

# **Regional NGO Consultation:**

## **Mainstreaming the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Asia**

*28 July 2004; Antipolo City, Philippines*

### **CONFERENCE REPORT**



**ANGOC**

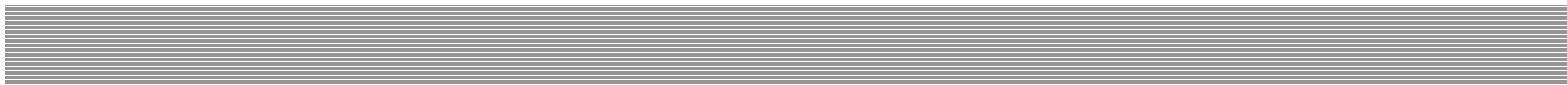


**United Nations**



***Nazioarteko Nekazaritza Gunea  
Foro Rural Mundial  
World Rural Forum***

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## Regional NGO Consultation: Mainstreaming the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Asia

Around 30 members and partners of Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) attended a whole-day consultation/workshop symposium on July 23, 2004 to discuss how

the civil society organizations (CSOs) can participate and contribute in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the region. Representatives from the United Nations (UN), Asian Development Bank (ADB), UN Millennium Development Goals Campaign Unit and ANGOC provided valuable inputs and viewpoints during the conference.

A total of 189 nations issued the UN Millennium Declaration in September 2000, committing to a series of tangible and time-bound targets under the MDGs. The MDGs provide a benchmark for the countries to achieve eight feasible goals to wipe out poverty and ensure human development by 2015.

The primary focus of the conference are Goals 1, 7 and 8.

The main objectives of the conference, as detailed by Mr. Nathaniel Don Marquez, Executive Director of ANGOC at the start of the meeting, are: a) to increase understanding of the NGOs (non-government organizations) on MDGs, their implementation strategies especially at the national and local levels and the respective roles of different stakeholders; b) to enable the participants to identify critical success-related factors on realizing the MDGs; and c) to formulate an action plan for the ANGOC network in monitoring the implementation of MDGs at the regional and national levels.

### Fragile and Uneven Progress

The resource speakers all agreed that progress has been fragile

Box I. Millennium Development Goals	
1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day</li> <li>✓ Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</li> </ul>
2. Achieve universal primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling</li> </ul>
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005; and at all levels by 2015</li> </ul>
4. Reduce child mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five</li> </ul>
5. Improve maternal health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio</li> </ul>
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Half and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS</li> <li>✓ Half and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases</li> </ul>
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Integrate the principle of sustainable programs and reverse loss of environmental resources</li> <li>✓ Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water</li> <li>✓ Achieve significant improvements in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020</li> </ul>
8. Develop a global partnership for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – nationally and internationally.</li> <li>✓ Address the least develop countries' special needs, including tariff- and quota-free access for their exports, enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries, cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction</li> <li>✓ Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing states</li> <li>✓ Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term</li> <li>✓ In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth</li> <li>✓ In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries</li> <li>✓ In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies – especially information and communications technologies.</li> </ul>

and uneven so far, and the challenges ahead are enormous and daunting. The goals, nevertheless, are attainable as long as all stakeholders, including the CSOs, work together in this “once in a lifetime chance” to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development in the world.

“These Millennium Development Goals include quantifiable, time-bound targets that are specific, practical and realistic. They are technically feasible, they are financially affordable, but without social mobilization across national and international boundaries, we will not progress from concept to achievement. A movement is needed to create awareness, trigger policy reforms, mobilize resources, motivate actors, and forge a grand coalition to meet the goals both locally and globally,” UN resident coordinator Deborah Landey said in a prepared speech read by her adviser, Anna Senga.

Landey urged the CSOs to become both campaigners and accountants of MDGs. The first role involves inspiring people to be concerned enough to do something about the poverty, and the second involves measuring and monitoring the results, as well as identifying the gaps. With these inputs, the CSOs can help governments draft policies and plans of action to help accelerate the MDG implementation.

Bishop Antonio Ledesma, former chair of ANGOC, outlined the various undertakings CSOs can initiate in this campaign. These include carrying out a parallel or alternative monitoring system of MDG implementation, such as social auditing of existing indicators e.g. textbook deliveries and high school readiness test. CSOs and NGOs can also serve as catalysts for development



and managers of micro-level pilot projects. They can also forge networking and strategic alliances with local governments and businesses.

