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An African Perspective of the Millennium Development Goals: from scepticism to leadership and hope

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Background

This report was prepared by Mr. Kerfalla Yansane, a member of the Committee for Development Policy, as a background paper for deliberations by the Committee at its seventh session. The first part of the report reviews the status and trends in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in sub-Saharan Africa. The second part examines the obstacles and challenges to and opportunities for achieving the Goals. The third part discusses the instruments and policies that would facilitate achieving the MDGs in sub-Saharan Africa. The report is intended to provide an African perspective with regard to ownership and the domestic policy adjustments required to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. The purpose of the report is to elucidate the following two key issues related to the central question of ownership: (i) the extent to which African policy-makers consider the MDGs valuable and are committed to the MDGs; and (ii) the extent to which the MDGs are reflected in the development programmes of African countries, particularly in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

JEL classification: F (International Economics); O (Economic Development, Technological Change, and Growth).

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An African Perspective of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): from scepticism to leadership and hope

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Status and trends of the MDGs in sub-Saharan Africa

A series of United Nations conferences and summits held during the 1990s set out an ambitious development agenda that provided the foundation for the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly in the year 2000. In the Declaration, 189 nations committed themselves to making the right to development a reality for everyone. The Declaration calls for halving, by the year 2015, the number of people who live on less than one dollar a day. This also involves finding solutions to hunger, malnutrition and disease, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, guaranteeing a basic education for everyone and supporting the Agenda 21 principles of sustainable development. It also invites the richer countries to help the developing countries by increasing aid, improving market access, providing debt relief and raising foreign investment. These aspirations were translated into a set of time-bound and measurable goals, the MDGs. The MDGs comprise eight goals. To help track progress towards the Goals, the United Nations Secretariat and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, as well as representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defined 18 targets and 48 indicators. They are aimed at: halving income poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education and gender equality, reducing under-five mortality by two thirds and maternal mortality by three quarters, reversing the spread of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), halving the proportion of people without access to safe water, ensuring environmental sustainability, and promoting a global partnership for development.

Reports from international agencies and researchers concur that the target of halving extreme poverty is within reach in a number of regions if current trends continue. However, reports also point out that many least developed countries (LDCs) are lagging behind. It is also generally agreed that sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where poverty increased during the 1990s, even though many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have made commendable progress in macroeconomic management and political reforms.[a] These improvements notwithstanding, on balance, the continent's record in progress towards achieving the MDGs has been inadequate. According to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) the region registered a decline in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of about 0.6 per cent per year during the 1990s and, as a result, the number of poor people increased by one quarter, or over 6 million per year.[b] Extrapolations have indicated that, unless the situation in sub-Sahara Africa improves, it will take these countries until the year 2129 to achieve universal primary education, until 2147 to halve extreme poverty and until 2165 to reduce child mortality by two thirds.[c] Given the current trends, achieving the MDGs will be a major challenge for African countries and the international community. In particular, the LDCs in sub-Saharan Africa are not likely to meet the Goals unless the current pace of development is accelerated.

This bleak prospect for many African countries, combined with the leadership of a new generation of African Heads of State, has attracted the attention of the international community and has helped place the continent on the global agenda: in 2004, British Prime Minister Tony Blair established the Commission for Africa to define the challenges facing Africa and to provide clear recommendations on how to support the changes needed to reduce poverty.[d] The main purpose of the Commission was to answer the crucial question "What can the rest of the international community do to support successful African development?" The report of the Commission was published in March 2005 after a full year of debate and consultation with key stakeholders in Africa and developed countries. Also, in early 2005, the final report of the Millennium Project was presented to the Secretary-General.[e] The report identifies the institutional reforms, investments and other interventions needed to "scale up" efforts to meet the MDGs in the context of the 10-year planning horizons required for the 2015 deadline. Both the report of the Commission for Africa and the report of the Millennium Project make a strong case for sub-Saharan Africa and urge developed countries to take decisive steps to fast-track the MDGs on the continent. The two reports are currently being used at every opportunity to intensify the campaigns to mobilize broad segments of society in support of the MDGs in Africa.

