

SUMMARY REPORT

**Caribbean Development Bank and United Nations
Development Programme**

Regional Workshop

**“Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in
the Caribbean”**

**Crowne Plaza Hotel
Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
21-23 September, 2004**

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BACKGROUND

The Caribbean Sub-Regional Resource Facility (SURF) has recognized the importance in playing a strong supportive role to UNDP Country Offices in the Caribbean Cluster in their work in the area of the MDGs. The Caribbean SURF had earlier prepared a proposal and obtained financing for a major regional MDG initiative in Bridgetown, Barbados.

Consistent with this thrust the SURF submitted a proposal to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) in **March, 2004** for funding to jointly host a regional workshop entitled " Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Caribbean".

This workshop sought to build upon the earlier Regional MDG Conference held in Barbados over the period 7-9 July 2003 where there was consensus on the need to accelerate the implementation of the MDGs so the goals can be achieved by 2015. Although, the Caribbean is on track to achieve some of the goals, it was noted that progress on some of the key goals remains particularly challenging. This is in areas such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and environmental sustainability. Additionally, the efforts made to implement the strategies to achieve the MDGs in the Caribbean have not fully realized the results that have been expected.

This important regional initiative was coordinated by the Caribbean SURF with resources from the CDB, UNDP, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC) and UNDP, Trinidad and Tobago as well as the Caribbean SURF. The regional workshop was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Trinidad from 21-23 September, 2004 and targeted senior Policy makers from the Ministries of Planning and Social Development and Senior Statisticians from each of the 17 CDB borrowing member countries. UNDP also financed the participation of five officials from Suriname. It should be noted that there was strong representation from across the Caribbean including Belize notwithstanding the devastation and adverse effects caused by Hurricane Ivan in the region.

The objectives of the high-level regional workshop were to:

1. Share country experiences in integrating the MDGs into National Planning Processes;
2. Highlight regional MDG priorities within the context of countries national goals;
3. Develop national action plans to integrate achievement of the MDGs into national and sectoral planning instruments; and
4. Identify priority areas for resource allocation to donor organizations.

The regional workshop was also utilised by the CDB to obtain inputs into planning processes as it seeks to increase resources available for grant and concessional financing. It intends to use the MDGs as the framework for its operations for its Borrowing Member Countries, particularly those who are eligible for grant and concessional financing.

Methodology:

The workshop was highly participatory and designed to have discussions and inputs from participants with a focus on specific and concrete action plans. The agenda was developed by a technical team whose membership included staff from the Caribbean SURF, UNDP Trinidad and Tobago and CDB. Technical inputs were also sought from RBLAC's Senior Economist and Programme Advisor, COSC as well as UNDP Country Offices in the Caribbean Cluster. The Caribbean SURF staff provided the facilitation support for the duration of the Regional Workshop.

DAY 1

SESSION 1- OPENING

The opening ceremony served the dual role of formally beginning the workshop as well as launching the UNDP/BLAC-sponsored publication, the Regional Report on the Achievement of the MDGs. In attendance were senior members from the CDB, participants from CDB's borrowing member countries, Resource personnel from UNDP, RBLAC and the Bureau for Development Policy, CARICOM Secretariat, OECS Secretariat and the University of the West Indies. There was also widespread representation from the UN Agencies including PAHO, UNECLAC, ILO, FAO, UNIC and UNICEF. The Resident Representative of UNDP, Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Inyang Ebong-Harstrup delivered the UNDP, Secretary General's UN Day of peace message and the feature address was presented by Mr. P. Desmond Brunton, Vice President, Operations, CDB. Mr. Brunton highlighted the fact that poverty is multidimensional and as such a multifaceted approach is needed to deal with it. He reiterated the call for integration of the MDGs into national planning processes and factoring vulnerability into the goals and the need to modify indicators and targets to represent the peculiarities of Caribbean territories.

