

**PART I: GOALS 1-4**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Progress Report on the MDGs**

**GAINS ACHIEVED,  
CHALLENGES  
REMAIN**



The Philippines has made several strides toward the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Challenges, however remain. The Second 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, and the incidence of tuberculosis, malaria and HIV / AIDS and improving dietary requirements, gender equality in education and access to safe drinking water. The country, however, still faces challenges in closing the gaps for maternal health, access to reproductive health services, nutrition and primary education.

According to Socioeconomic Secretary and NEDA Director-General Romulo Neri, many of the targets will mostly be achieved at the national level. There are wide disparities across regions, according to the Report, with some regions having difficulty of achieving some targets compared with others.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the MDGs are consistent with the basic task of the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2004-2010 which is to fight poverty by building prosperity for the greater number of Filipinos. She pointed out that the 10-point agenda contained in the MTPDP in the areas of livelihood, education, fiscal strength, decentralized development, and national harmony will help attain the MDGs.

**The Verdict**

According to the Report, Goals 1, 3 and 4 have high probabilities of achieving their respective targets except for Goal 2. It reveals the following information:

**GOAL 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

First Target: Halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty between 1990 and 2015. As of 2003, 30.4 percent of Filipinos were considered income poor compared to 33 percent of

Filipinos in 2000. According to Secretary Neri, if the annual rate of decline (-1.24%) is compared with the annual rate of decline to reach the target (-.65%), then there is a high probability of halving the poverty incidence in 2015.

The Report said income poor families are those earning below per capita poverty threshold of PhP12,267 in 2003. Earnings rose across all regions except for Metro Manila, CALABARZON and Northern Mindanao. The poverty situation in 2003 revealed the wide disparities in poverty incidence across regions. The ARMM and Regions XIII and IX were the poorest regions due, among others, to the peace and order situation.

In 2001-2004, the government implemented major policy and institutional reforms and programs to protect and empower the poor and vulnerable groups. Among these initiatives were: (a) the distribution of 2.9 million hectares of private and public lands to landless farmers; (b) construction of school buildings in 607 school-less barangays; (c) provision of electricity to 3,600 barangays; (d) creation of 600,000 agriculture-related jobs in rural areas; and (e) enrolment of nearly seven million beneficiaries under the National Health Insurance Program of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation.

Aside from these programs, the following priority initiatives need to be pursued: (a) fast track the asset reform program; (b) strengthen microenterprise development; (c) strengthen local government and civil society capacity in governance; and (d) localize poverty-reduction efforts.

Second Target: Halve the proportion of the population below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption and halve the proportion of underweight children (under five years old). According to the Report, the quality and quantity of absolute food

intake of Filipino households generally improved. The proportion of Filipino 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 1.23 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 27.6 percent in 2003. Eleven out of the 17 regions had prevalence rates higher than the national level of 27.6 percent. In 2001-2004, the National Nutrition Council (NNC) formulated the action for Nutrition Improvement or ANI to improve nutritional status of children aside from the implementation of the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN).

The priority actions in the coming years include: (a) strategic complementation with other strategies such as anti-poverty measures and the Bright Child program; (b) improved food security at the macro and household levels; (c) reduction of wide disparities in nutritional status by focusing efforts on the most-at-risk areas, particularly children in situations of armed conflict; (d) strict enforcement of the ASIN Law and the Food Fortification Act; and (e) increased investments in nutrition; among others.

### **GOAL 2: Achieve universal primary education**

Target : Achieve universal access to primary education by 2015. The Report said the participation rate at the elementary level, based on the school-age population of 6-11 years, registered at 90.05 percent in school year (SY) 2002-2003. Across regions, the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) had the highest participation rate of 91.37 percent while the lowest was the National Capital Region (NCR), with 77.15 percent.

Cohort survival at the elementary level improved from 67.21 percent in SY 2000-2001 to 69.84 percent in SY 2002-2003. The completion rate rose slightly from 66.13 percent to 66.85; and the drop-out rate, from 7.67 percent to 7.34 percent. The ARMM had the lowest cohort survival and completion rates at 47.49 percent and 42.91 percent, respectively. In contrast, Region I had the highest cohort survival and completion rates of 87.47 percent and 84.09 percent, respectively.

Based on the 2003 Functional Literacy Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS), the simple literacy rate stood at 93.9 percent, one of the highest in Southeast Asia.

Through Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 or Republic Act (RA) 9155, the Department of Education (DepEd) continued to implement programs, from 2001 to 2004, to improve the quality of education in the country. To help attain the target, at least three priority actions must be done: (a) improve school-retention capacity; (b) improve quality of educational services; and (c) improve governance and resource allocation and use.

### **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 Neri asserts: "We have already achieved our targets under this goal." He said that the data cover only public schools as data from private schools are not yet available. Disparity is generally minimal across regions at the elementary level except in the ARMM, which posted a gender parity index (defined as the ratio of female to male values of an indicator) of 1.10 (93.31% for female against 84.85% for male).

Females have an advantage over males in all three levels of education in areas such as simple literacy rate, participation and cohort survival rate, completion rate and number of graduates in higher education.

Overall, the country's gender-related development index (GDI) based on the UNDP Human Development Report improved from 0.739 in 1998 to 0.751 in 2002. This means that gender inequality in terms of healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living is slowly being reduced.

To address gender concerns in the next 10 years, the following priority actions shall be implemented: (a) understanding the sociocultural nuances of Philippine gender issues; (b) strengthening the alternative learning system to ensure that all types of learners outside the school system are reached through a more flexible approach; (c) improve the gender content of education; (d) make media more gender-sensitive; and provide more opportunities for women.

### **GOAL 4: Reduce child mortality**

Target : Reduce children under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015. Secretary Neri says that there is high probability of achieving the targets for under-five and infant mortality rates. Both have been declining steadily for the past 10 years at an average annual rate faster than the required rate of decline.

Infant and child mortality rates have decreased over the past 10 years from 34 to 29 infant deaths per 1,000 live births and from 54 to 40 under-five deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively. However, a concern is the repeated decline in the number of children immunized before they turn a year old. In 2002, about 62 percent of the target population was immunized, lower than the 65 percent immunization rate in 2000.

To attain targets, the following measures should be given priority: (a) strengthen local government units (LGUs) in the provision and management of maternal and child health service as provided under the Local Government Code; (b) increase advocacy for the financing and delivery of under-five health services at the local level; (c) increase the supply of affordable and fortified foods; (d) improve the policy environment for financing and provision of services; (e) improve policy dissemination; (f) develop prenatal and neonatal programs; and (f) advocate infant and young child feeding.