Overall, the year 2005 provides Africa and the international community with a unique opportunity to arrive at concrete programmes of action aimed at accelerating the development of the continent. To this end, African leaders have resolved to conduct their own assessment, through the African Union Commission and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Secretariat, to develop a common position on the MDGs in preparation for the summit meeting of the General Assembly to be held in September 2005, which will conduct the first five-year review of progress made in the fulfillment of the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration.[f]

Obstacles, challenges and opportunities

The difficulties with achieving the MDGs in sub-Saharan Africa are numerous, the obstacles ranging from structural and operational to political. In many of these countries, political turmoil and civil strife have resulted in poor economic performance (see also Annex II).

Structural impediments

Poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa has been hindered by the lack of economic growth. Progress in reducing poverty has been further complicated by the high levels of income inequality (sub-Saharan Africa, along with Latin America, has the highest degree of income inequality in the world).[g] The lack of economic growth and high income inequality are interlinked: the higher the initial poverty rate and the greater the initial inequality, the higher the growth rate required to reduce poverty.[h]

In most sub-Saharan economies, farmers are occupied in either subsistence agriculture or growing small-scale cash crops, which, over the last few decades, have experienced deteriorating terms of trade. Agriculture also suffers from low productivity, due to poor infrastructure. Furthermore, the unfavourable external environment, in particular with respect to access to developed countries, which have done little to open up their markets and reduce the subsidies to their own farmers, has not generated an increase in the effective demand for African agricultural products on world markets.

Scepticism of African countries in respect of the MDGs

Most of the MDGs reflect long-standing agreed development goals contained in the outcome documents of the global conferences of the United Nations on sustainable development, social development, population and development, women and development, least developed countries, and financing for development, held in over the last 25 years. Many of these goals remain unattained.[i] As a result, many policy makers in sub-Saharan Africa have seen the MDGs in the context of a long line of failed initiatives to assist development in Africa.

One such initiative was the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa (UNSIA). This Initiative was launched in 1996 by the Secretary-General as a 10 year, US$ 25 billion programme for Africa to reduce poverty and coordinate the follow-up to the global conferences of the 1990s. The Initiative sought to implement the goal-setting and global political consensus on Africa's development reached in previous United Nations initiatives on Africa, in particular the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 (UN-PAAERD), the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) and the 1994 System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development.

UNSIA arose out of the United Nations intention to give priority to the development challenges Africa was facing. It sought to mobilize political and financial support for a stronger, more coherent response by the international community to these challenges at a time when conditions in Africa were not attracting adequate support from outside the region. Under UNSIA, all United Nations entities would seek to accelerate Africa's development by identifying and taking organizational responsibility for a set of concrete actions on core development challenges in five selected areas: water, food security, governance, social and human conditions, and resource mobilization.

The high hopes held for UNSIA in 1996 were not realized. From the outset, African Governments were particularly sceptical about the motives and timing of the initiative, as well the lack of real ownership. The scepticism increased with the frustration over unrealistic expectations regarding the resource implications of the initiative. There was great disappointment when the estimated US$ 25 billion necessary to carry out the Initiative was not disbursed by the international donor community.

A first attempt at consolidating the development objectives adopted by the international community throughout the 1990s came from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. Its report *"Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation"* included seven International Development Targets (IDTs).[j] The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs were, by and large, an endorsement of the IDTs by the international community. As a result, in sub-Saharan Africa, the MDGs were perceived by many as yet another developed countries' initiative that was bound to fail.

Frustration over declining donor assistance

Part of the reservations of countries in sub-Saharan Africa over the MDGs also arose from their vulnerability to declining trends in official development assistance (ODA) in the 1990s, on which they rely heavily for their development. ODA to Africa fell from approximately US$ 22 billion in 1995 to about US$ 15 billion in 1999. As a percentage of the donors' gross national income (GNI), ODA flows to developing countries declined from 0.33 per cent in 1992 to 0.22 percent in 2001.[k] These downward trends in donor assistance were particularly frustrating for the countries in sub-Saharan Africa with poor economic and social conditions during the 1990s. For many, setting the same goals and targets to be achieved equally by all countries at different stages of the development process was seen as unjust. The MDGs were perceived as a manifestation of globalization in the realm of the social sector. Moreover, sub-Saharan African countries viewed globalization as being closely associated with competition, and they were not ready to compete with other regions that were far ahead in their development process at the time of the Millennium Declaration.

