

Midterm Progress Report on the MDGs

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Halfway through the 2015 target, the Philippines has made several strides toward the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

However, challenges remain. The Midterm Progress Report on the MDGs launched recently by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) shows that the Philippines will likely achieve the targets on reducing poverty by half in 2015, child mortality, nutrition, and the incidence of HIV / AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and access to safe drinking water and sanitary toilet facility.

However, the Philippines still faces challenges for maternal health, access to reproductive health services, universal access and gender equality to education.

Comparisons across regions show uneven progress and wide disparities. In all goals and targets, existing indicators revealed that the National Capital Region (NCR), Ilocos Region and Cagayan Valley are the only regions that were consistently above national averages while the rest lagged behind.

To attain the MDG targets, Acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and NEDA Director-General Augusto B. Santos says the government should address the disparities across regions and restrain the high population growth rate. Performance of agriculture should be enhanced, alongside the full implementation of basic education and health reforms. Strict enforcement of laws related to MDG should also be enhanced. There is also a need to bridge the

financing gap as well as to address the country's peace and security issues. The public-private partnership should be strengthened together with the transparency and accountability in government transactions as well as the capacity of local government units (LGUs).

Philippines Hits and Misses

According to the Report, the targets of Goals 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 have high probabilities of being achieved except for Goals 2, 3 and 5. Below is the summary of the Report.

GOAL 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

First Target: Halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty between 1990 and 2015. The Report says Filipinos living in extreme poverty (or below the subsistence or food threshold) decreased from 24.3 percent (or 20.4% of families) in 1990 to 13.50 percent (or 10.2 % of families) in 2006. This represents an annual rate of decline of 0.90 percentage point (or .85 percentage point for families).

Six regions are below the national subsistence incidence of 13.5 percent of the population. These better off regions are the NCR (0.7%), CAR (12.7%), Region 1 (11.2%), Region 2 (7.6%), Region III (4.1%) and CALABARZON (4.7%). The remaining 11 are the poorer regions which exceeded the national average, led by the Zamboanga Peninsula in Mindanao (32.7%), CARAGA (30.9%), and Region 5 (26.6%).



To address regional imbalance, regions with poverty incidence rates above the national average must receive more than a proportionate share of the government's resources, according to the Report.

Second Target: Halve the proportion of population below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption and halve the proportion of underweight children under five years old. The quality and quantity of absolute food intake of Filipino households improved, according to the Report. The proportion of households with per capita dietary intake lower than 100 percent dietary energy requirement decreased from 69.4 percent in 1993 to 56.9 percent in 2003, or an annual rate of reduction of 1.25 percent. To meet the MDG target of 34.7 percent by 2015, this needs to be reduced by 1.85 percent every year.

The prevalence of underweight preschool children also declined from 30.6 percent in 2001 to 26.9 percent in 2003. This further declined to 24.6 percent in 2005. To meet the MDG target of 17.25 percent, this needs to be reduced by 0.74 percent every year.

However, Santos says that wide disparities exist across regions ranging from a low of 16.2 percent for NCR and a high of 38 percent for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Through the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN), various health and nutrition programs continue to be implemented such as Garantisadong Pambata, the Salt Iodization Nationwide Act, Food Fortification, Nutrition Education, National Supplemental Feeding Program, Food-for-School Program, among others. The Accelerated Hunger Mitigation Program was launched to address hunger targeting 54 priority provinces.

GOAL 2: Achieve universal primary education

Target : Achieve universal access to primary education by 2015. Secretary Santos says the country needs to step up its effort to achieve the 2015 target of universal access as well as to improve elementary cohort survival and completion rates.

The Report says that the NER or participation rate at the elementary level (both public and private), based on the school-age population of 6-11 years was 90.29 percent in school year (SY) 2002-2003. For 2005-2006, the Report indicated a decline in the participation rate of 84.44 percent noticeably in the urban areas. By region, CALABARZON accounted for the highest NER of 92.87 percent with CARAGA the lowest at 74.8 percent.

To achieve universal basic education, the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 or Republic Act (RA) 9155 seeks to empower stakeholders at the local level to initiate and implement innovations towards improved delivery of

basic education. The Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda was also formulated supporting the Education for All 2015 goals and objectives.

GOAL 3: Promote gender equality

Target: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education not later than 2015. Secretary Santos says that as far as participation in basic education is concerned females have an advantage over males. "The government and other education stakeholders should look more seriously at the factors contributing to the comparatively low completion and retention among boys in the school system," he adds.