SESSION II- PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE MDGs

The second session of the workshop provided participants with a holistic overview of the progress made towards achieving the MDGs with very comprehensive presentations delivered by Professor Denis Benn, University of the West Indies, Jamaica and Mr. Elbert Ellis, Poverty Programme Adviser, UNDP Barbados and the OECS. Professor Benn provided an overview of the Regional MDG Report for the Caribbean. Mr. Ellis delivered a presentation on the progress of the MDGs in the Eastern Caribbean in achieving the MDGs based on the sub-regional report financed by the UNDP Country Office for Barbados and the OECS. Amongst some of the key issues raised during these presentations include:

- ? The reporting structure for MDGs need to be prescriptive as well as descriptive
- ? There needs to be closer examination of the relationship between good governance and the achievement of the MDGs
- ? The MDGs needs to be examined in the context of vulnerability (Structural Vulnerability and Conjunctional Vulnerability)

- ? We need to extend the MDG to accommodate the treatment of physic development
- ? Countries should emphasize not only achieving but surpassing the MDGs
- ? MDG indicators need to be localised
- ? There is still a need for increased data collection capabilities to support monitoring and evaluation

SESSION III-INTEGRATING THE MDGs INTO DEVELOPMENT PLANS; COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

This session sought to provide participants with the experiences of countries that have already make steps in integrating the MDGs into their National Development Plans and participants benefited from the experiences of Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Belize and internationally. Mrs. Victoria Mendez-Charles Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Planning and Development, Trinidad and Tobago delivered the presentation on behalf of Trinidad and highlighted to participants the plans, lessons learnt and challenges of its Vision 2020 Process.

Ms. Sonia Jackson, Director General, Statistical Institute of Jamaica provided a summary of Jamaica's position in terms of achieving the MDGs. Amongst the areas of concern she noted poverty, especially in rural areas; drop our rates of boys in schools; incidence of HIV/AIDS; the existing debt burden and slow economic recovery. Mr. Glen Avilez, Head, Central Statistical Office, Belize noted that existing development plans for Belize focus on the MDGs through plans to reduce infant mortality, medication for all, a multi-sectoral response to HIV/AIDS, universal secondary education and a focus on biodiversity and reforestation. Amongst the gaps in existing plans he mentioned that there was no reference to improvement of maternal health and the need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

RBLAC Senior Economist, Enrique Ganuza served as a resource person and made a key presentation on the international experience with respect to the MDGs. This presentation served to provide a perspective on the developments in other parts of the world and as well as the support efforts of UNDP and looked at the relation between HIPC, PRSPs and the planning framework for the MDG.

DAY 2

SESSION IV- HIGHLIGHTING PRIORITY MDG GOALS

Representatives from the Commonwealth of Dominica, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago highlighted their priority MDG goals during session IV of the workshop. Whilst the MDGs are not incorporated directly into the planning processes of the Commonwealth of Dominica, initiatives reflect that some of the activities being implemented are consistent with the achieving of the MDGs. The government is currently focusing on the following priority areas: generating economic activity; economic growth; ensuring social protection of the less fortunate and poverty reduction. The major programme currently being implemented by the Government is the Economic Stabilisation Programme.

In the case of St. Lucia, priorities MDGs were identified in the areas of HIV/AIDS, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. Urgent deficiencies exist in the invisibility of gender in available statistics; paucity in time series data; variations in data definitions; inadequate time, staffing, financial and technical resources and the need for the sustainability of effort.

The representative for Trinidad noted that within the context of the Vision 2020 the MDGs are considered a subset and a minimum standard. Trinidad and Tobago has developed other localized standards and benchmarks based on comparator country analysis e.g. they expended health to include dengue, diabetes and hypertension.

