

Advocacy Guide: **UN High-Level Plenary on the MDGs**

June 2010

This guide has been produced to help you to organise lobbying activities in order to influence the outcome of the UN's MDG+10 Summit in September 2010.

An appendix is also included to help you organise poverty hearings focused on water and sanitation, a key tool to influence national governments ahead of the Summit.



Advocacy Guide UN High-Level Plenary on the MDGs

Introduction

In 2000, Heads of State from 190 countries agreed eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with a range of targets, to be achieved by 2015, in order to galvanise action against global poverty. Alongside targets that included halving extreme poverty, reducing child mortality by two-thirds and achieving universal primary education, was a target to “halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.”

With just five years left to meet the MDGs, Heads of State will gather in New York for the United Nations High-Level Plenary on the MDGs, 20-22 September 2010. They will review progress made to date, and agree a plan to accelerate progress in the remaining five years.

About the Summit

The Summit is being convened by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, and should be attended by Heads of State from all countries – the biggest meeting of Heads of State focused on the MDGs in a decade. It will agree a negotiated document that will outline key priorities for action by all countries in the next five years, while Governments will be asked to outline their specific contribution to the plan. There will also be ‘side events’ bringing together groups of Governments keen to work on specific issues, perhaps including sanitation and water (TBC).

Our Opportunity

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) have long been neglected in efforts to meet the MDGs. The sanitation MDG target, for example, will not be met on current trends in Sub-Saharan Africa until the **23rd Century**. The Summit promises a renewed focus on those development issues and regions that are most off-track in meeting the MDG targets.

As the Summit promises a renewed focus on those development issues and regions that are most off-track, it can offer us key opportunities in our campaigning at both national and international level:

- **To influence the official negotiated document** that will help shape development priorities over the next 5 years
- **To obtain specific commitments from individual governments** as to what they will do to meet the MDGs in their country and across the world.

Additionally, we can use this Summit to build on the launch of *Sanitation and Water for All: A Global Framework for Action (SWA)* in April 2010, and build towards the next High Level-Meeting on Sanitation and Water in 2011.

WaterAid Nigeria offer a good example of national lobbying. By contacting their Government, they are now represented on the national MDG Task Force preparing the national report for the Summit.

Our messages and recommendations

Progress in meeting the MDGs has been slow and uneven, leaving millions without the essentials of life. It is very clear that progress will not be accelerated without scaling up efforts on *all* the MDGS, but also without providing an additional focus on those areas that have been left furthest behind – like sanitation – which can drive progress across multiple MDG targets.

We need to do more to meet the MDGs, and we need to do it better – including by investing in sanitation as part of a comprehensive approach to tackling poverty, hunger and ill-health. The UN Summit provides a unique opportunity to act.

As part of a broad agreement at the Summit, we call on Heads of State to:

- 1. Agree a Global Action Plan to meet all the MDGs**, with additional resources, improvements in aid effectiveness, robust accountability mechanisms and a greater role for the involvement of civil society.
- 2. Enhance integrated and holistic approaches** at a national and global level to achieve key development outcomes in a more effective and equitable way.
- 3. Provide a renewed focus on the most off-track targets:** more and better finance for interlinked targets like nutrition, health, sanitation and water, with a greater focus on the poorest countries.

Specifically on sanitation and water we are calling for Heads of State to build on the launch of *Sanitation and Water for All* with specific commitments to:

- 1. Mobilise additional resources** to ensure ‘no credible national sanitation and water plan fails through lack of finance’. This includes meeting existing regional commitments, and to launch a new ‘catalytic fund’ to support the development of national plans in countries with weak sectors.

- 2. Improve the targeting of resources to low-income countries and marginalised communities**, with a target of 70% of aid for WASH going to low-income countries, and 50% to ‘basic services’ aimed at meeting the MDGs.
- 3. Fully integrate sanitation and water interventions and indicators in broader development strategies**, including national strategies to improve child health, education, nutrition and gender equality.

End Water Poverty has produced a fuller briefing note together with Action for Global Health, Action Contre La Faim and WaterAid, with further recommendations on promoting integrated approaches and specific actions on achieving the MDG targets on sanitation and water, undernutrition and health. Download the document at www.endwaterpoverty.org/MDG2010

Five things you can do

1. Work with your national networks

Try to get a common plan with your national sanitation and water network, and also link in with your national anti-poverty coalition, who may also be working on advocacy for the Summit. This is important to try and get sanitation and water issues mainstreamed into broader advocacy and to encourage a more comprehensive and integrated approach to development issues.

The Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) has national coalitions in many countries that will be organising national events and 'MDG Charters' that you could join in with and bring your sanitation and water messages. You can see a list of national contacts at www.theworldwewant.info or get in touch with stevecockburn@endwaterpoverty.org

2. Influence your national government and UN agencies

This is the priority. There may be different ways you can influence processes at national level:

- **Your Government:** Your government can both input into the negotiations around

the final outcome document and announce its own plans to meet the MDGs at national level. Ensure you are meeting the key officials who can influence your Government's position, and use campaigning and media work to bring attention on the issue from outside. Developing countries should also be preparing a national MDG report you may be able to influence. You can also adapt a sample letter available at www.endwaterpoverty.org/mdg2010

- **UNDP agencies:** Check with your UN contacts at national level if there are ways of inputting into the Summit. UNDP, for example, produced 'needs assessments' in a number of countries and are also consulting on a proposed Joint Action Plan for Women's and Children's Health, which will be of great importance.

3. Hold a national poverty hearing:

Bring real stories and testimonies from communities in your country, and mobilize well known advocates for your cause, by using the powerful tool of poverty hearings. See a full poverty hearing toolkit on page six in the appendix.

4. Host a webchat with your Government Minister

Getting a public meeting with your Minister is the ideal outcome, but if this is not possible ask them to take part in a live 'webchat', whereby campaigners and members of the public can ask questions directly to the Minister, who must answer online. They have been successfully used in a number of places as a way to engage a broad group of people, and End Water Poverty can help you with simple and free technology to do it.

5. Join Stand Up Against Poverty, 17-19 September

In 2009, over 170 million people stood up against poverty in a global mobilization in events organized by campaigners across the world. This record-breaking feat will be repeated in 2010 on the weekend before the UN Summit. Join this effort, help mobilize others, and adapt it with your own ideas to highlight the need to achieve sanitation and water for all. For info and resources see www.standagainstopoverty.org

Further resources available

Links to all resources are available on End Water Poverty's webpage at

www.endwaterpoverty.org/mdg2010

Or you can link directly to the following documents:

From End Water Poverty

You will find a policy briefing paper, a sample lobbying letter and all information on the Summit at

www.endwaterpoverty.org/mdg2010

From others:

- Official Summit website:
www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/
- Official information for NGOs:
www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=mdg2010
- Stand Up Against Poverty:
www.standagainstpoverity.org
- UN Secretary General's Report:
www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=amdg10&id_article=2266
- GCAP national contacts list:
www.theworldwewant.info

For any further information contact stevecockburn@endwaterpoverty.org including if you would like to be part of a dedicated working group coordinating advocacy efforts in the run up to the summit.

What will the End Water Poverty secretariat be doing?

To complement your national efforts, End Water Poverty will be working hard at international level by:

- Producing advocacy guides and policy briefs to support national efforts.
- Inputting policy positions through lobbying of UN agencies and key governments, as well as through formal processes.
- Collecting and communicating testimonies and evidence from national poverty hearings, and communicating to global policy makers and media.
- Facilitating a working group of all CSOs interested in sharing information and coordinating lobbying efforts for the UN Summit.
- Liaising with other CSOs through the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) to represent issues relating to sanitation and water.

Share your stories

Let people know what you are doing and planning by writing a short blog for the website – this will be a great way to share learning across countries and spread the word further. Get in touch with serenaosullivan@endwaterpoverty.org to find out more.

Appendix: Host a Water and Sanitation Poverty Hearing

This section has been produced to help you to organise water and sanitation poverty hearings in order to influence the outcome of the UN's MDG+10 Summit in September 2010.

We see an opportunity to influence both the outcome of the Summit, and the actions of your own government, by bringing stories and testimonies of people directly affected by poor water and sanitation provision to those in power. 'Poverty hearings' can be an effective and media-friendly way of doing this.

What is a Poverty Hearing?

Poverty hearings have been traditionally used as public forums where often-excluded voices can be heard. Members of communities affected by poverty or exclusion to speak out, tell their stories and help shape the solutions needed.

Alongside community members, other groups and people you might want to take part could include the media, local and national government representatives, as well as other NGOs and networks and community leaders.

Hearings are often themed around a certain issue, for example climate change or gender equality; or a certain group of people such as

indigenous groups or child labourers. We encourage your hearings to be broadly themed around water and sanitation, They could also focus down onto specific related issues faced in your community, whether ensuring access for marginalised groups, promoting sanitation in schools, water provision in informal urban settlements, or issues affecting gender equality or child health.

Overall, we want to use the hearings to:

- **Raise profile of the importance of sanitation and water** amongst media and policy makers locally, nationally and internationally.
- **Support local, national and regional campaign objectives** by promoting an empowering activity that can be integrated into your campaign plans
- **Support efforts to influence the UN MDG Summit**, providing legitimacy and depth to advocacy efforts, and strengthening the voices of those affected by poor water and sanitation.

