

EPILOGUE

Towards a global partnership

The series of MDG reports for Asia and the Pacific has demonstrated how, as a result of national efforts, the region has continued to make significant progress, particularly in primary education and in reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty, on less than \$1 per day. Indeed in many countries the development agenda is moving on to address those living on less than \$2 per day – often called the ‘vulnerable poor.’ At the same time, however, governments are becoming more concerned about particular groups and regions that are being left behind – those living in the slums of major cities, or in environmentally fragile zones.

Whatever the sector, the overall aim should be to reduce poverty and vulnerability while improving the delivery of basic services. This will mean pursuing ‘pro-poor’ growth in a broader sense – not just promoting income generation for the poor but also expanding physical and social infrastructure, such as transport, water, energy, and health and education services. These priorities should be reflected in national development strategies.

Countries across the region have already demonstrated this approach. Indonesia, for example, has designed specific social sector policies for the poor. China has been investing in pro-poor infrastructure. Viet Nam has been tackling environmental poverty with special programmes for poor people living in upland areas. Countries in Central Asia that have long since achieved high primary enrolment are now looking more to secondary education and vocational training that can help people adjust to changing labour markets.

Many countries will be able to follow their own strategies and maintain or renew their momentum for the MDGs by investing from their own resources. But others, particularly the region’s least developed countries, do not have the funds to meet all their investment needs. They have a large ‘resource gap’ – the difference between savings

and investment as a percentage of GDP. In 2003, Afghanistan, for example, had a resource gap amounting to 32 per cent of GDP, while in Timor-Leste the gap was 77 per cent (ESCAP, 2005c).

The eighth Millennium Development Goal seeks to build a ‘global partnership for development’, which could help meet such gaps through, for example, official development assistance (ODA). At the global level ODA has reached record amounts but the LDCs in the Asia-Pacific region have been getting a steadily smaller share. Between 2000 and 2003, ODA to LDCs in other global regions increased by 87 per cent but to the Asia-Pacific LDCs by 60 per cent. Also of concern is the situation of the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In 2005 ODA received by the LLDCs ranged from 12 per cent of GNI in Mongolia to 0.45 per cent in Kazakhstan, and ODA received by the SIDS ranged from 71 per cent in the Solomon Islands to 7 per cent in Papua New Guinea. While not many Asia-Pacific countries fall into the category of highly indebted poor countries, some countries would benefit from debt relief.

Another component of the eighth goal that would help developing countries fill the resource gap is enhanced market access. The LDCs in this region face, on average, higher tariffs than other LDCs and since 1990 the proportion of developed country imports coming from Asia-Pacific LDCs has declined. The LDCs would benefit greatly from duty- or quota-free access to the developed countries. Other developing countries in the region also face above-average tariff levels for many of the traditional exports in which they have comparative advantage. To some extent these countries have been able to offer mutual support by offering preferential access to each other’s markets. But the developed and more advanced developing countries need to do much more. The

best way to provide additional momentum would be to conclude the Doha Development Round which would add legal certainty to LDCs' duty- and quota-free access to developed-country markets.

Preferential access in trade can be complemented by greater south-south cooperation – from one developing country to another – such as through technical assistance. This now appears to be increasing, with support to poorer countries coming from China, India, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. All countries will benefit too from cooperation on information and communications technologies, but particularly the LDCs which at present risk being left behind.

Building a global partnership for the MDGs complements the overall responsibility of national

governments for mobilizing resources – aligning their budgets towards development strategies aimed at achieving the goals. Indeed, many countries have already done so. As this report has shown, even the poorest countries have been able to make rapid progress on at least some of the indicators, and some of the largest countries have had some striking successes in helping many millions of people emerge from poverty or get basic education and better water supplies.

The task is to ensure that these and other advances now take place on a much broader front – across all countries, and across all the goals. The Asia-Pacific region has in many respects been setting the pace for the developing world, particularly in economic growth. Now it has the opportunity to focus again on equity – and extend the benefits of rapid economic and social development to all its people.

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