According to the Report, females perform better than males in simple literacy rate, participation and cohort survival rate, completion rate and number of graduates in higher education.

For SY 2001-2002, female participation rate was 90.91 percent, compared to 89.33 percent of males. In SY 2005-2006, female participation rate was 85.4 percent while 83.6 percent for males. On the other hand, the school leaver rate for females (6%) was lower than that of males (8.62%) in SY 2005-2006.



GOAL 4: Reduce child mortality

Target : Reduce children under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015. There is a high probability of achieving the targets for under five and infant mortality rates (IMR) which have been declining steadily for the past ten years according to the Report.

Secretary Santos says gains have been made in reducing the under-five deaths per 1,000 live births. The decline from 80 to 32 deaths between 1990 and 2006 indicates a high probability of meeting the target of 26.7 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2015.

Infant and child mortality rates have also been decreasing from 57 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990, to 35 in 1998, to 30 in 2003. In 2006, these declined further to 24 deaths. This figures indicate that the likelihood of attaining the MDG target for IMR is high. It should be further noted that the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2004-2010 aims to reduce the IMR to 17 per 1,000 live births by 2010, a much greater decline than the 2015 MDG target.

To attain the targets, the following plans and policies are being carried out by the government: (a) Philippine National Development Plan for Children; (b) Milk Code of 1986; (c) Rooming-in and Breast-feeding Act of 1992; (d) National Dairy Development

Act of 1995; (e) An Act Promulgating a Comprehensive Policy and a National System for Ensuring New-Born Screening; (f) Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide (ASIN) of 1995, among others.

GOAL 5: Improve maternal health

Target 1: Reduce maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters by 2015 (half by 2000, half by 2015). Based on the 1993 and 1998 National Demographic Survey (NDHS), maternal mortality ratio (MMR) went down to 172 deaths from a 1993 baseline of 209 deaths. In 2006, it declined to only 62 death. Though the decline continued, it was at a sharply diminishing rate. The target reduction in MMR is 52 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015. Secretary Santos says that with this figure, it is unlikely that the 2015 target will be met.

To effectively reduce maternal mortality ratio, the following must be pursued: (a) improve the quality of maternal health care through programs for health workers, health facilities and services; (b) provide adequate funding for programs and mobilize all stakeholders including families and communities; and (c) identify alternative sources of financing and cost-efficient interventions, availability of health manpower and stronger linkages with other stakeholders.

Target 2: Increase access to reproductive health services to 60 percent by 2010, 80 percent by 2015. According to the Report, contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) slightly increased from 49 percent in 2001 to 50.6 percent in 2006. At this rate, the 2015 target of 80 percent access to reproductive health services is difficult to achieve. Among the regions, Central Luzon had the highest CPR (58.9%) followed by Southern Mindanao (57.2%). ARMM was the lowest at 20 percent.

Over the years, the government has responded to reproductive health (RH) programs through policies, programs and projects that include the Ten-Year Reproductive Health Plan, Philippine Population Management Program (PPMP) and its companion document, the PPMP Strategic Operation Plan and Population Investment Program as well as several administrative orders in support of family planning and safe motherhood.

Activities to attain the RH target include: (a) reassessment of the present programs and projects on reproductive health; (b) strengthening male involvement in RH; (c) improving access of the poor to quality RH services, among others.

GOAL 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target 1: Halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. Secretary Santos says that the prevalence of human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV and AIDS) has been kept below the national target of one percent of the population.

According to the Report, there seems to be an underreporting of HIV and AIDS cases in the country. The Department of Health (DOH) estimated the HIV and AIDS cases to be about 11,200 as of 2005. Underreporting can be attributed to the social stigma of disclosing to the public one's infection in a predominantly Catholic population.

To stop and reverse the rise of HIV and AIDS cases, a more vigorous national response through prevention, treatment, care and support programs has to be in place. Moreover, HIV and AIDS related policies must be harmonized and the AIDS law implemented.

Target 2: Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases by 2015. Malaria, the eighth leading cause of morbidity in the country, has declined in terms of morbidity and mortality rates. According to the Report, malaria morbidity decreased from 72 cases per 100,000 population in 1998 to 47 cases in 2002. In 2005, the rate increased to 55 cases. The mortality rate, on the other hand, decreased from 0.8 deaths per 100,000 population in 1998 to 0.1 death in 2002. However, this slightly went up to 0.17 deaths in 2005.

Tuberculosis is the sixth leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the country, although its incidence has been declining since 1999, from 38.7 to 33 deaths per 100,000 population in 2003. In 2005, the case detection rate was at 71 percent while the cure rate was 82 percent.

