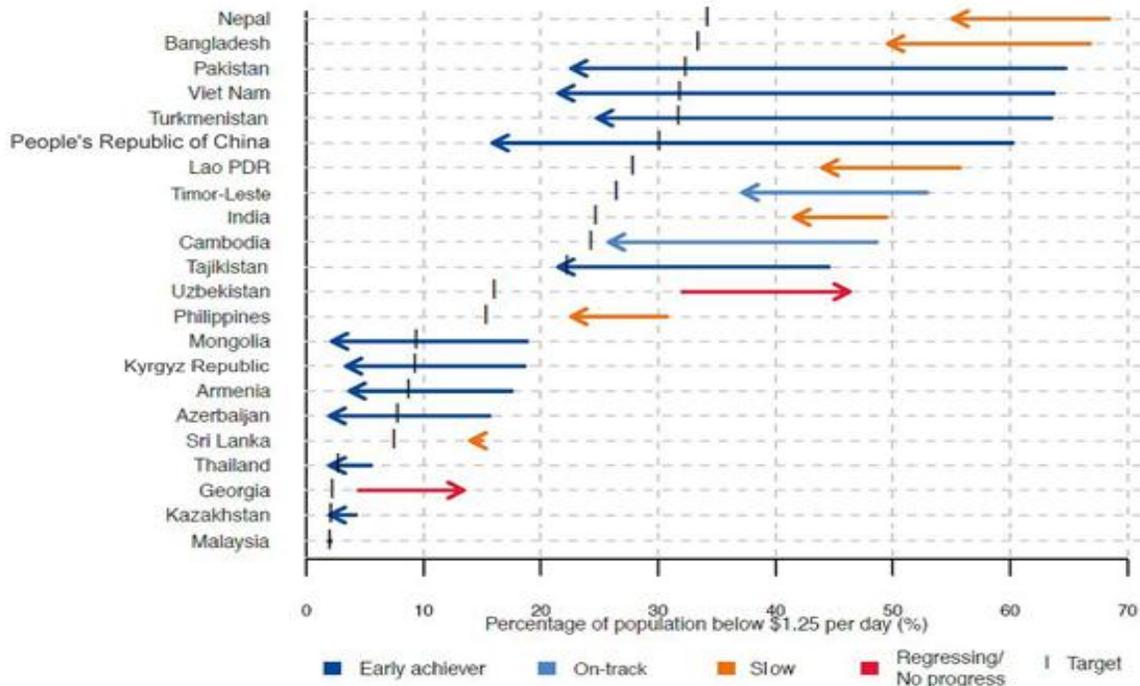
This was not the first time world leaders had made lofty promises to reduce poverty, and cynics expected the MDGs to be abandoned as too ambitious. Instead, MDGs have helped set national and global priorities, mobilize action, and achieve remarkable results in poverty reduction.

However, with the target year of 2015 drawing near, and the next generation of sustainable development goals (SDGs) shaping up, major inroads can be made to reach the poorest and most vulnerable by refocusing energies and investments on local leadership.

### **Progress, but some goals have yet to be achieved**

Globally, 600 million people have escaped extreme poverty—a 50% reduction compared to 2000 (UNICEF 2012). In Asia and the Pacific, a record number of children are attending primary school, with an equal number of girls and boys attending school for the first time (JICA 2010). Maternal and child mortality have dropped in South Asia (ESCAP 2013). Targeted investments in fighting malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis have saved countless lives. On the other hand, the region is still lagging in several major areas of development. It has been slow in reducing hunger, improving maternal health, and providing basic sanitation. Too many women die in childbirth, too many communities lack sanitation and safe drinking water, and in many parts of Asia, inequalities are growing and many are being left behind. As a result, the Asia and Pacific region is likely to have a mixed record on achieving MDGs by 2015. (Figure 1). Though each country has to address its own specific needs, there are a number of common concerns and priorities.

**Figure 1. Progress in Reducing Extreme Poverty**



Source: Staff calculations based on the United Nations MDG database.

### Four steps to accelerate action

Four steps of action need to be taken to achieve MDGs by 2015. The first step is to scale up success through strategic and targeted investments that have a multiplier effect, boosting results in all other areas. Ensuring that girls and women have equal access to education, economic opportunities, healthcare, and nutrition is a powerful strategy that will make certain the achievement of the development goals.

