

CAMEROON GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES 2008 MDG REPORT



The official launching ceremony which took place at the Hilton Hotel Yaounde on the 24th September 2008, was conducted under the auspices of the Minister of the Economy, Planning and Regional development, represented by the Minister Delegate, Mr Yaouba Abdoulaye. In attendance were, Dr Yao Faustin, UNFPA Representative and Acting Co-ordinator of the UN Systems in Cameroon, Mrs Dede Ekoue, interim Representative of UNDP, representatives of UN Systems in Cameroon, top government officials, members of the international community, a cross section of the civil society and a host of journalists.

In his opening address Dr Yao reiterated the fact that the world was half-way towards the 2015 MDG rendez-vous. Extrapolating from the UN Secretary General's statement during the presentation of the launching of the 4th edition of the MDG Report, Yao Faustin pointed to the important process made thus far in the achievement of the eight MDGs. The 2008 Report according to Dr Yao both quantifies and qualifies the results achieved whilst outlining the obstacles amidst which are the challenges of poverty, food shortages and adverse climate changes. The report stated he, is not only a manifestation of the willingness of the United Nation Systems to support member countries but also a roadmap which is intended to guide governments and partners in measuring progress achieved and assessing difficulties to be surmounted with respect to specific domains.

With particular reference to Sub-Saharan Africa, the challenges faced can be summarised thus:

MDG 1: Eradicate Extreme poverty and hunger

- ◆ Conflicts leaves many displaced and impoverished
- ◆ Low daily earnings of less than \$1 a day
- ⇒ Zero tolerance for conflict and full and productive employment and decent work for all

MDG 2: Achieve Universal primary education

- ◆ **High rate of out-of-school children of primary school age**
- ◆ **Only 1/4 of children of secondary school age attend school**
- ⇒ Political will and targeted investments will improve primary school enrollment

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

- ◆ Gender gaps still exists in primary education
- ◆ Low daily earnings of less than \$1 a day
- ◆ Most women continue to remain in low-status, less valued jobs and face gender barriers to higher level positions
- ◆ Women have slowly gained grounds in political decision-making but progress is erratic and marked by regional/cultural differences
- ⇒ Gender parity in primary school bodes well for girl's continued educational progress
- ⇒ Quotas are key supportive mechanisms plus political goodwill of leaders to promote women's access to power

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality

- ◆ No progress: Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for about 1/2 the deaths of children under 5 in the developing world
- ⇒ Efforts required to ensure that every child is immunized

MDG 5: Improve maternal health

- ◆ Progress is negligible
- ⇒ A skilled health worker at delivery is critical to reducing maternal deaths
- ⇒ Antenatal care is an essential safety net for a healthy mother and child
- ⇒ Increased availability in family planning results in spacing births and reducing mortality rates

MDG 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

- ◆ The vast majority of those living with HIV are in Sub-Saharan Africa
- ◆ The proportion of children with a fever who receive antimalarial medicines has dropped

- ◆ Africa, China and India collectively account for more than 2/3 of undetected tuberculosis cases
- ⇒ HIV prevention has been successful, particularly in reducing risky sexual behaviour
- ⇒ Need to increase use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets
- ⇒ Early detection of new cases will account for success in eradicating tuberculosis

MDG 7: **Ensure environmental sustainability**

- ◆ Carbon dioxide released from the burning of fossil fuels accounts for more than half of the global greenhouse gas emissions responsible for climate change
- ◆ On the overall, the Africa region seem to be especially vulnerable because of the high exposure to the effects of climatic change
- ◆ Deforestation continues to pose serious challenges
- ◆ The lack of or underdeveloped water infrastructure, high vulnerability to short/long term drought, difficult access to reliable water supplies results in water scarcity
- ◆ Open defecation even though on the decline continues to be practiced by more than 1/4 of those living in Sub-Saharan Africa
- ⇒ An infusion of financial resources and investments, as well as technology development and transfer are key elements to combating climate change
- ⇒ Protected forests, the conservation of forest ecosystems and the flora and fauna will help in mitigating climate change
- ⇒ The redoubling of efforts in improved sanitation facilities will result in a decline in the up rise of related diseases

MDG 8: **Develop a global partnership for development**

- ◆ Market access for most developing countries is less improved
- ◆ Poor availability and high prices are barriers to access to essential drugs
- ◆ The poorest regions still lack behind in internet use
- ⇒ Trade related assistance in the form of an open, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system will improve market access
- ⇒ Cooperation with pharmaceutical companies and national distributors is critical in ensuring that people have access to drugs at affordable prices
- ⇒ Providing affordable internet connectivity will help realise goals for health, education, employment and poverty reduction

With particular reference to Cameroon, Dr Yao cited monetary poverty, hunger, maternal mortality, unemployment and degrading living conditions in the mist of urban development as some of the areas of concern. He however lauded the government for the elaboration, financing, execution, follow-up and evaluation of policies, programmes and developmental projects geared towards achieving the MDGs.