Although significant strides have been achieved in malaria and TB control, more effective policies and activities must be improved in two categories: improving service provision; and strengthening program support services.

GOAL 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 1: Implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2005 to reverse loss of environmental resources by 2015. According to the Report, important improvements have been noted in the protection of the environment. For example, the number of protected areas under the National Integrated Protected Area System (NIPAS) has expanded from 83 proclaimed areas in 2000 to 103 in 2006.

The government is pursuing the following activities in order to achieve the 2015 target: (a) update environmental data as reference and basis for environmental planning, decision making, monitoring and evaluation; (b) support the implementation of environmental laws; (c) address poverty and population problems; (d) prevent or reduce the occurrence of natural and man-made disasters and minimize the damage caused through reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged areas; (e) provide capacity-building for LGUs and other key partners on environmental management, among others.

Target 2: Halve the proportion of people with no access to safe drinking water or those who cannot afford it by 2015. Surveys conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO) reveal that access to safe drinking water and to sanitary



toilet facilities slightly improved over the years. Based on the 2004 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS), access to safe drinking water slightly increased from 80.0 percent in 2002 to 80.2 percent in 2004. The percentage of those using sealed water and closed pit type of toilet facility, on the other hand, was at 86.2 percent.

To achieve the 2015 target, the government will prioritize the following measures: (a) focus on waterless areas through the President's Program on Water; (b) establish a groundwater monitoring system; (c) provide safe drinking water by installing low cost water supply; (d) conserve water for sustainable water quality and supply and; (e) develop/construct low-cost sanitation facilities.

Target 3: Achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. In 2002, the government estimated that there were 588,853 informal settler families or squatter households nationwide. In 2004, the estimate increased to 675,000 families or 14.6 percent higher. More than half of the informal settlers or 51.8 percent are in the NCR, Region VI, CALABARZON, and Region IV. These informal settlers live mostly in urban slum areas with little or no basic services. The least number of squatters are in CAR, Region 1 and MIMAROPA.

To achieve the 2015 target, the Housing sector shall continue to undertake the following programs: (a) meet the housing needs of informal settlers; (b) pursue an expanded urban asset reform program; (c) promote sustainable sources of housing finance; (d) expand private participation in socialized housing finance and construction; (e) rationalize coordination for housing and urban development; and (f) further strengthen housing regulation.

GOAL 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Target 1: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system; include a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally. According to the Report, the Philippines has been an active participant in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and in regional trading arrangements committed to trade and investment facilitation on a global scale.

The government is aware that good governance is needed under increasing internationalization of trade and investment. For this reason, a new Government Procurement Act

(GPA) was enacted based on a competitive bidding and transparency. Efforts to step up the fight against corruption and support the ongoing judicial reform program are being undertaken.

To eradicate poverty, the government aims to create high-wage, high-skill jobs through increased investments in education and training, among others.

Target 2: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debts sustainable in the long term. Government debt has ballooned to PhP4.47 trillion in 2005, or 76 percent of the country's GNP, according to the Report.

The following reforms have already been undertaken to strengthen the country's capability to meet its debt obligations: (a) enactment of the reformed value added tax (RVAT); (b) emerging fiscal reforms aimed at strengthening the links between planning and budgeting; (c) policy reforms that contribute to large increases in exports leading to improvement in ratio of debt service to export earnings, low inflation and declining interest rates, among others.

Target 3: Provide access to affordable essential drugs in cooperation with pharmaceutical companies. Drug prices in the country have been known to be among the highest in the ASEAN. Based on the 2004 publication of the World Health Organization (WHO), only 66 percent of the population had access to essential drugs. However, efforts to bring down the cost of drugs have slowly made headway during the last quarter of 2004. In 2000, the DOH and DTI adopted the Parallel Drug Importation Program wherein parallel drug imports resulted in an estimated average reduction of 60.9 percent in prices in 2004.

To achieve the objective of increasing availability and access to low-priced quality essential medicines, the government established the Botika ng Barangay (BnBs) as well as the Botika ng Bayan (BNB). Nationwide, the number of BnBs rose to 7,437 (or 67 percent of the 11,000 target) from 4,738 in 2005. The BNB, on the other hand, increased its distribution network from 1,016 outlets in 2005 to 1,283 outlets in 2006.

Sources: Midterm Philippines Progress Report on the MDGs; and the script presented by NEDA Acting Director-General and Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Augusto B. Santos during the Launching of the 3rd MDG Report.