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UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS PERFORMANCE AND CHALLENGING TASK AHEAD FOR INDIA

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India accounts for 50% of the World's hungry, over 46% of Indian children are undernourished.

The United Nation's Millennium Development Goals focus on democratically elected Governments of developing countries to acknowledge basic human needs and fundamental rights that every individual should be able to enjoy, such as freedom from extreme poverty, hunger and malnourishment; access to quality education, better health services and improved shelter; opportunity for productive, decent and environment-friendly employment; the right to women for safe delivery without risking their lives; and a world where women and men live in equality and environment sustainability is accorded top priority.

The Millennium Development represents the most important promise ever made to the world's most vulnerable people in 2000 and to fulfill it within a period of 15 years i.e. by 2015. The MDG

framework for accountability emerged from its Declaration in 2000 has endorsed an unprecedented level of commitment and partnership in rebuilding basic free and healthier lives for billions of people hitherto neglected and in creating an environment that contributes to inclusive growth, all round development, peace, harmony and security.

Elected legislators as a part of their public mandate and bureaucrats as a part of their avowed duties should formulate, in consultation with beneficiaries, a strategic action plan that can be implemented to yield targeted MDGs by 2015. While industrial, business and commercial houses as a part of their social responsibility must involve themselves in this effort, Governments may also pledge to forge a wide-ranging global partnership for development to achieve these universal objectives.



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India's Initiatives: Implementation of India's rights based laws and flagship development programs can significantly improve the lives of millions, facilitate them to access income generating employment, social security, food, basic education, health services; clean water; sanitation, shelter and empower women. India's performance upto 2009 and expected achievements by 2015 is as under.

Poverty: According to NSS round [2004-05], 41.8% of rural population lived on a monthly per capita expenditure of Rs.447 as against 25.7% of urban population living on a monthly per capita expenditure of Rs.578.8. Poverty was high in Orissa [57.5%] followed by Bihar [55.7%] and Madhya Pradesh [53.6%]. Some economists term per capita expenditure norms for estimating poverty being abysmally low as 'starvation line' rather than poverty line.

According to Multidimensional Poverty Index [MPI] worked out by UNDP & Oxford University in July 2010, about 645 million people [55%] in India are poor. As against 410 million MPI poor in 26 of the poorest African countries, just eight Indian States [Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal] have 421 million MPI poor. The MPI reveals a vivid spectrum of challenges facing the poorest households. MPI considers 10 sharp indicators, namely Education [child enrolment and years of schooling]; Health [child mortality and nutrition] and Standard of living [electricity, drinking water, sanitation, cooking fuel, flooring and assets]

Child Mortality: According to National Family Health Survey [1992-93], 52% of infants under the age of three years were underweight, which declined to 47% in 1998-99 and 46% in 2005-06. At this rate of decline, the MDGs targets can be attained in 2043 instead 2015, according to Prof. Lawrence Haddad, Director, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University, a specialist in poverty, food security & malnutrition who has done extensive field research in India.

Malnutrition: From 1993 to 2006, the GDP per capita went up by 53% while malnutrition among children declined only by 12.5%, when international comparison suggests the decline should be closer

to 30%. While India will have a long way to achieve MDGs in combating malnutrition China, Thailand, Vietnam, Ghana and Brazil achieved it successfully.

Income Disparity: According to NCAER, the top 20% of India's population had 53.2% share of the national income in 2009-10, up from 36.7% in 1993-94. The bottom 60% had a mere 27.9% share in total income in 2009-10, down from 38.6% at the start of the reform process.

The financial inequality is wide between rural and urban areas as urban consumption is 63% higher than rural consumption. Per capita consumption is the lowest among the agricultural laborers in rural areas.

Education: In terms of Net Enrollment Ratio [NER: proportion of pupils of official school age of six to 11 years who are enrolled in primary grades I to VI], India would achieve 2015 target of universal primary education for all children aged 6-11 years as the NER was around 75% in 1990, which improved to 96% in 2008. The NER trend for girls in primary schools indicates sharper rise than that for boys and at this rate of increase the country may have already reached 100% mark by now.