Bishop Ledesma likewise emphasized that access to land as productive asset is a crucial factor for reducing rural poverty, therefore he suggested that agrarian reform indicators should be included in the monitoring of various targets.

As the Millennium Declaration is a holistic campaign to uplift the quality of life of every human being, the CSOs must also serve as guardian to the core values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. Later in the open forum, he said social development is as important as economic growth and sustainable development.



### ADB Prognosis

Mr. Shiladitya Chatterjee, chairman of Asian Development Bank’s poverty reduction committee, agreed with Bishop Ledesma’s view that poverty reduction is not all about how to increase one’s income. It is also about access to education, health and other basic services, gender equality, empowerment, participation and voice, and social protection.

He presented a matrix where the progress so far for the various goals are ranked as “very good”, “good”, “modest”, “slow” and “poor”. The prognosis is dim, with the target of halving the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day as the only one target with a “very good” grade, mainly due to the high economic growth in the region.

#### Box 2. Cycles of Life

Bishop Ledesma presented the inter-linking dimensions affecting human lives. He posited that the individual household income is affected by the overall economic growth of the society, which in turn is brought about by the various policies and programs implemented by the government. He added that a strong household that do not worry about its basic needs is likely to become more active in socio-cultural, religious, economic and political institutions which contribute to the formulation of government policies and program.

*He said CSOs should examine the different development concerns – such as social development which centered on household income, economic development which centered on economic growth, and sustainable development which focuses on government policies and programs as well as participation of civil society organizations – in order to identify where and how they can be most effective in achieving the MDGs.*

*For example, providing better skills and values will lead to better access to livelihood and employment of an individual, which in turn will lead to better household income. And better household income will allow one to get better access to goods and services such as food and nutrition, health services, water sanitation and education. Helping a household in one dimension can trigger a domino effect in the whole process.*

Mr. Chatterjee stressed that the various stakeholders must not slacken in their efforts. The laidback “business as usual” attitude must be abandoned for MDGs to succeed. He asked the CSOs to take a more active role, as he cited the case of Cambodia where CSOs, with the help of ADB and World Bank, helped provide basic services in the war-ravaged country.

He also stated that the ADB, in its pursuit to eradicate poverty, recently approved to open a “grant window” providing grant assistance for various development projects in the least developed countries.

### Multi-Stakeholder Initiative

Ms. Erna Witoelar, the UN Special Ambassador for the MDGs, stressed the attainment of the MDGs is a multi-stakeholder initiative. “Nobody is irrelevant in achieving MDGs,” she said, adding that MDGs require actions from NGOs and their networks; faith-based groups; media; social groups advocating peace, human rights, gender equality; trade unions; youth; local authorities; private sector; research institutes; etc. Ms. Witoelar also said that the MDGs are vital to the overall development since they are linked to peace and security as well as good governance.

She urged each country to shape and drive their campaigns based on local and grassroots realities, using the MDGs as **minimum development goals**. She also called on CSOs to help find places in their respective countries that are lagging behind in development and help them catch up.

<b>Progress Towards the MDGs in Asia-Pacific</b>			
<b>Goals and Selected Targets</b>	<b>Base Year: 1990 Target Year: 2015</b>	<b>Progress so far in reaching selected targets</b>	<b>Livelihood of achieving the targets</b>
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b>		
Target 1	Halve the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day	Very good	Very probable
Target 2	Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	Modest	Possible
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Achieve universal primary education</b>		
Target 3	Ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	Slow	Unlikely
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Promote gender equality and empower women</b>		
Target 4	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education	Good	Probable
<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Reduce Child Mortality</b>		
Target 5	Reduce by two-thirds under five mortality rate	Modest	Unlikely-most countries will miss the target without renewed efforts
<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Improve maternal health</b>		
Target 6	Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio	Poor	Unlikely
<b>Goal 6</b>	<b>Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</b>		
Target 7	Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	Modest	Possible
Target 8	Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other diseases	Modest	Possible
<b>Goal 7</b>	<b>Ensure environmental sustainability</b>		
Target 9	Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the losses of environmental resources	Poor	Unlikely
Target 10	Halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water	Modest	Unlikely-supplies in rural areas are still scarce
Target 11	By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	Modest	Possible

Ms. Witoelar lamented the slow progress on Goal 8 (involving aid, trade and debt relief) in developed countries. As such, she said a more intense MDG campaigning in Europe and North America is needed. She also called for stronger leadership from developing countries to pressure the developed countries.