Operational obstacles

To overcome the reservations of African countries, the United Nations system, particularly UNDP, conducted large campaigns across the continent through the holding of seminars and conferences to raise awareness of the MDGs and to gain support from African stakeholders, including Governments and civil society.[l] This campaign is starting to bear fruit. However, there is a long way to go, owing to a number of daunting operational obstacles.

Lack of long-term strategic-planning capacity

At independence, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa adopted a Government-led development model. In many of these countries, the model provided Government control over resource allocation, reduced the functioning of the market, and granted the State significant power to intervene in the market as well as to own and control productive resources. Almost all African countries adopted central planning to conduct ambitious development programmes aimed at improving social and physical infrastructure and diversifying economic activities.

However, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the role of the State in the economy declined and was overtaken by the changes introduced by the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) advocated by the World Bank and the IMF, which encouraged greater economic deregulation. These programmes removed the Government from many economic activities and, more damagingly, eliminated the ability to implement a long-term development vision and strategic plan. In many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, this led to the disintegration of public services and a weakened capacity of Governments to conceive and implement long-term development policies and to correct market failures. As a result, from the outset, African countries were ill-equipped to embark on achieving the MDGs since doing so would require long-term programming, as opposed to the short-term reform programmes aimed at restoring macroeconomic equilibrium.

Misalignment of national development programmes, particularly the PRSPs, with the MDGs

On average, in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa that implemented SAPs, people experienced deteriorating standards of living, reduced access to public services, devastated environments and worsening employment prospects, even in those countries where the programmes were well implemented. In the late 1990s, as a response to the criticism from developing countries on the SAPs, in particular concerning the lack of focus on poverty and the countries' ownership of reforms, the Bretton Woods institutions introduced national programmes for poverty reduction, embodied in the PRSPs, as a new approach to international development cooperation for low-income countries.

PRSPs are formulated by Governments through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders and the countries' development partners, including the Bretton Woods institutions. They have four main characteristics: (i) poverty-oriented economic growth; (ii) programmes that are owned by the country; (iii) programmes that are based on a set of country-specific outcome indicators, and (iv) broad-based participation of all segments of the population in selecting and monitoring the goals and targets. The experience with PRSPs in sub-Saharan Africa shows that, similar to the SAPs, they often give priority to short-term stabilization (including strict fiscal policies) over long-term development.

A study by the World Bank shows that, in general, the PRSPs encompass most of the MDGs. The study, however, underscores that the targets and the actual data required for monitoring are often different.[m] Anther distinction between the PRSPs and the MDGs is that the time frame of the PRSPs is focused on short- to medium-term development strategies, as compared to the longer-term and broader framework required to address the MDGs. As a result, the targets of the PRSPs are normally set to be achieved before 2015, making comparisons between PRSP and MDG targets complex. PRSPs also include a number of goals that are not part of the MDGs, such as macroeconomic management, rural and/or agricultural development, infrastructure, governance, private sector reform and social protection. Furthermore, there is no required set of goals or indicators that must be included in a PRSP. As a result, the degree of alignment of PRSP goals with the MDGs varies from country to country.

Policy makers in sub-Saharan Africa have stressed the need to adopt a country-specific approach to MDGs in which country-owned development strategies, including PRSPs, play a central role. In other words, it is important to set national development goals by tailoring the MDGs to country-specific conditions and then to identify and implement policies and actions needed to accomplish these national goals.

Several countries in sub-Saharan Africa have been inclined to adapt the goals, targets and indicators of the MDGs to the specific conditions and priorities of the country. For instance, Senegal expanded the scope of Goal 5, on improving maternal health and changed it into "reproductive health" in order to bring it more in line with the goals and targets of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).[n] Senegal also made access to drinkable water a separate goal. Lesotho has also made innovative adaptations to the MDGs.

Since the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the national priority, progress towards all goals is analyzed in the context of HIV/AIDS.

