

BACKGROUND NOTE

Roundtable 3: Promoting Sustainable Development

To reach all the Goals requires concerted effort within a more integrated and strategic framework based on a sustainable development approach. Sound and equitable management of the environment is integral to inclusive growth and evidence shows that investing in the environment is critical to expanding the opportunities for poor people to lift themselves out of poverty.

1. What are the most cost-effective national policies to increase the availability of safe drinking water on a sustainable basis and to improve sanitation?

A sustainable development approach incorporates environmental sustainability issues – such as increased access to basic services, including safe drinking water and sanitation, addressing biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, slum rehabilitation, along with managing the natural resource base – into the design and implementation of coherent and effective national development strategies.

Achieving universal access to clean drinking water and sanitation is critical for reducing poverty and malnutrition, and realizing the gender and health-related MDGs. While notable progress has been made in increasing access to improved water sources, explicit efforts are needed to monitor water safety, accessibility, affordability and reliability (or continuity). Greater emphasis on sanitation is particularly urgent as access to sanitation is still far from being achieved in many countries.

The most effective national policies are those that catalyze, facilitate and support effective local action. Local management and community initiatives play a key role in ensuring and sustaining the success of enhancing water supply and sanitation services to poor communities. National strategies can prioritize sanitation and water coverage by, for instance, setting norms and targets, and locating them within the framework of integrated water resource management. Successful policies have focused on:

- Building local community arrangements and capacity for developing, maintaining and expanding new systems to ensure sustainability of the benefits.
- Mobilizing local leadership and participation of community women in local water management institutions as well as training local people in maintenance and repair.
- Establishing management committees or groups that manage water systems beyond the completion of projects, instituting user fee arrangements, as appropriate, to ensure financing for management, maintenance and repair.

2. What are the most cost-effective ways of improving the welfare of slum-dwellers and of ensuring their access to basic services on a sustainable basis?

Successful programmes include:

- Mobilizing key stakeholders - including local authorities, civil society, local communities and the private sector - to collaborate in the provision of services that both enhance the quality of life in the slums and create employment and business opportunities.
- Sound urban planning and making urban areas resilient to emergencies and disasters.
- Incorporating rural development strategies into the framework for improving slum dwellers' welfare can reduce pressures for rural-urban migration and address other rural-urban linkages.
- Ensuring participatory governance and community development. Compiling lessons learned and sharing for others to use. Ensuring the security of tenure and women's rights to land, property ownership and inheritance.

3. What institutions and reforms will protect biodiversity and forest cover?

The target to reduce biodiversity loss by 2010 has not been met. Every year 7 million hectares of forest cover are being lost. The major drivers of biodiversity loss include over-consumption, population pressure, habitat loss, pollution and climate change. The International Year of Biodiversity (2010) and Forests (2011) as well as the establishment of post-2010 targets on biodiversity, provide valuable opportunities to re-invigorate efforts to address biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

Studies show that effective conservation can bring species back from the brink of extinction. Protected areas are widely recognized as cornerstones of biodiversity management and sustainable development. A comprehensive, effectively managed and ecologically representative global network of protected areas is crucial to reduce biodiversity loss. Successful strategies include:

- A national policy framework for sustainable development that strengthens participatory local governance and institutions capable of delivering conservation and poverty reduction benefits through capacity development efforts.
- Recognition of land and property rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples and of women to equal ownership and inheritance.
- Technical support and support for community management of forests and biodiversity.
- Financial incentives for conservation. Mobilization of international financial support for local conservation efforts. Focus on livelihoods, creating employment and nature-based enterprises
- Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) is a promising mechanism to protect biodiversity and forest cover.

4. What international partnerships and resources are needed to support national efforts?

National policies, existing technical capacities and financial resources will be insufficient for achieving the MDGs in the poorest countries. Actions needed include:

- The proportion of ODA dedicated to water and sanitation should be increased to cover both investment and operational costs to restore and sustain ecosystem goods and services in ways that drive rural growth, poverty reduction and improved resilience of populations.
- The effectiveness of such resources can be maximized through adequate and predictable financial support, a coherent policy framework and mechanisms to promote the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology. Partnerships can leverage mutual learning, including South-South learning, promote lessons learned from best practices, facilitate the adaptation of new technologies, encourage cost-effective methods, and enable broad stakeholder participation.

5. How can we ensure that new and existing commitments, by all stakeholders, are adequately monitored and met?

- Establish robust monitoring frameworks to ensure the accountability of all partners. Accountability mechanisms at all levels can provide redress where rights are not met.
- Disaggregate data on access to clean water and sanitation by gender, rural/urban disparities, and upper and lower income quintiles.
- Strengthen governance at the national and local levels to ensure the durability of commitments made. Integrate policy approaches such as national sustainable development strategies to serve as both planning and monitoring frameworks.
- Strengthen institutional infrastructure to improve national capacity for implementation, delivery of services and strengthen national development management, and where appropriate establish indigenous structures for monitoring and evaluation of progress.