The country can achieve 100% Youth literacy [literacy rate in the age group 15 to 24 years] by 2012, since youth literacy increased from 61.9% in 1991 to 76.4% in 2001 and further to 82.1% in 2007.

Gender Disparity: The Gender Parity Index [GPI] of Gross Enrolment Ratio [GER] = GER (female)/GER (male) ratios in primary and secondary education were 0.76 and 0.60 respectively in 1990-91, which improved to 0.94 and 0.82 respectively in 2006-07. At these rates of increase India can achieve gender parity in enrolment by 2015.

Women participation in employment and decision-making is quite less than that of men and the country cannot eliminate gender disparity by 2015. However, the progress in literacy gender parity index of the youth [ratio of literate women to literate men in the age group of 15-24 years] tends to exceed 1 by 2015, which implies attainment of gender parity in youth literacy by 2015. This ratio was 0.64 in 1991, which significantly improved to 0.81 in 2001.

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<p>The GPI in tertiary education, however, improved marginally from 0.61 in 1990-91 to 0.69 in 2006-07. At this rate, the country can improve by another 0.04 points during the period 2007-2015.</p> <p>Share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector improved from 13% in 1990-91 to 18% in 2004-05. At this rate of growth, the share of women in wage employment in the nonagricultural sector can be about 24% by 2015, which would be far less than the target.</p> <p>Infant Mortality: Prevalence of infancy deaths measured by IMR [infant mortality rate is the number of infant death in less than a year after birth expressed as number of deaths per 1000 live births] declined from 80 in 1990 to 53 in 2008, which the country should reduce to 26.7 by 2015. At the current trend of decline since 1990, the country can reduce to about 46 by 2015, which will be far short of the target.</p> <p>Immunization against measles for one-year olds (12-23 months) is almost reaching to universality. At the national level, the proportion of one year olds immunized against measles significantly improved from 42% in 1992-93 to 69.6% in 2007-08 and may reach to 97% by 2015.</p> <p>Maternal Mortality: MMR [proportion of women, in the child bearing age group 15-49 years per 100,000 live births, who die due to pregnancy related causes] declined from 301 during 2001-03 to 254 during 2004-06. The country had an MMR of 437 in 1990/1991. India has to reduce it to 109 by 2015 against which India may achieve MMR of 135.</p> <p>The rate of coverage of institutional deliveries increased from 26% in 1992-93 to 47% in 2007-08 and the coverage of deliveries by skilled personnel increased from 33% to 52%. At this rate of slow growth the rate of increase in deliveries by skilled personnel would be only 62% by 2015.</p> <p>The rural coverage was 39.1% as compared with 75.2% urban coverage in 2005-06.</p> <p>Drinking Water & Sanitation: The proportion of households having access to improved water sources, increased from 68.2% in 1992-93 to 84.4%</p>	<p>in 2007-08. The urban coverage increased to 95% from 87.6% during the same period. The growth in rural coverage was 79.6% in 2007-08 against 61% in 1992-93.</p> <p>There has not been much improvement in providing access to improved sanitation facilities during the last decade. The country has been one of the most densely populated countries in the world and has the lowest sanitation coverage. The country should reduce the proportion of the household having no access to improved sanitation to 38% by 2015. The proportion of households without any toilet facility declined from about 70% in 1992-93 to about 51% in 2007-08. The rural-urban gap in access/ use of sanitation facility continues to be very wide as 66% of rural households do not have toilet facilities as against 19% of urban households as per statistics for 2007-08.</p> <p>HIV/AIDS & Other Diseases: Incidence of HIV/AIDS among adults declined to 0.34% in 2007 from about 0.45% in 2002. Among pregnant women of 15-24 years, it declined from 0.86% in 2004 to 0.49% in 2007. Total number of females living with HIV/AIDS declined from 1.07 million in 2002 to 0.97 million in 2006 and 0.95 million in 2007.</p> <p>The incidence among the persons examined for the malaria disease declined from 1.74% in 2005 to 1.52% in 2009. The percentage of death of malaria patients thus diagnosed between 2005 and 2009 fluctuated between 5 and 9 per 10000 cases.</p> <p>India is the highest TB infested country accounting for about 20% of global incidence. The Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP) based on the internationally recommended directly observed treatment short course (DOTS) strategy has been expanded to cover the entire country with a view to achieving and maintaining a cure rate of at least 85% among new sputum positive patients and at least 70% success rate in case detection. The program has yielded good results as the incidence of TB has steadily declined from as high as 586 per 100,000 persons in 1990 to 283 in 2007, showing significant improvement in detection rate as well as success rate due to expansion of DOTS.</p>