Another area of concern in achieving the MDGs is the lack of adequate data. All MDG country reports sponsored by the UNDP in sub-Saharan Africa stress that the lack of timely and reliable data poses uncertainties for the effective formulation, implementation and monitoring of relevant socio-economic programmes and policies. Furthermore, in many countries, data are not disaggregated by region, gender or sub-groups of people and are not available for several of the agreed targets, particularly for health and the environment.[o]

Challenges and opportunities

When evaluating the different regional performances in the context of the MDGs, there has been a tendency to contrast the sustained and rapid growth in South-East Asian economies over the past three decades with the socio-economic stagnation (and increasing poverty) in sub-Saharan Africa. One of the notable features of the performance of the South-East Asian countries over the past three decades has been their ability to expand and upgrade their linkages with the world economy – compared to the increased marginalization of much of sub-Saharan Africa. More recently, due to high rates of economic growth, poverty has been reduced significantly in China and India, making it likely that the target for reducing world poverty by half will be met.

In recent years, the average economic growth rate for sub-Saharan Africa was around 3.5 per cent. Most studies concur that this is about half the growth rate required to make significant steps in reducing poverty in the region. In order to reduce poverty by half by the year 2015, GDP growth of about 7 per cent per annum is estimated to be required for Africa as a whole; even higher rates of growth may be needed for the least developed countries.[p] This growth rate implies an investment rate of about 30 per cent of GDP, which would require substantial financial resources.[q] For their financial situation to improve, countries in sub-Saharan Africa need to increase substantially domestic resource mobilization, including fiscal revenue, and develop financial intermediation, particularly with respect to microfinancing to serve the poor.

Another challenge for sub-Saharan Africa in achieving the MDGs is to substantially mobilize external resources. Both the reports of the Millennium Project and the Commission for Africa concur that to accelerate income growth and to spur economic and social progress towards the MDGs, the volume and quality of external aid to sub-Saharan Africa must change radically. There are encouraging signs that the ODA flows have increased since the Monterrey Conference in 2001 and that the distribution of aid has improved in that it is being directed more to poorer countries.[r] However, these commendable improvements are well short of what is required to help attain the MDGs.[s]

The Millennium Project report and the report of the Commission for Africa can create a more favourable context to mobilize resources from the international community for sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, several events taking place in 2005 could make a meaningful impact: it is the twentieth anniversary of Live Aid, which was among the first global event to make the struggle of Africa a political issue in many developed countries and which exerted pressure to act; 2005 is also the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Brandt Commission report. In 2005, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland holds the presidencies of the G8 and the European Union. Prime Minister Tony Blair is committed to pushing through the recommendations of the Commission for Africa in these two forums. Mr. Blair will also embark on a round of diplomatic meetings ahead of the G8 summit to discuss the important issues of Africa.

The conjunction of all these events, together with Africa's achievements in increasingly utilizing aid more effectively, are likely to galvanize the attention of the international community and create a new momentum for sub-Saharan Africa, thereby reducing the risks of failure. Moreover, there may also be a reassessment of foreign aid policy in the developed countries to redirect resources away from the heightened focus on terrorism and security following the terrorist attacks of September 2001 and return them to a more collaborative approach to development challenges.

Instruments and policies

Achieving the MDGs is first and foremost the responsibility of sub-Saharan Africa itself. These countries must take responsibility for the MDGs at all levels, including in the areas of capacity building, promoting good governance and pro-poor growth policies. As recommended in the reports of the Millennium Project and the Commission for Africa, it is also imperative that sub-Saharan Africa receive significant support from the international community, that is to say through aid increases and improvements in the quality of aid.

Leadership and ownership

All stakeholders of the region, Governments and civil society, must take ownership of the MDGs through innovative instruments and policies.

Regional level: AU/NEPAD MDG Programme

Although the responsibility for meeting the MDGs lies with the countries themselves, a regional perspective can contribute to the process by exchanging best practices and providing a foundation for common understanding, and through collective action by African stakeholders, including Governments and civil society alike. In this regard, the Commission of African Union was mandated by the African Unity Summit to coordinate and lead the process of developing an African common position in collaboration with Member States and in close consultation with the NEPAD Secretariat, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the African Development Bank (ADB). The Commission has been further requested to submit a finalized draft African common position to the seventh Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in July 2005.

Sub-regional level

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is the first regional economic community to embark on a comprehensive development programme based on the MDGs, as reflected in its Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP). The RISDP was launched in March 2004 and is closely linked to NEPAD's objectives. Its purpose is to deepen regional integration through a comprehensive programme of long-term economic and social policies and through the provision of strategic direction to SADC and its members. The RISDP assigns top priority to poverty eradication and is the vehicle through which SADC can achieve the MDGs. The RISDP will be implemented over a 15 year period. The Plan is indicative in nature, outlining the conditions necessary for SADC to realize its integration and development goals. The RISDP will be implemented at a national level, with the SADC Secretariat playing a coordinating role. It is hoped that other subregions will follow the SADC model.