"Meeting the Millennium Development Goals is at an early stage of its evolution, and civil society can shape it, provide it with both its intellectual and moral muscle and its boundless organizing energy. We are the first generation that have a real opportunity to actually see poverty eradicated, and we should refuse to miss this opportunity," Witoelar told the group.

During the open forum, Witoelar said that while MDGs are the very same goals that the CSOs have been striving over the past decades, the Millennium



Declaration provides a golden opportunity for CSOs to bring these issues to the forefront of policy making and development strategies. She also called on CSOs to broaden their alliances and be more creative in increasing global awareness on MDGs.

### **Small Group Workshops**

The conference participants then split up into two groups, with representatives from South Asia (Nepal, Sri Lanka and India) forming one group and participants from Southeast and East Asia (Philippines, Indonesia, China and Japan) forming the second group.

During the plenary, participants noted that MDGs are not new. NGOs/CSOs have been involved and have been addressing issues of poverty, access to education, environmental degradation, need for basic services among others. There is consensus that the MDGs are limited and in fact, minimal. Given the complexity of poverty, structural issues of access and equity are not reflected in the MDGs. Hence, participants will continue their respective advocacy work and field projects to combat hunger and poverty.

At the same time, poverty situation differ among and within countries. Hence, it is inappropriate to come up with a common formula and unit of quantifiable indicators to measure the reduction of poverty.

However, the participants view the MDGs, despite of its limitations, as another opportunity to exact accountability to governments and the international community. As governments are preparing country reports on MDGs, NGOs/CSOs can use such space either as a starting point or to complement existing initiatives to effect structural changes through policy dialogues.

Below are the highlights of the workshop reports:

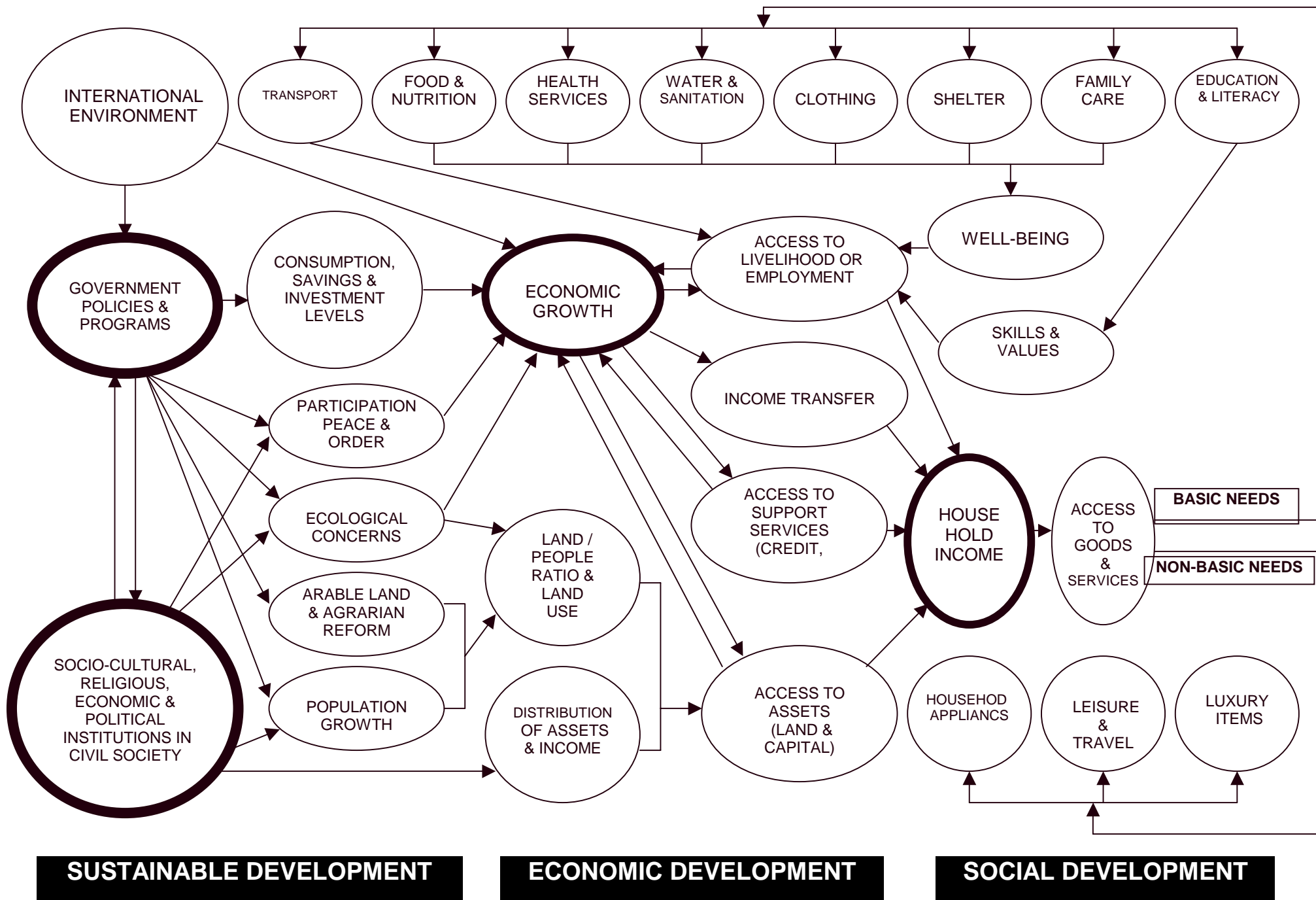
### South Asian Report

The South Asia group reported that the Nepali government is the first among its group to incorporate inputs from NGOs in its MDG report. The Sri Lankan government is still in the process of reviewing its MDGs, while the new Indian government is formulating its Common Minimum Program that can be used as a basis for MDG implementation.

In terms of NGO participation, the participants are all involved in the eradication of poverty and hunger in their respective countries with focus on self-governance to empower local communities on various needs such as education, health, alternative livelihood, savings, credit, sanitation and human rights. The NGOs are also involved in environmental programs including traditional watershed management system, community forestry, micro-hydro electric power, water tanks and land management

The group recommended the following action plans:

- information sharing within the ANGOC network, with the secretariat collecting reports from members as well as relevant data from the UN, ADB and other institutions. It also called for documentation and sharing of success stories by NGOs and POs.
- monitoring of budget allocation by national and local governments, with ANGOC members collecting data from regional institutions and national governments and circulate these to members/partners and the communities.
- convene dialogues with UNDP and other international organizations, including regional and inter-governmental bodies such as SAARC, in order to give a more Asian perspective to the definitions of the MDGs.
- training of young people and women for future leadership.
- producing alternative MDG reports.



**VARIABLES THAT INFLUENCE THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**  
**(Explaining the Causes of Poverty)**

**Box 3. Case Study of Kuppam Area in India: Localizing MDGs**

The Kuppam Area, which consists of more than 700 villages and a population of over **300,000** has been chosen as the site for a pilot program of Andhra Pradesh government in close coordination with NGOs led by South Asian Rural Reconstruction Association (SARRA). The program mandates the various government departments to collectively provide necessary support and guidance to the farmers' organizations in the area.

As a result, the following infrastructure projects had been initiated so far:

- Road facilities were given the top priorities within a span of three years.
- Potable water facilities enabled the communities to achieve significant reduction in the prevalence of minor ailments.
- Families were encouraged to build and use individual sanitary latrines.
- Additional primary health centers were set up to achieve greater access to medical and health facilities. A special family planning drive was initiated with the help of self-help groups and other community based organizations, reducing the population growth rate to 1.8% from 2.1% in the span of nine years.
- The number of primary schools increased to 378 from 132, the number of upper primary schools (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades) increased to 96 from 9, and the number of high schools rose to 85 from 21. The number of teachers increased to 1450 from 335. Tertiary and technical schools were set up. By the end of 2003, Kuppam has become the educational hub and an important center for higher education in the liberal arts and technical education.
- Ninety watershed development programs were implemented to enhance rainwater harvesting, storage and utilization covering 45,000 hectares. More than 600 ancient irrigation tanks were desilted and the silt was applied to enrich the fertility status of degraded lands.
- Israeli-type of agriculture with emphasis on micro-irrigation was introduced. Instead of concentrating on paddy and sugarcane planting that require higher quantity of water, the farmers were encouraged to produce high-value crops such as banana, sericulture, vegetables, baby corn, gherkin, vanilla and other export crops.
- Meat chilling plants were built so that dairy development could be promoted as a major drought mitigation initiative. Liberal credit support for introducing milch animals, veterinary health care was upgraded to assist dairy farmers introduce feed fodder and participate in dairy development programs.
- Cold storage facilities have been built so that farmers are able to escape the distress sale of their products in the regular markets. Export zones for vegetables and horticulture crops also established.
- Proactive measures to protect and promote forest coverage were initiated. Open grazing of goats was banned so that the natural regeneration of forest could be achieved.
- Continuous capacity-building programs were introduced to help the farmers experiment with various crop production systems. Information technology giants like HP were invited to assist farmers in using IT support services in their farming operations.

