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## Editorial

### The poor have a right to live with dignity



The unofficial draft (non paper) of the World Summit (previously called the Millennium Plus 5 Summit) has been released on July 22, 2005. Though the draft has major improvements in recognising the role of the environment in development.

The Millennium Development Goal 7 is to ensure environmental sustainability. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has recently released a position paper that reiterates the need to focus on a sustainable development perspective with an emphasis on poverty reduction. Among the three targets for MDG 7 on environment (targets 9, 10 and 11), target 9 is the least reported by countries.

The decade spanning 2005-15 has been declared as “Celebrating water for life: International Decade for Action”. This directly reinforces and urges countries to meet the Target 10, which is to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Though the drinking water targets are more or less being met, except in sub-Saharan Africa, the global sanitation coverage is way below the targets. Nearly half of the developing world i.e. about 2.6 billion people still live without improved sanitation. The way to achieve this is to take an integrated water resources management process to implement cost effective and sustainable solutions in developing countries, and for the developed world to assist them in its implementation. This will, for the poor families, mean better health, longer lives and greater dignity. Another important task would be to ensure that adequate treatment and disposal of wastewater is made so to save the ecosystems, and lesser contamination of precious groundwater.

Fast forward to 2007, and reflect on Target 11. The situation looks rather grim. The target: achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. The number of slum dwellers would already be numbering from 0.75 to 1.0 billion and would be nearly one sixth of the world population. These figures could rapidly increase in the coming years. A European Union report in Ireland made in 2004 estimates the cost of achieving target 11 at \$50 billion.

Ensuring that the MDG 7 targets are met is critical to the achievement of other goals, as they are closely linked. Another important factor is to put in place the mechanism for decentralised management of the resources generated and fulfilling the goals by national governments, in collaboration with private sector and the civil society. MDGs are not simply goals set out by the UN and signed on by 187 countries, they are very much targets that we, as a society, must contribute to achieve.



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