Country level

The central goal of the NEPAD MDG Programme is to help African countries develop national poverty-reduction strategies, based on needs assessments, to achieve the MDGs. This includes a medium-term investment framework and a clear assessment of the external financing gaps that need to be filled in order to achieve the MDGs. To this end, each African Government will need to lead an inclusive process to prepare, with the support of the NEPAD secretariat and with participation from civil society, the donor community and its parliament, the following sequence of "deliverables":[t] (i) a detailed MDG needs assessment of the long-term financial, infrastructure and human resources required to meet the goals (by the end of 2007); (ii) a long-term plan through to 2015 that outlines the policies, institutions and investments needed to achieve the MDGs, which should be based on the MDG needs assessment and should describe the long-term trajectory for achieving the goals (by the end of 2007); and (iii) a new 5-year PRSP based on the long-term MDG plan (2006-2010).[u]

A number of sub-Saharan African countries have already taken full control of the national effort to achieve the MDGs. For example, Ghana and Ethiopia have embarked on comprehensive MDG needs assessment processes; the outcomes of these processes will feed into a new type of PRSP covering longer time period.[v]

Capacity-building

Emphasis should be placed on investment in people, including investment in higher education and training. Attention should also be given to the effective development, utilization and retention of existing institutional capacities to avoid and reverse brain-drain. Furthermore, it is imperative that sub-Saharan Africa restores the role of the State. Governments play a critical role in establishing a long-term vision, coordinating policies, creating an enabling environment for wealth creation by the private sector, and making adjustments when necessary. This implies creating and strengthening long-term strategic-planning capacity consistent with the proper functioning of a market economy. For instance, it is encouraging that a number of countries, such as Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, have elaborated their own development framework. Uganda has established a National Planning Authority responsible for charting out long-term national strategic reforms, and the United Republic of Tanzania has transformed its second-generation PRSP into a five-year national development framework.

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa need to strengthen their monitoring infrastructures to meet the demand for accurate statistics. With respect to the MDGs, reliable data are needed for, inter alia, analysis, priority-setting and strategy formulation, monitoring, and the evaluation of the outcomes and impacts. This requires the elaboration of statistical master plans at the national level and the conducting of surveys, such as population censuses, surveys of income and expenditure, the labour force, education, health and national accounts.

Promoting good governance

In the framework of NEPAD, African countries have put in place a set of rules and procedures called the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), aimed at upholding the principles of accountability and transparency in the following four areas: (i) democracy and political governance; (ii) economic governance; (iii) corporate governance; and (iv) socio-economic development.

The purpose of the APRM is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that will lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated regional and continental economic integration through the sharing of experiences and the reinforcement of successful best practices, including the identification of deficiencies and the assessment of the needs for capacity-building of participating countries. The APRM is a self-monitoring mechanism, voluntarily adhered to by African countries. It is open to the member states of the African Union, of which 24 members have so far voluntarily acceded. It is anticipated that more African countries will join the APRM in the near future.

Pro-poor growth

Since the majority of the poor in sub-Saharan Africa live in rural areas, poverty reduction strategies must give priority to the development of rural sectors, particularly to agriculture. Investment in agriculture would help create jobs and eventually reduce poverty and hunger.

Furthermore, to ensure that economic growth does not aggravate the already high levels of income inequality, countries in sub-Saharan Africa should focus on the relationship between economic growth and income distribution. To this end, pro-poor growth policies should strive to disaggregate poverty data and target poverty pockets in all key social sectors.

Examples elsewhere are such developing countries as China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mauritius, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, where relatively high levels of education and health were achieved over a relatively short period at a time when, for some of these countries, incomes were not higher than those in sub-Saharan Africa. In these countries, policies and programmes were planned, executed and paid for by the public sector. Costs were kept low, with modestly paid health workers and teachers and rudimentary physical facilities. Reinforcing programmes in nutrition, health and education helped achieve goals with little waste at all levels of education.