Amongst some of the key issues that were highlighted by these presenters were:

- ? There needs to be strengthening of the institutional capacities of Central Statistical Offices within Caribbean territories
- ? Gender is not integrated as a cross-cutting issue
- ? Monitoring and evaluation programmes are weak
- ? There is a need for greater inter-sectoral networking
- ? Gaps exist in data collection systems - caused because of a lack of data in some areas and data not being gender sensitive

SESSION V- DEVELOPING THE ACTION PLANS

Prior to the working group discussions and the development of action plans participants were provided with an insight into the progress made in statistical reporting within Jamaica through its Survey of Living Conditions Methodology. This presentation was made by Ms. Carol Watson-Williams, Director General of the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ). This presentation was reinforced by the need to press towards continued development in our statistical reporting process by Dr. Philomen Harrison, Programme Manager, CARICOM. Ms. Jacquelyn Joseph delivered a presentation entitled: "Maximising Opportunities for Addressing Human Resource Development"

From the discussions held during the second day the following points were highlighted:

- ? Efforts have been made to incorporate the MDGs into national development plans as seen in the instances of Trinidad, Dominica and Jamaica. However several other countries need assistance in strengthening their own efforts e.g. St. Lucia. St. Kitts and Nevis
- ? There is still a need for institutionalization of the MDGs and recognition and commitment from the highest levels of government.
- ? The MDGs are still to be adapted to fit the context of specific countries

DAY 3

SESSION VII- THE ACTION PLANS

The working group discussions proved to be one of the most valuable sessions of the workshop. During this time countries had the opportunity to highlight their MDG

priorities and develop national action plans to ensure progress in these priority areas. Amongst the priority areas in all of the working groups were: poverty reduction, combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic, economic growth and stability and social service provision. Whilst the minimum standards in education had already been attained by most countries, the participants noted that the challenge was to maintain the existing standard and raise the bar of performance. Amongst the resources necessary to achieve these plans include: strengthening of human resource capacity and institutions, increased finances and partnerships with National, Regional and International Organisations as well as NGOs and Civil Society. Further information on the output of working group sessions can be found on the resource CD for the workshop.

SESSION VIII-RESOURCING THE MDGs

Due to the human, financial and technical constraints that plague most Caribbean territories the issue of resourcing the plans to integrate the MDGs into National Planning processes was a crucial one to participants. Information on the kinds of resource available to countries to ensure the effective implementation of their plans were delivered by Mr. Clairvair Squires, Portfolio Manager, Project Financing Division, CDB; Mr. Antoine Huety, BDP and Ms. Jacquelyn Joseph, Director Human Resource Development CARICOM Secretariat. The BDP resource person made a comprehensive presentation on costing of the MDGs.

MEETING SUMMARY

The meeting ended with a meeting summary from Professor Denis Benn which highlighted the following points:

- ? The MDGs provide a useful framework in which countries can achieve their development objectives.
- ? Partnerships: all are important in the achievement of the objectives
- ? Ivan has forced us to focus on environmental sustainability in the context of achieving the MDGs and broader development plans
- ? Several Caribbean territories have already achieved the minimum standards in literacy and as such the emphasis must now be on continuous learning
- ? Capacity development must now include individual and institutional development which can only take place in a policy matrix
- ? The question of interim targets must be considered

The overall consensus of this workshop is that it has furthered the work of the Regional MDG Conference held in Barbados from 7-9 July, 2004. Countries have now moved beyond an appreciation of the importance of the MDGs to the issues of implementation and achievement of the MDGs. In this very important step the issue of vulnerability has been brought to the fore and regional and international organizations now have a clear understanding of where individual Caribbean territories are and the areas in which countries need support in order to further the process of the MDGs. Coming out of the working group discussions was a suggestion by the, CARICOM

delegation to form a core group of individuals comprising one representative from each of the four working groups, and representatives from CARICOM, UNDP and CDB to further the deliberations of the workshop and to move the commitments made by all stakeholders during the workshop into a tangible action plan for the region. Based on the evaluation reports, participants emerged well pleased with the lessons learnt as well as the key requirements to achieve the MDGs in the Caribbean. For further information, contact Jason Cotton at: jcotton@surf.undp.org.tt

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