

The Jakarta Post online

The best place for

The Jakarta Post.com

Opinion and Editorial

February 17, 2005

Highlight News

February 17, 2005

February 16, 2005

February 15, 2005

February 14, 2005

February 13, 2005

February 12, 2005

News & Views

National City

Opinion

Business

Features

Supplement

Sports

Gallery

Weekly

Roundup

Your Column

Past Editions

Resources

Acronyms

Addresses

Indonesian

Cabinet

Indonesian

History

Links

Where to go

Members Area[Register](#)[Login](#)

Archives

Who's Who

About Us

Company Info

Online Media

Kit

Print Media Kit

Associates**How can ASEAN help achieve Millennium Development Goals?***Opinion and Editorial - February 11, 2005***Romeo A. Reyes, Jakarta**

A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was submitted to the UN Secretary General last month by the UN Millennium Project, an independent advisory group commissioned to recommend strategies for meeting the MDGs. It was commissioned in preparation for the upcoming MDGs+5 review by the UN General Assembly in September 2005.

The group was led by Prof. Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University and comprised of 250 distinguished development scholars and practitioners, including Indonesia's Mari Pangestu, who has since joined the Cabinet of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as Minister of Trade.

The MDGs were adopted by Heads of State and Government at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. They include reducing the proportion of people suffering from poverty and hunger by one half, from 1990 to 2015; achieving universal primary education; eliminating gender disparity; reducing child mortality by two thirds and maternal mortality by three fourths; halting and reversing the incidence HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases; and reducing by one half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.

The UN Millennium Project concluded, not surprisingly, that massive investments in physical and human (health, education, nutrition) capital will be required to realize the MDGs. To finance these investments, rich countries must live up to their promise of more aid reaching 0.7 percent of their GDP by 2015, along with more generous debt relief and more open trade. And to make these investments work for the MDGs, poor countries in turn must live up to their promise of good governance, including enhancement of transparency and accountability and mobilization of domestic resources.

The performance of Southeast Asia as a region towards realizing the MDGs compares well with many other regions of the world. It is assessed by the Millennium Project to be on track with respect to poverty reduction, gender equality in school enrollment, child mortality reduction, sanitation in urban areas, and improvement of the lives of slum dwellers. However, it is off track with respect to universal primary schooling, maternal mortality reduction and many other targets.

It is not surprising that the region as a whole is assessed to be on track with respect to poverty reduction goal given that poverty incidence has been declining in the region over the last two decades (save from a blip in the aftermath of the 1997-1998 economic crisis). Indeed, poverty reduction in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia has been dramatic mainly as a result of decades of sustained growth.

However, income inequality in these countries actually worsened during the same period, suggesting that while both the rich and the poor benefited from growth, the former benefited more than the latter. Because of the boom and bust pattern of growth in the Philippines, poverty incidence has remained high at over 30 percent, which is within the range of poverty incidence in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and





New Investments
&
Trade Finance
in a Resurgent
Indonesia

9-10 March 2005
Shangri-la Hotel
Jakarta
INDONESIA

[click here](#)

Vietnam.

The impressive performance of Southeast Asia as a whole hides the striking socio-economic disparities within and among countries in the region. Based on one dollar a day poverty threshold, UNDP's 2004 Human Development Report recorded less than 2 percent poverty incidence in Malaysia and Thailand. The report did not even have statistics on poverty for Brunei and Singapore presumably because the incidence was nil.

But at the other extreme were Cambodia and Laos with poverty incidence of 34 and 27 percent respectively. Per capita GDP of Singapore was 24 times more than Myanmar's. In terms of Human Development Index (HDI), Singapore was ranked 25th and Laos 135th.

Socio-economic disparities are similarly striking within countries. In Indonesia, for instance, poverty incidence has come down to single digit levels in Jakarta and Bali, but it remains as high as 30 percent or more in Aceh and Maluku and 42 percent in Papua. The same disparity can be observed in Thailand, particularly between Bangkok and its Northeast region, and in the Philippines, between Metropolitan Manila and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. It seems as if the people in Muslim Mindanao, Papua and Northeast Thailand do not have the same right not to be poor as the people in Manila, Jakarta and Bangkok.

ASEAN Leaders are fully aware of this disparity across and within ASEAN Member Countries (AMCs). They see this disparity or development gap as a constraint to deepening and broadening of regional economic integration. But more importantly, they also see economic integration as a means to narrow this gap when they declared the formation of an ASEAN Economic Community, in which there is a free flow of goods and services, investment and skilled labor and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities.

ASEAN Leaders have agreed to cooperate more closely to narrow the development gap both as an end in itself and as a means to the successful formation of ASEAN as a single market. The Vientiane Action Programme (VAP) they adopted at their last Summit contains measures not only to realize the three pillars of the ASEAN Community but also to narrow the development gap as manifested by large disparities in per capita GDP, poverty incidence and other dimensions of human development. The VAP provides that AMCs will determine and agree at an appropriate forum the extent to which the development gap could be realistically narrowed by 2010 and by 2015.

ASEAN can help realize the MDGs in Southeast Asia as a whole and in less developed AMCs by promptly translating those agreements and intentions into further actions. To start with, ASEAN should now take steps towards convening "an appropriate forum" to enable AMCs to agree on specific targets for 2010 and beyond for narrowing the development gap in terms of per capita GDP and other human development dimensions.

For this purpose, AMCs could use the MDGs as a framework and the quantitative targets as benchmark. For instance, if they could agree on the extent to which the gap in poverty incidence could be realistically narrowed by 2015, this might imply setting poverty reduction targets for CLMV countries over and above the global benchmark.

In this regard, Indonesia should be commended for offering, on the occasion of the last ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Poverty and Rural Development, to share with other AMCs the outcome of their efforts to localize MDG targets at the district level and to link those targets to local poverty reduction action plans and operational programs. This initiative spearheaded by the Coordinating Ministry for People's

Welfare is fully consistent with the call from the UN Millennium Project to craft and implement MDG-based poverty reduction strategies.

In turn, Indonesia expressed keen interest to learn from other AMCs their experiences relating to poverty mapping, measurement and targeting. A project for UNDP support to enable this cooperation has been prepared by ASEAN with encouragement, guidance and support from another prominent Indonesian who is actively engaged in the MDGs -- Erna Witoelar, the UN Special Ambassador for the MDGs. This is a concrete example of how AMCs can cooperate with each other to help realize the MDGs. More of the same can and should be pursued.

The writer is Senior Adviser, ASEAN-UNDP Partnership Facility. The views expressed herein are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of ASEAN, its Member Countries, or UNDP.

[2004 Elections](#) [National](#) [City](#) [Opinion](#) [Business](#) [Features](#) [Sports](#)
[Gallery](#) [Weekly Roundup](#) [Your Column](#) [Past Editions](#)
[Acronyms](#) [About Us](#) [Links](#)
[Archives](#) [History](#) [Who's Who](#) [Provinces](#) [Companies](#) [Laws](#) [Outlook](#)
[Home](#)

This Website is designed for The Jakarta Post by [CNRG ITB](#).
All contents copyright © of The Jakarta Post.
webmaster@thejakartapost.com