Sub-Saharan Africa should evaluate the policies of developing countries that have made commendable achievements in lifting large segments of their populations out of poverty in a short period of time. To encourage pro-poor growth, best practices should be identified across sectors from countries within and outside sub-Saharan Africa and adapted to the needs of each country.

More and better quality aid

Volume and quality of aid

To encourage economic growth and to achieve progress towards the MDGs, the volume and quality of external aid to sub-Saharan Africa must change radically. Although there has been some recent progress, particularly with regard to aid flows, the effectiveness of aid to Africa in the 1990s has been at best modest, largely because of the low quality and decline in the volume of aid, as well as because of poor governance. It is essential that aid improves in terms of composition, that is to say that there is a higher proportion of grant elements. Furthermore, aid flows should be untied, harmonized, coordinated, predictable and integrated into the budget process, which itself must be improved to reflect strategic prioritization and a higher degree of public financing accountability.

Aid conditionality should be mutually agreed between Africa and its donors and, to the extent possible, any conditionality should be derived from the country's development strategy. Aid should address the priority challenges stipulated in the national development framework and, where macroeconomic instabilities characterize the economy, aid should be used to mitigate any adverse social and economic impact of corrective measures. Furthermore, a "big push" in aid is needed, particularly to generate a major increase in investments in the productive and social sectors. The proposed doubling of aid to sub-Saharan Africa to US$ 50 billion in 2010 and the further increase to US$ 75 billion in 2015 should be considered as a positive development in this direction.[w]

Capacity constraints

Limited absorptive capacity in sub-Saharan Africa may prevent the effective use of additional aid resources in achieving the MDGs.

Increased aid-financed public investments may have positive effects by overcoming infrastructure bottlenecks, thereby enabling the private sector and other actors in society to be more productive. Such investments could be in infrastructure, or in other areas which are currently limiting growth in related economic activities (for example, investments in education, training and governance).

Another aspect relates to institutional capacity constraints hindering effective ODA delivery at the country level. Channelling more aid into building institutional and human capacities and investing in capacity building for strategic planning and policy making, including for external resource management, would build a foundation for effective ODA delivery.

Aid should also be delivered and utilized in ways that limit the use of resources that are most constraining and already overstretched, for instance, by avoiding unnecessarily sophisticated project designs and, instead, allocating resources to projects that are within the existing capacity of communities and other domestic actors. ODA should be delivered through existing administrative mechanisms, in a manner that contributes to aid improvement, rather than circumventing and undermining them by using parallel systems.

Monitoring mechanisms

With regard to the monitoring and evaluation of the MDGs, appropriate mechanisms must be put in place at all levels.

At the country level, the objective of monitoring and evaluation should be to keep track of both the implementation of national development programmes and the impact of those programmes on the achievement of the Goals. It is particularly important to organize broad-based participation at the country level in order to ensure that all key stakeholders, including civil society and communities, have their say in the assessment of the status of progress towards the MDGs. Country-level monitoring and evaluation often requires a strengthening of human and institutional capacity, as well as the reinforcement of a country's capacity in data collection, processing, analysis and dissemination.

At the regional and subregional levels, the APRM could be a useful instrument for sharing experiences and exchanging best practices in monitoring and evaluating progress towards the MDGs.

Closer cooperation is called for between the United Nations system and the multilateral financial institutions, particularly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to promote policy coherence in providing development aid. In addition, innovative approaches must be developed to monitor partner commitments and actions, including the involvement of independent monitoring groups and the broadening of consultative group meetings.

Conclusions

The achievement of the MDGs in sub-Saharan Africa faces a combination of varied obstacles that are structural, political and operational. Awareness of the MDGs is gaining momentum and there are encouraging signs that African Governments and civil society are determined to take ownership of and leadership in achieving the MDGs.

Achieving the MDGs is first and foremost the responsibility of national policy makers. All stakeholders in sub-Saharan Africa, Governments and civil society must take ownership of the MDGs through innovative instruments and policies. However, it is imperative that sub-

Saharan Africa receive significant support from the international community, as recommended by the reports of the Millennium Project and the Commission for Africa.

The MDGs represent an unprecedented opportunity for Africa and the international community to reduce poverty. It is a compact which defines the responsibilities of the donor community and the developing world to combat poverty and disease within a quantified, time-bound action plan. The UNDP Human Development Report 2003 is correct that the real power of the MDGs is political, as they represent the first global development vision that combines political endorsement with a clear focus on poverty reduction.