Watch a great video explaining hearings, produced for the Climate Hearings project:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZNUP_WsgjM

Case study: The Climate Hearings Project

Ahead of the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit in 2009, thousands of Climate Hearings were held in 36 countries in order to represent the real experiences of people living with the effects of climate change at the Summit. An estimated 1.5 million people took part in this project, organised by the TckTckTck campaign and Oxfam, which included key witnesses sharing their direct experiences as well as open floor sessions for the general public to join.

High profile speakers such as former Irish Prime Minister and UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Mary Robinson and Archbishop Desmond Tutu presented findings and recommendations at an international hearing at the Summit, attended by the media and Southern representatives from Uganda, Kiribati, Peru and Bangladesh.

The international hearing was a culmination of the thousands of hearings and brought all those stories to the attention of negotiators and media in Copenhagen.

See videos and find out more at www.climatehearings.org

How could your poverty hearing be structured and organised?

Ultimately it's up to you as to what would work best, but a few things would be worth considering based on the experiences of events organised by others.

Your Poverty Hearing should be a forum for people, or 'witnesses', affected by water and sanitation issues to share their experiences, as well as experts to present their recommendations for action. You could organise a select few detailed cases to be presented, reflecting some core themes or your national campaign's focus issues; but there could also be an open part for members of the public to add their voices.

These 'witness' statements would be heard by a panel of 'jurists' who would take the learning and evidence from the Hearing to national and local government, asking them to respond with action. This evidence would in turn be taken to an international level, ahead of the MDG+10 Summit.

An organising committee can help you to plan the Hearing and its thematic focuses, ensuring people affected by poor water and sanitation are included in this group would be positive.

Who do you need to mobilise?

The involvement of people – from those directly affected by poor water and sanitation, to advocates who can take the evidence gathered to decision makers, to politicians themselves, can all play important roles in your Poverty Hearing. These are the groups you'll need to mobilise:

- **An organising committee** made up of civil society organisations
- **Primary witnesses** who could be community representatives chosen to provide 'evidence' from their lives, tell their stories and make recommendations.
- **Expert witnesses** could be academics, development practitioners or others who can provide further analysis to provide context to the cases being heard.
- **Jurists and advocates** to take the issues to political leaders after the event. These could range from traditional leaders to respected cultural figures or celebrities.
- **Advocates, local and/or national politicians** should be asked to attend, listen to the evidence and say what they will do about the issues raised.
- **Media networks** to raise issues in local and national media, and publicise commitments made by attending politicians.

- **The public** to listen and speak out in a free space alongside primary witnesses.

Activities

You're encouraged to incorporate a range of activities into your Hearing:

- At the event, attending politicians should be invited to hear demands of their constituents, and make commitments to act.
- Your hearing could be enlivened by theatre, music or dance, and people attending could also be asked to write statements, draw stories or sign a petition.
- After the event, 'advocates' would take stories, evidence and displays of support to local and national leaders with clear demands of what they want to happen.
- Attendees could be asked to give individual testimonials to camera, and this footage can be used in a global video.

Your organisational checklist

- **People:** The most critical aspect of your Poverty Hearing!
- **Venue:** An accessible place in the community, from a school to a public square.
- **Travel and food:** Participants may need travel, food and even accommodation
- **Documentation:** Ensure documentation to record findings and add to the international evidence, this includes equipment such as videos or a person to transcribe proceedings.
- **Budget:** Your Hearing can be to scale according to the budget you have available.
- **Promotion:** Ensure you've raised awareness of your Hearing in your community, either through the media, your networks and/or your colleagues.

It's also important to note that your Hearing can be large or small in scale – the most important aspect is that stories are heard, gathered and then shared with decision makers and the international community. You are also encouraged to fit them thematically into your current campaigning priorities.

Following up to ensure impact

- **Document the event** through transcription and/or video.
- **Organise advocacy** meetings with national political leaders to represent outcomes.
- **Produce a press release** for the media to promote findings, recommendations and stories
- **Feedback** what happens after the hearing to those who participated.

What support will the international secretariat provide?

- **Link you up with partners in country** to strengthen your events
- **Make links to northern campaigns and the MDG Summit**, promoting voices to international level through the media, online communications and our networks.
- **Create a final report and video** for promotion and dissemination ahead of the Summit.

If you do organise a Poverty Hearing ahead of the Summit, it is very important to contact Serena O'Sullivan so we can link you up with others working in your area and coordinate documentation gathering:

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End Water Poverty is an international civil society coalition that campaigns to end the global water and sanitation crisis.

Launched in March 2007, the coalition has grown rapidly to include over 180 member organisations in 45 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and North America.

Over one million actions have been taken in support of the campaign, demonstrating a real global movement for change.