

India and the MDGs: Completing the task

United Nations country team in India assesses progress accomplished and policy options to fulfill the goals in India

New Delhi – India, along with other developing countries, committed to fulfill the eight Millennium Development Goals by the set deadline of 31 December 2015. As the timeline for achieving the Goals is drawing to a close, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in partnership with the UN Country Team in India, joined hands to assess accomplishments thus far and to draw lessons to spur progress and move towards a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Their analysis is presented in “India and the MDGs: Towards a Sustainable Future for All” which was released today in New Delhi in a high-profile event attended by Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); Dr. T.C. A. Anant, Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and Chief Statistician, Government of India; and Mr. Louis-Georges Arsenault, UNICEF Representative and Resident Coordinator, a.i.

“Over the years, the Millennium Development Goals have pushed Governments around the world to mainstream poverty reduction, gender equality, education and health, and such basic needs as water and sanitation in their development agenda”, stated Dr. Akhtar, ESCAP Executive Secretary in her special address at the event. “India’s achievements towards the MDGS are beyond doubt considerable... Yet the progress has been uneven across goals and across states, and inequalities have risen”.

Still nearly 300 million people live in extreme poverty in India and face deprivation in terms of access to basic services, including education, health, water, sanitation and electricity. As the 2015 deadline is about to expire and the form and content of the successor framework --the Sustainable Development Goals -- is being discussed, the momentum generated to accomplish the MDGs is to be sustained, and efforts are to continue unabated, Dr. Akhtar noted.

“Growing first and clean up later is no more an option... Switching to more sustainable development paths is becoming more urgent with every passing day”, she stated.

Dr. Akhtar outlined eight sustainable development priorities for India, summarized as follows:

1. Focus on accelerating sustainable, inclusive and balanced growth, which in turn can lead to the creation of productive jobs, low-carbon industrialization and more sustainable consumption;
2. Invest in human development to harness its youth bulge;
3. Enhance agricultural productivity through a new sustainable agriculture-based green revolution in India;
4. Close the gaps in access to basic services such as sanitation, as crucial factor to improve health outcomes;
5. Improve access to modern/renewable sources of energy;
6. Promote smart incentives to encourage sustainable development practices and to create ‘wealth out of waste’;
7. Focus on sustainable urbanization, building on India’s 100 Smart Cities proposal;
8. Share widely India’s development experience with other developing countries.

“India has an opportunity to become a leader in sustainable development... Being home to one sixth of the world’s population, the world is not going to achieve the SDGs if India does not”, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar stated.

The event brought together over 120 participants, including policy- and decision makers from South and South-West Asian countries, United Nations officials, representatives from non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations.

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