However, there is still a sense of mistrust between sub-Saharan African countries and the donor community. The latter would like to see tangible signs of political stability and good governance. The former remains sceptical over the political will of development partners to live up to their part of the compact, including more and better aid, free and fairer trade and debt cancellation.

It is, however, important to stress that Africans want more than the attainment of the MDGs. They also aspire to decent jobs, more tools with which to raise the yield of their crops, and a better infrastructure with which to diversify away from agriculture and into manufacturing and services. This means that national and regional projects for electricity, roads, telephones and irrigation canals are a priority. Africans aspire to make their investment environment attractive for native and foreign business, but they also hope to attract the “better type of FDI”, that is to say, the kind that yields technology, provides jobs and increases the value added in economic activity. These are the means whereby Africa can break its vicious circle of poverty breeding poverty, move to the stage where growth is sustainable at higher levels, and ultimately rely more on trade and private investments than on assistance from rich countries.

Notes

[a] *The MDGs in Africa: Promises and Progress* (United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Children's Fund, June 2002); "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa: Progress, Prospects, and Policy Implications", *Global Poverty Report 2002*, prepared by the African Development Bank in collaboration with the World Bank with contributions from the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank (June 2002); *Human Development Report 2003: Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty,* United Nations Development Programme.

[b] *The MDGs in Africa: Promises and Progress….*

[c] *Human Development Report 2003 ….*

[d] See report of the Commission for Africa, *Our common interest*, 2005.

[e] Report of the United Nations Millennium Project, *Investing in Development, A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals* (UNDP, New York, 2005).

[f] The African Union Commission has been mandated to coordinate the process of developing an African common position on the MDGs in collaboration with the NEPAD Secretariat, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Regional Economic Communities. The African Union Commission is expected to submit a draft report to the African Union Summit in July 2005.

[g] Lionel Demery and Michael Walton, "Are the Poverty and Social Goals for the 21st Century Attainable?", IDS Bulletin, vol. 30, no. 2 (Institute of Development Studies, 1999).

[h] Ibid.

[i] World Bank Operations Evaluation Department (OED), *2002 Annual Review of Development Effectiveness: Achieving Development Outcomes: the Millennium Challenge* (World Bank, 2003).

[j] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Development Assistance Committee, *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation* (OECD, May 1996).

[k] World Bank, World Development Indicators, available from http://www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2005/wditext/Section6_1.htm.

[l] UNDP has launched a special campaign under the name of Africa 2015. This initiative is an advocacy campaign designed to create sustained awareness and engage multiple audiences and constituencies in fighting poverty and the spread HIV/AIDS. The effort mobilizes all sectors of society to advocate for the MDGs. The process integrates the support of popular celebrities, the media and sports institutions, as well as national, municipal, religious and grassroots leaders.

[m] World Bank Development Data Group, "Targets and indicators for MDGs and PRSPs: What countries have chosen to monitor?", World Bank, Washington D.C., 2003.

[n] UNDP Evaluation Office, *Millennium Development Goals Reports: An Assessment*, vol.I (New York, UNDP, December 2003).

[o] *Ibid.*

[p] Economic Commission for Africa, *Economic Report on Africa 1999: The Challenges of Poverty Reduction and Sustainability* (Economic Commission for Africa, 1999).

[q] Ibid.

[r] According to the report of the World Bank and IMF Development Committee of 28 March 2003, in 2001 low-income countries received 64 per cent of total DAC bilateral ODA that is allocable by country, of which roughly half was received by the least developed countries; middle-income countries received 36 percent. Regionally, sub-Saharan Africa received 29 percent of the total.

[s] Both the Millennium Project and the Commission for Africa reports suggest that ODA to sub-Saharan Africa should be doubled to US$ 25 billion per annum over the next three to five years, and a further US$ 25 billion should be provided following a review of progress.

[t] New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Secretariat.

[u] See also United Nations Millennium Project, "Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessments – Methodology", September 2004.

[v] The findings of the MDG need assessment of Ghana were presented to national stakeholders and the donor community at the occasion of the launching of the Millennium Project report in Accra on 18 January 2005.

[w] Commission for Africa, loc. cit., p. 327.