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## **"It is almost half-time": Will the SADC Region Achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) By the Target Date of 2015?**

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### **1. Background**

The Millennium Declaration embraced in 2000 by 189 United Nations member states present a multi-dimensional development framework whose core programme is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The eight MDGs – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and the entire world's leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest.

Driven by the need to rapidly reduce poverty, like other sub-Saharan African (SSA) regions, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) embarked on the implementation of a number of reform measures aimed at promoting macroeconomic stability and higher growth combined with the improvement in the delivery of social services. These efforts are supported by a number of both continental and global efforts. For instance, following the launch of the Millennium Campaign there have been follow-up regional, continental and international initiatives in mobilising resources and aid for achieving the MDGs. These include the G8 Gleneagles Summit, the Paris High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, the United Nations Review Summit, the WTO Ministerial conference in Hong Kong, the Monterrey Meetings, among others. Recently there was a declaration by African Ministers of Finance in Addis Ababa to renew their resolve and commitment to the realisation of MDGs by the target date of 2015. These declarations and initiatives need to be critically evaluated in light of emerging economic and social evidence from across the region on whether or not the region will attain the MDGs by the target date. The roles of regional governments, donors, non state actors and other stakeholders also need to be assessed in the whole MDG matrix. We need to ask: who is doing what, where and how?

In the words of former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan: "*We will have time to reach the Millennium Development Goals – worldwide and in most, or even all, individual countries – but only if we break with business as usual. We cannot win overnight. Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline. It takes time to train the teachers, nurses and engineers; to build the roads, schools and hospitals; to grow the small and large businesses able to create the jobs and income needed. So we must start now. And we must more than double global development assistance over the next few years. Nothing less will help to achieve the Goals.*" The question still stands: how are we to achieve these targets?

While international cooperation and support are cardinal in the achievement of the goals the ability of member states, non-state actors and other stakeholders to contextualize and adapt the MDGs in line with national priorities is critical. It is generally acknowledged that a number of regional governments have developed strategies to localise and achieve the MDGs; however, it is important to stop the 'train' and take stock of the progress made so far. It is almost *half-time* before the due date of 2015, and so how are our governments and donors faring? It is also important to note that non-state actors have been actively involved in policy debates and monitoring of MDGs across the SADC region. Now more than ever, their role in the MDGs will need to be heightened to ensure that governments and donors do not slack on their obligations and commitments in order to attain the development goals by the target date.

Recent reviews of regional progress on the MDGs during the Lusaka UNECA Meetings of 13-16 March 2007 suggest that remarkable progress in some targets and indicators has been attained in a number

of countries. But there are still a lot of challenges in many other countries particularly those with weak institutional and policy frameworks for attaining the MDGs. This is compounded by inadequate domestic and foreign resources to implement programmes. The Lusaka UNECA Meetings highlighted gaps regarding availability of credible information for monitoring progress and lack of suitable macroeconomic frameworks for the implementation of MDGs. There are also challenges in terms of having effective monitoring mechanisms and the required capacity both in government and civil society to do so. It has also been noted that there is lack of clarity in terms of roles in the implementation and monitoring of MDGs at national and regional levels.

In light of these challenges, there is need to strengthen national and regional statistical offices to enable them make information and statistics readily available to allow major regional stakeholders easily track MDGs. But there is also need to explore alternative frameworks that can adequately and meaningfully support the realization of MDGs.

The Economic Dimensions Programme (EDP) of SARPN will be hosting a Policy Dialogue in order to critically examine the current policy challenges and donor commitments regarding the MDGs and to propose concrete action points that can be taken forward at both national and regional levels. The EDP's view is that the action points will help civil society and governments to be empowered to monitor, measure and report on progress towards the MDGs on a sustained basis. This will be critical in the development of advocacy and policy agendas between now and the target date of 2015.

## **2. Aim and objectives**

The overall aim of the regional workshop is to contribute towards improving national and regional policy frameworks as well as policy implementation and monitoring mechanisms to accelerate progress towards the MDGs and other international commitments. This will then lay a firm foundation for poverty eradication in Southern Africa.

More specifically, the workshop will:

- Take stock of good practices and experiences in the implementation and monitoring of current policies and the impact these policies are having on human development (MDGs) – what is working, what is not and why?
- Linked to the point above, examine alternative macro-economic and development frameworks in terms of their formulation and how they can be applied in the SADC region to promote equitable growth and maximise sustainable human development
- Identify capacity challenges in strengthening the policy frameworks and service delivery and the role of civil society in addressing these challenges
- Interrogating institutional policies such as PEMFAR, IFIMIS, MTEF, Expenditure review reforms, etc— in the context of direct budget support, aid harmonisation and effectiveness: are these facilitating the realisation of MDGs?
- Identifying strategic priority areas and action points that can be taken forward both at national and regional levels for developing the capacity of stakeholders to effectively monitor the MDGs and other commitments.

## **3. Outputs and Outcomes**

In order to move beyond dialogue and discussion, the main outputs of this workshop will include:

- a) a compendium of discussion papers, synthesized report and briefs of specific issues drawn from the workshop that can be used as advocacy materials for a broad range of policymakers and other stakeholders. Part of the information will also be used in the production of the second quarter SARPN Bulletin
- b) a proposed plan of action for participating CSOs (in collaboration with partners in government and donor community) for implementing the recommendations of the workshop. It is expected that a mechanism for following up and supporting agreed actions will also be agreed.
- c) Develop strategies and mechanisms for building the requisite capacities within CSOs and government to be able to effectively implement and monitor MDGs across the region

#### **4. Targeted Participants**

The workshop is targeted at policy makers, policy actors and development practitioners drawn from national and regional civil society organizations, NGOs and INGOs working on MDGs