

Sub-Regional Advocacy Workshop on the Millennium Development Goals and post-2015 Development Agenda in South-East Asia

Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic
24-26 June 2014

Key Recommendations

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic organized the Sub-Regional Advocacy Workshop on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and post-2015 Development Agenda for South-East Asia in Vientiane, from 24 to 26 June 2014. The Workshop was attended by 66 senior officials, representatives of regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations, civil society and private sector organizations, and United Nations funds, programmes, and specialized agencies from nine countries of the subregion: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

2. The two main objectives of the Sub-regional Advocacy Workshop were: (a) to disseminate key findings and messages of the ESCAP/ADB/UNDP Regional MDGs Report 2012/2013 entitled "Asia-Pacific Aspirations: Perspectives for a Post-2015 Development Agenda" with a particular focus on the progress achieved by the countries in South-East Asia; and (b) to discuss how regional and global cooperation could support the implementation of a post-2015 Development Agenda in Asia-Pacific. Implementation issues addressed in the Workshop included technology access, strengthening the evidence base for development effectiveness including strengthening a monitoring and accountability framework, and financing the post-2015 Development Agenda.

II. Recommendations

3. The following recommendations emerged from the discussions:

Technology access and trade facilitation

- a) There is a need for careful assessment of specific barriers to accessing technology, including patented as well as non-patented technologies. In many cases, and particularly in LDCs, it is not advanced technologies protected by patents that are most needed, but simpler and appropriate technologies, which are, in most cases, already in the public domain. The challenges for technology dissemination and uptake tend to be related to local absorptive capacity and sharing of know-how.

- b) There is a need to reassess Intellectual Property Right regimes and trade issues, especially in the context of bilateral and multilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and their impact on the use of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) flexibilities by developing countries, especially LDCs. FTAs can potentially discourage developing countries from availing of the TRIPs flexibilities, making it difficult for countries to access appropriate technologies, including for public health, needed for achieving development objectives. Capacity gaps also still limit countries from availing of the full potentials of the TRIPS flexibilities.
- c) There is the need for a more responsible private sector, which is more collaborative and fairer in the way in which it approaches agreements around voluntary licenses. In this respect, the role of national governments and the international community in managing voluntary licenses for essential technology is desirable.
- d) Developing countries need to invest in science, technology and innovation. In this respect financing and technical support from development partners will be required. More investments in quality education, including at secondary and tertiary level, is critical for developing countries to develop their scientific capacity. Development cooperation can support those efforts.
- e) In accessing technology, support and technical assistance are needed during each phase of that complex process. Issues around know-how, absorptive capacity, financing, delivery need to be addressed by all with predictable support from more developed countries for smooth access to technologies for sustainable development. The new development agenda should recognise the complexity of the technology transfer process and promote policy coherence across all aspects of the technology transfer.
- f) International cooperation to support investments in R&D, innovation and the development of new essential technologies in the public domain is desirable.
- g) Greater collaborative initiatives with a whole range of stakeholders, including the scientific community, the private sector, including through PPP, and governmental, intergovernmental organisations and CSOs are needed to promote the sharing of knowledge, ensure R&D in critical areas for development (including climate change, public health, education, energy, water and sanitation, agriculture and food security, inclusive finance and others) and greater access to essential technology by developing countries.

Strengthening the evidence base for development effectiveness

- h) The monitoring of development goals should be integrated in national economic and social plans as well as national strategies for the development of statistics to ensure that it is accorded priority.
- i) Strong coordination with various line ministries is key to ensure access to and harmonization of data that are collected by government ministries, which often

constitute the underlying data for the majority of the indicators of MDGs and are an important source of official statistics.

- j) Increased investments are needed for national statistical systems in order for them to acquire the tools to carry out work and maintain skilled and motivated work force.
- k) Improving data availability, particularly better access to microdata, should be a priority for localizing monitoring and informing planning targeted interventions to achieve development effectiveness.
- l) Given that the monitoring of a post-2015 sustainable development agenda will post much greater demands for data than did the MDGs, support for national statistical institution building is critical for developing countries, many of which are already strained
- m) National statistical systems should embrace the opportunities brought by Big Data and explore the potential of using such new data sources in official statistics in partnership with the private sector, CSOs and relevant specialized institutions.

Financing for a post-2015 Development Agenda

- n) Official development assistance (ODA) remains one of the significant sources of development finance, especially for least developed countries (LDCs) and those in structurally difficult situations. There was a continued demand for developed countries to fulfil ODA commitments already made – not just the 0.7 % of donor GNI, but also a share for LDCs. For all countries ODA can be taken to reflect seriousness of commitment to a global development agenda.
- o) In practice domestic fiscal sources have been the main source of financing development for Asia and the Pacific. The financing framework will have to consider country-specific characteristics responding to growing financing needs, potential and limitations of fiscal space, gaps and strengths of local financial markets, scope for businesses, and technical capacity.
 - It was noted that in a low middle income countries, domestic public finance is still the main source of funding for development and not ODA. Revenue measures and reforms in tax administration and efficient public financial management are important to raise resources.
 - For LDCs, access to credit is constrained by loan-related requirements that are difficult to comply with, and high interest costs.
 - LDCs need significant technical assistance in developing a vibrant and stable capital market that serves the needs of the real economy. Technical assistance is also needed in designing public-private partnerships for lumpy investments with safeguards against contingent liabilities.

- p) Even when money is available from different sources, this has to be complemented with development of viable and profitable projects which include both those that have a scope for financial returns (part or full), such as electricity distribution or roads, and non-financial returns as in the case of social infrastructure like public school buildings or specific public health programmes, as well as in the case of environment-related programmes.
- q) Public-private partnerships are seen as an important complementary means to realize the potential of the private sector in providing public goods using private resources based on a legal contract with appropriate safeguards.
- r) Expanding financial inclusion and access to finance to serve the poorest of the poor should be supported through appropriate assistance.
- s) Appropriate regional financial architecture is needed to facilitate investment in regional public goods. Regional cooperation and dialogue can be vital for this as well as to stem illicit transfer of funds, including profit shifting by multinationals and tax completion. ESCAP can play an important role.

Monitoring and Accountability Framework for post 2015 Development Agenda

- t) Country ownership with strong political commitment, inclusive and partnership approach of all stakeholders including beneficiaries at all stages is key to effective monitoring and accountability framework.
- u) There is a need for decentralized implementation and monitoring with disaggregated data on gender, sub-population, income status etc. and effective engagement of local government.
- v) Specific roles of global, regional, national, sub-national and community levels need to be clearly determined for an effective monitoring and accountability framework backed by very specific indicators. Clear guidance on monitoring and reporting, including reporting tools and technologies, should be set at global and regional levels. In this regard building capacity at the country and local levels are essential.

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