

# NRG4SD4MDGs

## Make Poverty History:

The Role of the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (NRG4SD) in meeting 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

“This generation is the first to have the power to end extreme poverty.”

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General





## Five Years In: Time to Deliver

In September 2000, 189 UN member states signed the Millennium Development Declaration, pledging to halve global poverty by 2015. To date, many governments have broken their promises by failing to take the action needed to meet the agreed goals. With ten years to go, 2005 must see a step-change in commitments from governments in both North and South.

- Rich country governments must honour their commitments on aid, debt and trade, to mobilise the financing and infrastructure necessary to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- Developing country governments must work alongside civil society and communities to draw up strong, nationally owned plans for delivering the MDGs.

With the necessary political will and resources, these targets can be met. Oxfam believes that regional governments have a critical role to play, not only in urging their national governments to honour their commitments, but in promoting, influencing, and delivering the MDGs 'on the ground' – and in building a global partnership for development.

## The Role of Regional Governments

“Economies need to grow to provide jobs and more incomes for poor people. Health and education systems must deliver services to everyone, men and women, rich and poor. Infrastructure has to work and be accessible to all. And policies need to empower people to participate in the development process. While success depends on the actions of developing countries, which must direct their own development, there is also much that rich countries must do to help.”

UN Development Programme, Goal 8

“National governments are too small for the big issues, and too big for the small issues – that’s where regions come in.” NRG4SD Delegate

Oxfam believe that sensitive devolution of power plays a key role in good governance. Government brought closer to the people provides improved opportunities for:

- The voices of those in poverty to impact on policy-making processes
- Pro-poor, community led policy to be put into practice
- Transparency and accountability in administration and delivery of services, such as health and education, to those in poverty.

In our view, strong regional governance is key to the effective delivery of the Millennium Development Goals.

## Challenges to the NRG4SD

In taking the initiative to work together for sustainable development, we believe the NRG4SD can lead the world by example in building a global partnership for development.

Oxfam recognises the considerable variance in legislative powers and influence between regional governments, and the diversity of sustainability-related issues that members of the NRG4SD are seeking to address. However, we believe that participation of developing countries and an actively pro-poor 'development agenda' must be viewed as key to the credibility of the network, if any meaningful progress on global sustainable development is to be made. If members focus to excess on rich-country 'consumption-led' issues, the network's agenda will become less relevant to developing countries and will fail to address real and immediate threats to global sustainability.

**"You can't boast about being green in your own back yard, if you're making poor people do your dirty work - and plundering their environment instead."** Youth Forum Participant

The NRG4SD must take the following steps:

- Give priority to a policy agenda which gives priority to development issues – with a particular focus on MDGs.
- Develop, alongside civil society, participatory policy approaches which not only 'give voice' to those experiencing poverty, but directly inform and influence the processes of the NRG4SD.
- Actively seek to engage African regional governments in a common approach to the agenda for the MDGs and Sustainable Development (SD).
- Play an active role in promoting and disseminating best practice for integrating MDG targets into SD schemes.

Oxfam believes that, with broad and solid foundations, the NRG4SD should seek to develop its profile and role in promoting sustainable development, to achieve greater global impact.

- We would encourage the network to consider making a collective submission on Sustainable Development and the MDGs to the UN Heads of State Summit in Autumn 2005.

## Challenges to Regional Governments

Regional governments must use their influence at every level to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

- **Sustainable development schemes** must demonstrate a clear analysis of poverty and human rights, as well as environmental issues. They must also put structures in place to check decisions at every level against their global impact, to ensure that achievement of the MDGs is not unwittingly hindered.
- Regional governments, in both North and South, must actively promote **civil-society participation** in the development, delivery, and evaluation of high-quality Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans that are gender-sensitive and incorporate mechanisms of mutual accountability (such as budget monitoring), between community stakeholders and government.
- Regional governments (North and South) should take steps to ensure that people living in poverty have access to basic social services – **Health and Education** – without facing prohibitive barriers such as user fees. Regional governments can and should work together to find innovative solutions to problems of access to formal services; but they should also develop means of engaging communities in informal but often life-saving community education programmes, for example on HIV / AIDS or sanitation.

- Regional governments spend a large proportion of their budgets on procurement; **procurement policies** must make respect for **labour rights** integral to their supply-chain strategies. In the simplest terms, good jobs for people in developing countries can enable them to work their way out of poverty – while poor jobs ensure the opposite. The codes of conduct of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) should be endorsed by regional governments, and reflected in use of public funds – for example, when awarding grant funding to private investors and corporations.
- Regional governments play a major role in promoting **local agricultural produce**, in both domestic and international markets, supporting sustainable livelihoods for their own farmers. But trade in products with the 'Fairtrade' mark provides a means by which sustainable livelihoods can be guaranteed for farming communities in developing countries too. Sustainability schemes should seek to 'tie-in' promotion of Fairtrade products alongside initiatives to promote local food sources.
- Developing-country regional governments should support farming communities in **co-operative trading** ventures, such as Fairtrade, which facilitate access to sustainable and dependable markets. NRG4SD members could also take the bold step of developing fair-trade schemes between *each other's* markets.
- Regional governments in the North and South have influence over, or direct responsibility for, decisions which can lead to proliferation or control of the **Arms Trade**. Support for business and industry engaged in making arms components affects the security of communities in which freely available guns lead to armed violence and tragedy. The arms trade *fundamentally undermines* sustainable development through promoting conflict and, too often, forcing people to flee their communities. Regional governments must scrutinise their policies to put people's lives first, and sustainable development schemes should seek to enforce appropriate codes of conduct.
- Policies supporting **Education for Sustainable Development** at regional levels will help to ensure the commitment of future generations to the eradication of poverty. This may be further bolstered through developing educational exchange links between developed and developing countries.
- Regional governments should take active steps to promote mechanisms for **knowledge and technology transfer** to promote pro-poor sustainable development.

Regional governments should seek to use their influence in actively promoting the Millennium Development Goals within their national contexts. In particular, they should use whatever power and influence they have to achieve the following in rich countries:

- National commitments on pro-poor trade reform (in particular, to end the dumping of subsidised agricultural produce from rich countries).
- Full cancellation of the debts of Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) that are committed to poverty reduction.
- Achievement of the UN's target of 0.7% of GDP to be devoted to aid, which is required to deliver the Millennium Development Goals.

Within developing countries, Oxfam urges regional governments:

- To work alongside civil society in developing effective Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans that will contribute to delivering the MDGs where it matters: ending poverty at the community level.

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