The second step is to focus on the poorest and most vulnerable communities, which are often dogged by community conflicts and poor internal coordination, making progress difficult (Leicester 2012).

In the past, the principal providers of services to these communities have been national governments. However, more services are now being provided by community organizations and local governments.

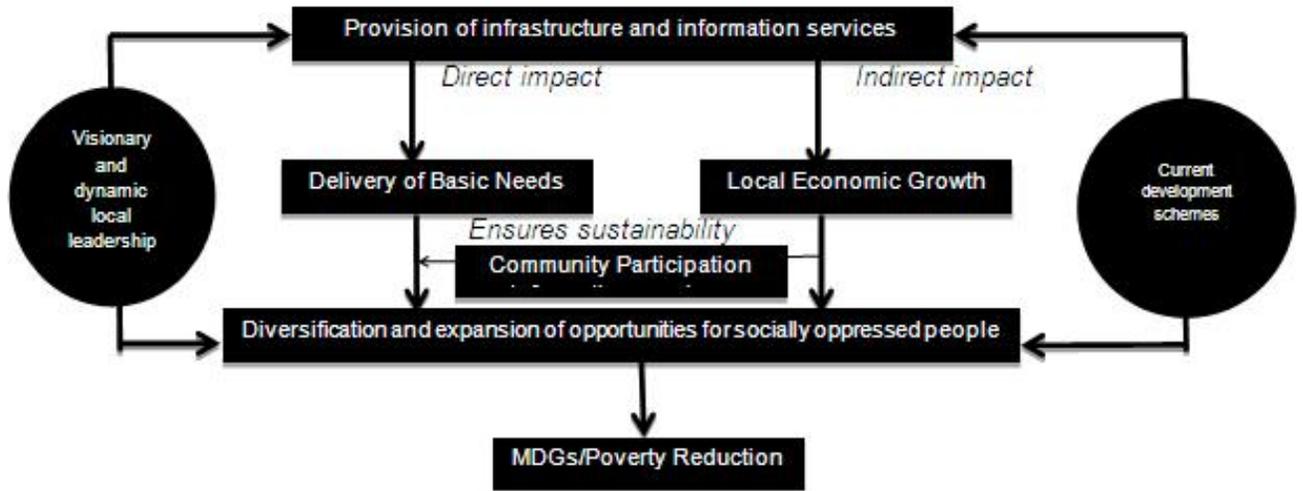
The third step is to provide innovative financing. Budgets cannot be balanced on the backs of the poorest and most vulnerable. It is ethically unacceptable and it will help neither donors nor recipients (Kawai 2012). For this purpose, countries should be encouraged to access financial markets and to tap household savings, though poor countries may have to rely primarily on external aid.

The fourth step is to induce local governments to play greater roles. The remaining time to achieve the MDGs should be a call to action—a national and global movement to focus on the involvement of local governments that has been so crucial to success to date. (Shaw 2011).

### **A decentralized approach needed**

Local leadership is the key to the implementation of these four steps. A local development model based on innovative leadership, and decentralized institutions along the social protection floor framework, is illustrated in Figure 2. This type of development model can be started on a small scale with the integration of the local community and expanded over time.

**Figure 2. Model for Realizing MDG Targets at the Local Level**



Source: Anbumozhi and Elanchezhian 2013.

Since it will take time to nurture local leadership for the mobilization of resources, in the short term, national governments and local businesses will have an important role to play in piloting this decentralized model so that it can eventually be financed and managed through market mechanisms.

## **Conclusion**

Focused development objectives can make a profound difference in achieving MDGs globally. They can inspire, unite, and mobilize efforts to reduce poverty. Success in sparking innovation and spurring local leadership to achieve MDGs will improve the lives of millions and add momentum to greater achievements beyond 2015.

At the June 2012, UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, governments agreed to create a set of universal SDGs that are consistent with international laws, build on commitments already made, and contribute to the full implementation of the outcomes of all major UN summits in the economic, social, and environmental fields. As we look to the next generation of development goals, we will find inspiration from local leadership and community participation that are essential to the acceleration of the MDG agenda.

Source: <http://www.asiathways-adbi.org/2013/10/how-to-accelerate-the-implementation-of-the-millennium-development-goals/>