The experience shows that it is necessary for the provincial governments to initiate intensive pilot programs through the active participation of local government units such as Panchayaths and Mandals. Community-level planning and management of programs is the key for achieving a breakthrough in sustainable development. It also shows that NGOs play a critical and strategic role in working with government agencies and building the capacity of community-based organizations.

South-East and East Asian Report

The Southeast Asian and East Asian group focused its discussions on how ANGOC network can help in achieving MDGs.

The group recommended the following action plans:

- coordinate with other regional networks as well as develop and strengthen linkages with government, bilateral and multilateral agencies involved in similar MDG efforts.
- ANGOC members becoming part of the government group processing the MDGs and/or provide comments on the government report.



- closely monitor the implementation of the various goals and write alternative MDG reports in order to compare and contrast with the government's official reports. The alternative reports can be presented to donors and other sectors.
- information-sharing on other MDG monitoring mechanism, and setting up regional or national workshops on MDGs.
- public education on the MDGs in both urban and rural areas.
- sharing of advocacy skills.
- close monitoring of APEC and AFTA agenda that can affect the attainment of MDGs.
- set up a coordinating committee on the MDGs. The committee should facilitate information



exchange and dissemination on the progress of MDG implementation. ANGOC should identify a focal person from each organization as member of the committee.

### Comments from the Panel

Ms. Witoelar commended the participants for their good intention and strong motivation to make MDGs become realities. She, however, cautioned them against putting their efforts on drafting alternative MDG reports, as the pursuit is a gargantuan task that needs comprehensive networking with all other NGOs in various fields. Besides, the effort will be redundant since the government, with all its attached departments and agencies, should be doing a similar job. It is more important for CSOs to initiate dialogues with government officials in order to influence or pressure them to undertake the correct policies.



She reiterated the need to generate greater public understanding and knowledge on MDGs, so that more people will be able to benefit from the campaign.

Jose Osaba, the World Rural Forum Africa-Asia Desk Coordinator, also commended the participants. He assured the group that his organization is standing solidly behind the group, especially in achieving Goal 8.

"We are ready to support every where, and in front of every concerned institution the claims in favor of a substantially increased development cooperation budget from the North, reaching an annual figure of 100 billion US dollars, and a significant reduction of the external debt of developing countries, in order to give them the maximum chances to implement in time the Millennium Development Goals."

"As I have proposed already to the ANGOC General Assembly, the WRF, as one of the organizations present in four continents, we offer the strength of our network, its means of expression and especially our Electronic Bulletin as planetary 'loud speakers' in order to recall, once and again until 2015, to the industrialized nations and governments, that 59 among the least developed countries need an exceptional support to be able to reach on time the 2015 challenges, most especially, the 31 poor nations that are going in the opposite

direction," he said.

### Three-Pronged Approach

At the end of the presentations, Fr. Francis Lucas, chair of ANGOC, synthesized the recommendations made by the participants as well as inputs from the panel. As a result, a three-point action plan was adopted by the group.

#### Box 4. Poverty Reduction Monitoring in Cambodia and Vietnam

*Following up from the initiative of ANGOC and its partners in 2001, there is a proposal to initiate citizen's monitoring and ensuring sustained participation of NGOs and CSOs in the poverty reduction programs in Cambodia and Vietnam. The NGOs and CSOs in these countries need to build up a level of knowledge and capability to engage constructively in policy dialogue, including facilitating public policy dialogue between poor people and policy makers, thus strengthening their capacities to carry out their role as "public monitors" and "policy advocates".*

*The major activities of this project will be:*

- **Planning meeting on monitoring of PRSP progress and outputs.** This key meeting will bring together a group of NGO/CSO representatives from Cambodia and Vietnam with resource persons and ANGOC staff to draw up a common strategy for monitoring the respective PRSPs. This common strategy will serve as the basic framework for the NGOs/CSOs participating in the monitoring of the PRSP content and process at various levels during the project time frame as well as beyond, subject to regular review.
- **In-country capacity-building activities.** Possible activities that can be undertaken at the country with the help of resource people from both within and outside Cambodia and Vietnam based on their training needs. This will include the production of a PRSP Watch.
- **Regional workshop on sharing of country experiences.** This regional workshop will bring together NGO/CSO representatives from selected Asian countries with PRSP experiences.
- **Synthesis of experiences and guidebook on citizens' participation in PRSP monitoring.** The project will produce a simplified guidebook for NGOs/CSOs on approaches/tools for monitoring and advocacy based on training materials developed and experiences documented.