<p>24</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability: The country's forest cover increased by 728 sq. km during 2005-07. The total forest cover was 21.02% of the geographical area of the country in 2007 against the revised forest cover estimates of 20.99% in 2005. The forest cover increased by 3.31 million hectare in the past 10 years. The total tree cover in the country also improved marginally during 2005-07 and accounted for 2.82% of the country's geographical area in 2007 against 2.79% in 2005.</p> <p>India has succeeded in maintaining low per capita emission of carbon dioxide along with reasonable industrial growth and dependence on fossil fuels to meet energy needed for all round development in the country. The per capita emission of carbon dioxide was 1.31 metric tons in 2006, which is still much lower than that in some of advanced countries.</p> <p>New Technology: The tele-density increased from 0.67 per 100 persons in 1991 to 36.98 per 100 persons by March 2009. The tele-density in particular has phenomenally increased from 18.31 per 100 persons in March 2007 to 37 in March 2009. The total number of telephones, both fixed and wireless increased from 22.8 million in 1999 to 467.7 million in March 2009. The growth has been possible due to overwhelming increase in wireless /mobile telephony that rose from 1.2 million lines in 1999 to about 430 million lines by March 2009. The number of internet subscribers increased from 0.21 million in 1999 to 13.54 million in 2009. The Govt. of India is contemplating of raising internet subscriber base to 100 million by 2014 and is planning to provide internet connectivity to all villages in the country by that time.</p> <p>The performance review, however, reveals that India accounts for 50% of the World's hungry; over 46% of Indian children are undernourished; health too is a measure challenge; and the very survival of women and children is threatened. Besides, the slow progress has in particular resulted in inadequate access to basic services for the vulnerable groups that include SCs, STs, minorities, the women, landless laborers, share croppers, oral lessees, tenant and marginal farmers.</p>	<p>Kans&Kema December 2010</p> <p>India's efforts to achieve the MDGs are constrained by unmet commitments, low social sector allocations, lack of focus and accountability, slow progress on decentralization and delivery of public services hampered by complex procedures, rigid administrative structure, poor utilisation of funds by States and ineffective systems for monitoring, personnel and capacity building. Nevertheless, targeted interventions, sustained by adequate funding and political commitment can result in rapid progress in these areas. The shortfalls in Goals that have been identified during the review exercise can be achieved by strengthening national development strategies, policies and programs and fully supported by equal amount of concern, commitment, governance, transparency and accountability.</p> <p>With now just five years to the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs, particularly the targets related to poverty, hunger, health, gender equality and environmental sustainability, the Union & State Governments need to make concerted efforts in collaboration with all sections of civil society working in tandem. The country has the resources, capabilities and accumulated knowledge and experience that need to be mobilized to empower the poorest region, State and others held back geographic isolation to achieve the MDGs. There is immediate need to undertake a comprehensive review of progress State and district-wise and all stakeholders together chart course for accelerated action to achieve the shortfalls on the MDGs between now and 2015.</p> <p>For the first time region & State specific data in respect to all six most important areas are brought out in this MDGs report pinpointing regions/States that lag much behind and those that are on the fast track. This provides important insight for policy planning to target their interventions to integrate MDGs at all levels of planning, policy formulation and implementation of programs with participation of citizens including the poorest and the marginalized as important stakeholders through political representation and local governance institutions.</p> <p><i>(The author is Ex-Deputy General Manager, Bank of Baroda, Currently International Consultant, Kazakhstan, e-mail: amrit_rptel@yahoo.com)</i></p>
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