



Social Issues

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Millennium Development Goals

A Global assault on hunger & poverty

The Millennium Development Goals MDGs were adopted at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations during the month of September 2000. At this summit, 189 member states pledged to achieve the 8 stated goals and associated targets. This ambitious undertaking calls for a dramatic world-wide reduction in poverty and marked improvements in the health of the poor. The time frame set for achieving these goals encompasses the first fifteen years of the new millennium, 2000-2015.

Benefits for all Humanity

The MDG's are both feasible and achievable. Collectively, the countries of the world possess the requisite resources to ensure realization of the stated goals many times over. The resources of the planet, however, are not equitably distributed among nations and thus problems of poverty and hunger may be defined in terms of inequitable distribution of resources. The real test, therefore, will depend upon our altruism and willingness as inhabitants of this planet to forego or downgrade some of our more costly and ambitious programmes (such as costly weapons systems and space exploration) in the interest of the cause of humanity.



The MDG's are part of a broader process, designed to respond to the global challenges of poverty and underdevelopment and comprise a system of measures intended to facilitate greater global partnerships, geared towards bridging the ever widening gap between high and low income countries. More specifically, the MDG's embody a package of measures designed to stem and ultimately, reverse the growing incidence of hunger and poverty, endemic to so many developing states. The net result should lead to a significant improvement in the quality of life for all people.

Among initiatives taken to facilitate attainment of the MDG's is the creation of an international non-profit organization, NetAid founded by the United Nations Development Programme. This body is helping developing member countries reach the MDG's by working to increase support in wealthy countries for policies and programs that improve the lives of the poorer people of the world.

Success in achieving the MDG's particularly in Developing Countries, will require a seriousness of purpose, strong political will and setting the Social Development Agenda at the apex of development planning and national resource allocation.

Saint Lucia & The MDG's

Saint Lucia is among the 189 member countries of the United Nations, which have pledged to work towards achieving the MDG's by the year 2015. Institutional arrangements are currently being put in place for monitoring, reporting on and otherwise ensuring that the stated goals are achieved within the given time frame. A summarized situational analysis in relation to each goal is discussed below.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty: by reducing by half the proportion of people suffering from hunger and/or of those living on less than one dollar(US) a day;

While poverty and some incidence of hunger exist, these phenomena are not widespread. According to the most recent Poverty Assessment Report(1995)the rate of poverty stands at 25%. There is no general Minimum Wage but for clerical workers the average minimum wage is above \$10 US per day . We have therefore superceded this MDG target. Through initiatives such as the Poverty Reduction Fund and other Social Assistance programmes, the quality of life of some of the poorer segments of our society is gradually being improved.

Goal II: Achieve universal primary education: by ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling;

Saint Lucia has substantially achieved and even surpassed this goal. Primary School education is not only available but mandatory for all boys and girls. In this regard, a significant percentage of students both, male and female, benefit from secondary school education and beyond. Universal secondary education is being relentlessly pursued. By 2003, 60% of students who sat the common entrance examinations were assigned to secondary schools.

Goal III: Promote gender equality and empower women: by eliminating gender disparity at in all levels of education;

The establishment of a Department of Gender Relations drives the well established policy which seeks the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Significant strides have been made by women in all facets of social life. This is evidenced by the election of female Parliamentarians and the large number of women serving in the upper echelons of the Public and Teaching Services.

Goal IV : Reduce child mortality rate among children under five by two thirds;

Infant mortality rates between 1994 and 1998 ranged between 6-12 deaths per 1000 population. This rate is within range of that of most developed countries.

Goal V: Improve maternal health: by reducing the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters;

No statistics on this issue are currently available. Nevertheless, the health-care system is constantly upgraded resulting in a number of attendant benefits system-wide including maternal health.

Goal VI: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: by halting and beginning to reverse their incidence and spread;

The first case of AIDS was reported in 1985. Since then the number of reported cases have increased significantly. As of 30 June 2003, there were 401 reported cases of HIV infection, including 210 cases of full blown AIDS of which 194 have died. The Aids Action Foundation and an .Aids Secretariat established by the Ministry of Health are spearheading efforts to combat the spread of Aids island-wide.

Malaria is no longer endemic to St. Lucia. Other major communicable diseases are generally under control, particularly as a result of infant immunization programmes.

Goal VII: Ensure environmental sustainability: by integrating sustainable development into country policies, reversing the loss of environmental resources, reducing by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, and improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020;

This goal is has been surpassed and major environmental improvements continue. However much more needs to be done to change public attitudes on issues related to the environment. St. Lucia ranks 66th among countries in the UN Human Development Index(2000). The Unites Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that 98% of citizens have access to improved water resources. Reforestation, Coastal and Marine conservation programmes all help reverse the loss of environmental resources.

Goal VIII: Develop a global partnership for development : which includes addressing least developed countries' needs by reducing trade barriers and improving debt relief, and increasing official development assistance from developed countries

St. Lucia is a signatory to several development cooperation agreements with a number of developed countries. Major packages of Development Assistance are also received from the European Union The USA, Canada Japan and The People's Republic of China. Besides these agreements, this country is also party to multi-national agreements such as the FTAA, an initiative by heads of the democracies of the region to amalgamate the economies of the Americas into a single free trade area by the year 2005.

Send your Comments to: mincomdev@hotmail.com, or