First, ANGOC will be collecting all MDG-related reports and disseminate them to members for their feedback. The network will explore possibilities of producing alternative MDG reports. The 200-Village Project, ANGOC's regional food security program, may be used as the possible framework. Similarly, enhancing access to land as a basic requirement for rural poverty eradication, through the "Land Watch" campaign and reporting will be pursued.

Secondly, ANGOC will continue with its advocacy work on MDGs, including providing training for capacity building, in order to improve awareness on the MDGs.

And finally, ANGOC will create a committee on MDGs with one focal member from each country as member of the committee. The ANGOC Secretariat will support the committee by sending all reports, discussion points and inputs from various resource speakers on MDGs, via electronic mail.



*Box 5. The 200- Village Project of ANGOC*

*The 200-Village Project of ANGOC is a community-based regional program aimed at monitoring food security status, specifically the extent to which the commitments and plan of actions of the 1996 World Food Summit have been achieved among 200 selected villages in 10 countries in Asia. It also aims to assess food security status at household and community level as basis for planning and implementation of need-based food security projects in the community. Food security, especially in the rural areas, is directly related to poverty eradication. Both are more assured when rural households have access to land and other resources, when production and resource management practices are sustainable, and when people are allowed and able to participate in the local government system and community development processes.*

*The project has three phases:*

- **baseline survey and community planning** which consists of data gathering at household, community and country levels. The household survey and community profiling were conducted through 17 NGO Networks in selected countries and participation of 125 community-based NGOs. A preliminary baseline survey regional report (covering five countries) was generated and presented in the FAO-NGO/CSO consultation in Yokohama, Japan in August 2000 and in Bangkok, Thailand in August 2001. The preliminary results of the first phase of the baseline survey suggested certain areas for community intervention and possible initiatives in addressing food security problem.
- **Community project implementation**, as a follow-up phase, is a need-based approach addressing household food insecurity. A technical working group will be formed per country to help in developing project management, design and methodology.
- **Policy advocacy** involves national and regional dialogues with government, donor institutions and multilateral banks together with a number of regional and international committees to which ANGOC has been involved with.

*There are two concrete follow-up strategies that are being pushed:*

- **Community-initiated strategy.** ANGOC is acting more on linking the community initiatives with interested support agencies through the country focal points and local NGO partners.
- **Program-based strategy.** ANGOC networks' priority program areas of intervention to promote food security within a larger framework of a) agrarian reform and resource rights, b) sustainable agriculture and rural development, and c) participatory local governance. These areas serve as common focus of intervention and collaboration for community project implementation and policy advocacy by the country focal points and ANGOC Network at large. ANGOC serves as the project holder in collaboration with the national or community-based NGOs.

*The project has been implemented initially in nine countries and has covered about 5,640 households in 188 villages out of the targeted 200. The countries include Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.*

*The 200-Village Project process and output substantiate the Network's national and regional advocacy work promoting agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture and local governance towards the attainment of food security and alleviation of poverty among rural communities in the region.*

"We will continue the process of dialogue...for the benefit of transforming them from knowledge to action, and action to knowledge," Fr. Francis said.

Michio Ito, vice chair of ANGOC, agreed, saying that it is time for action. ANGOC should mobilize other CSOs, professional organizations, universities and even trade unions to work towards the attainment of MDGs. The group can also try to pressure the government and the business sector to take more active roles.



## Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)

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The Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) is a regional association of 24 national and regional networks of non-government organizations (NGOs) from 11 Asian countries. Actively engaged in food security, agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture and rural development activities. Its member-networks have an effective reach of some 3,000 NGOs throughout the region. ANGOC was founded in Bangkok in February 1979, following a two-year series of village and national-level consultation in 10 Asian countries leading to the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD, 1979).

The complexity of Asian realities and the diversity of NGOs highlight the need for a development leadership to service the poor of Asia- providing a forum for articulation of their needs and aspirations as well as expression of Asian values and perspectives. ANGOC seeks to address the key issues related to agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture and rural development in the Asian region.