

UN4U 2011: WAYS THE UN MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN OUR EVERYDAY LIFE

In Focus: Poverty and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The programmes of the United Nations which focus on sustainable development takes into account that the needs of the future depends on how well-balanced are the social, economic, and environmental needs of today. How do we decide how these needs are met?

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works with governments to construct solutions to global and national development challenges, working to reach both national and international agreed-upon goals and needs. While helping developing countries attract and use aid effectively, UNDP encourages the protection of all human rights and promotes democratic governance.

UNDP advocates for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. Some examples of this:

- 128 countries receive UNDP support for democratic governance
- 60 countries receive election assistance
- 103 countries receiving support for anti-corruption efforts
- 60% of municipalities in Jordan use a UNDP-created property tax collection system
- \$550 million in interest savings for Jamaica after UNDP helped negotiate with creditors

Background Note

- 6 million square metres of land cleared in Cambodia with UNDP support
- 103 countries receiving support from UNDP for anti-corruption efforts

Learn more: www.undp.org

Looking ahead to Rio +20

4-6 June 2012, Rio de Janeiro - Brazil

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development also referred to as “Rio +20” or “Earth Summit 2012” will have **2 themes**:

1. a green economy within the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication
2. an institutional framework for sustainable development

Rio +20 seeks **3 objectives**:

1. to secure renewed political commitment to sustainable development
2. to assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of meeting already agreed upon commitments
3. to address new and emerging challenge.

The conference outcome should be a focused political document addressing these issues surrounding sustainable development.

Learn more: www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/

Historical Background



Background Note

In June 1992, the world came together in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for the first Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – the “Rio Conference” - where an agenda was adopted concerning environment and development in the 21st Century. The resulting “Rio Declaration” recognizes the right of each nation to pursue social and economic progress, and assigns to Member States the responsibility of adopting a model of sustainable development. The Rio Declaration also advocates for a major change in consumption and production patterns.

Since the 1992 Rio Conference, there has been a significant increase in the number of people living in absolute poverty, particularly in developing nations. Poverty is a vastly complex issue that can jeopardize economic development, social order, the environment and political stability. Many of the people living in poverty depend on natural resources for their livelihood. Addressing the issue of poverty means that access to sustainable livelihoods must be improved. This requires an increase in entrepreneurial prospects and productive resources, as well as universal access to basic social services, empowering women in poverty and promoting international cooperation.

Frequently Asked Questions?

1. What is a green economy?

A green economy is an economy where growth in income and employment is driven by investments, both public and private, that reduce harmful pollutants and enhance energy and resource efficiency in order to prevent environmental damage.

Protecting and rebuilding natural capital is critical for development; it is a major economic asset and also a source of public benefits, especially for poor people whose livelihoods and security depend on nature.

The Rio +20 Conference will address the need for a more green economy as a crucial element for sustainable development.

Learn more: www.unep.org/greeneconomy/

2. What are the Millennium Development Goals?

- 1) Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty
- 2) Achieve universal primary education
- 3) Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4) Reduce child mortality
- 5) Improve maternal health
- 6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- 7) Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8) Develop a global partnership for development

Learn more: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

3. Where do we stand on the MDGs?

- The number of people living under the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day declined from 1.8 billion to 1.4 billion between 1990 and 2005.
- The proportion of people living in extreme poverty in developing regions dropped from 46 per cent to 27 per cent — on track to meet the target globally.
- The economic crisis is expected to push an estimated 64 million more people into extreme poverty in 2010.
- About one in four children under the age of five is underweight in the developing world, down from almost one in three in 1990.

Achievements in the MDGs are due largely as a result of extraordinary success in Asia, mostly East Asia, where the poverty rate in East Asia fell from 60 per cent to under 20 per cent in the last 25 years.

Unfortunately, little progress has been made in reducing extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, where the poverty rate declined only slightly, from 58 to 51 per cent between 1990 and 2005.

The proportion of people suffering from hunger is declining, but at an unsatisfactory pace. The estimated number of people who will suffer chronic hunger this year is 925 million. While it is down from 1.023 billion in 2009, it is still more than the number of undernourished people in 1990 (about 815 million).