

## Why Localise the MDGs, What's the Big Deal

*Sherpard Zvigadza (ZERO Regional Environment Organisation)*

While MDGs have become the common development framework at the global level, they are in themselves the subject of debate, when it comes to their implementation at national and local levels. Some countries see them as a framework for action, others see them as a set of generic objectives to guide development cooperation, and others see them as a global consensus without national or practical relevance.

It must be understood that the targets to achieve the MDGs are global targets, based on aggregate trends of all developing countries. Therefore, even if the global targets were achieved, inequalities between countries and among people would still persist. Localization is therefore a path to taking MDGs to the people engaging citizens and local authorities or administrations in customizing national development goals to fit local realities.

At national and local levels, achieving these global targets needs political commitment and ownership, which can be mobilised only if these targets are concretized in a local context. Thus, even though the MDGs are global, they can most effectively be achieved through action at the local level and support from the national level, states the UNDP. The global targets require local action. Through localizing the MDGs, and measuring MDG targets at the local level, it is possible to provide a true assessment of development realities. Simply put, localizing the MDGs highlights the local dimension in development efforts. Localization facilitates planning, more focused action, promoting local ownership for planned activities, and mobilizing support of local actors including the beneficiary communities for the implementation of these activities. Localizing MDGs will also bring out the rural and urban differences in the performance of each goal. The difference if any, will have significant implications on policy making as urban dimensions of poverty have hitherto escaped the notice of the policy maker. In the absence of strategic policy measures for managing the urban change, the demographic makeover that ensures the change will bring with it a serious urbanization of poverty. Since the vulnerability factors that cause urban poverty are different from those that cause rural poverty, they demand distinctly different measures in remedying them. Hence differentiating the urban and rural performance in achieving the MDGs is critical for developing effective responses for narrowing these gaps of performance.

Research shows that recent experience shows that national level development documents such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) focus on national action plans but do not elaborate on how local governments should implement pro-poor service delivery to achieve these plans and goals (e.g. by addressing health, education, rural and urban development). It is important to develop a framework for development that is realistic and that develops activities, which align MDGs and the local dimension with national long-term planning and PRSP processes.- end-