

The MDG Achievement Fund at work: Access to water and sanitation services

*From beneficiaries
to agents of change*

Miskito families are protecting Nicaragua's environment through a MDG-F programme to provide renewable energy and increase access to drinking water and environmental sanitation for rural populations near the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve.



Our work: access to water and sanitation

Access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation is essential to the full enjoyment of life and of all human rights. Yet almost 900 million people are denied that opportunity, especially slum-dwellers of large cities and indigenous people living in remote rural areas.

The MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) identified access to water and sanitation as one of its eight thematic priorities. To this end, the MDG-F supported 11 programmes around the world to manage and conserve water resources, increase access to safe drinking water, and, by including users in the design and management of their water services, ensure that affordable and sustainable water and sanitation services reach even the most disadvantaged communities.

story

The MDG-F helped provide safe water to 120,000 people in disadvantaged areas across the Philippines.

Country	Budget (\$ Million)
Albania	\$2.10
Angola	\$7.60
Bosnia & Herzegovina	\$4.45
Ecuador	\$5.81
Guatemala	\$5.95
Honduras	\$6.50
Mexico	\$6.00
Nicaragua	\$7.70
Panama	\$4.50
Paraguay	\$3.64
Philippines	\$5.68

MDG-F joint programmes in the thematic window of Democratic Economic Governance.

In addition, some programmes in the Environment and Climate Change thematic window, such as those in Egypt, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Jordan, Mauritania, Mozambique and Nicaragua, have prioritized access to water as part of a broad approach to tackling climate change.



Photo: Erwin Lim

Our approach: Democratic Economic Governance of water and sanitation

Good governance is an influential factor in achieving the MDGs. How public services are governed can determine whether people have access to basic needs such as clean water. Good governance ensures that the voices of the poor and vulnerable are heard. The interaction among all stakeholders – the state, the private sector and civil society – influences the extent to which political and economic institutions and processes deliver for all, especially the poor.

Democratic economic governance, in the context of the MDG-F's work, is understood as any **form** of socially legitimated organization which has the objective of setting **rules** for the use and management of natural resources.

- **Forms of organization** can take different modalities: water law, hydrographical confederations, water boards, an indigenous forest protection committee or an elders' council.
- The **rules** that guide its functioning should be clear, accepted by all community members, prioritize common good over individual benefit and be flexible to cultural and social contexts.



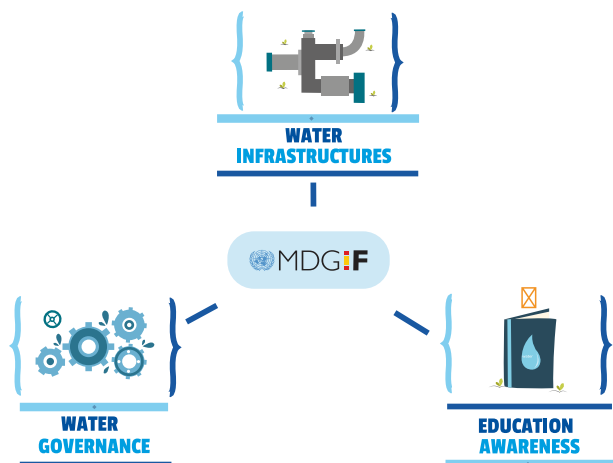
Joint and coordinated efforts to address multidimensional challenges

One of the particularities of the MDG-F's work is its "Delivering as One" approach. Building on the expertise of over 25 UN agencies, the MDG-F maximizes their comparative advantage and devises multi-sectoral programmes that tackle complex development issues. Each of the 130 MDG-F joint programmes involves an average of six UN Agencies. This coordinated approach is often mirrored by governments with various ministries and local authorities engaged in the implementation of programmes. Access to safe water is a multi-dimensional problem; by coordinating participating agencies' work, convergent aspects of water and sanitation - such as infrastructure, governance, health, education, environmental protection and gender equality - have been integrated in development approaches that are more effective and sustainable in the long term.

UN agencies participating in the MDG-F's 11 Democratic Economic Governance joint programmes are: UNDP, FAO, PAHO/WHO, UNESCO, ILO, IOM, UNCDF, UNICEF, ECLAC, UN-HABITAT, UNIDO, UNODC and UNFPA.

Our pillars of action

- 1 Building and improving water infrastructures.** Encouraging investment in services to poor communities, many of the MDG-F programmes set out to develop new and innovative mechanisms to finance water supply and sanitation infrastructures. Some programmes engaged in direct financing and facilities construction, whereas others maintained a facilitation role, having as a common thread to prioritize vulnerable groups and marginalized communities. For example, in Nicaragua, water and sanitation projects in communities and schools on the Caribbean Coast improved access and water supply sources for almost 17,000 community members.



2 Strengthening water governance mechanisms.

Important as it is, infrastructure is not always the answer to guaranteeing access to water and sanitation. Weaknesses in institutional management are one of the most significant impediments. To improve water services, the MDG-F has ensured that the poor participate in the design, management and maintenance of their water resources and that they are able to influence the process of reform and policy development. Democratic and transparent governance contribute to reducing inequalities and improving access to water and sanitation, by democratizing decision-making and by establishing mutual accountability systems.

3 Education and awareness raising initiatives.

MDG-F programmes generated dialogues with civil society and water suppliers. Some programmes prioritized the work in schools and homes, promoting more sustainable and healthy water and sanitation practices. In Mexico, the improvement of water and sanitation services in schools benefitted a school population of 2,317. Awareness raising initiatives also targeted homes: in Honduras, for example, the programme supported 3,330 households in adopting better hygiene practices, reaching 16,000 people.



Promoting gender equality

A key to communities successfully managing their resources is encouraging women to take leadership roles. For that reason, the MDG-F has developed a dual strategy to enhance the role of women in relevant planning and policy making. Examples include: increased participation and leadership of women in water boards (Angola and Bosnia and Herzegovina); gender mainstreaming and participation in Ecuador; incorporating a gender perspective in water management in Mexico; and organization and participation of women in Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama. Two of these experiences (Ecuador and Panama) provided the basis for case studies by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) to be used as examples for future development projects.

story

Venus Unión water system in Nicaragua

In Nicaragua's North Atlantic Autonomous Region, less than 20% of the population has access to water and sanitation. Despite being surrounded by rivers that spring from the Bosawas Biosphere, Central America's most important rainforest, the small community of Venus had no drinkable water. None, until some community women decided to put an end to the situation and approached the mayor of their municipality with a proposal to create the Potable Water Committee (CAP) of Venus, a network that would supply drinking water to the entire community. Inhabitants of Venus contributed 296,000 córdobas (US\$11,800) to the project, with the MDG-F contributing an additional 1.6 million córdobas (US\$64,000). Today, more than 400 villagers enjoy access to safe drinking water.

Key findings and recommendations for future action

1. Promote linkages through multidimensional approaches to overcome fragmentation.

Water sectors in most countries tend to be fragmented. With solid coordination, the complementary expertise of the several UN agencies and national counterparts can overcome silo behaviors and increase programmes' effectiveness.

2. Facilitate and support the formation of Water Boards for local development.

The formation of Water and Sanitation Boards at regional and municipal level helps to establish areas of cooperation and dialogue between stakeholders. It is important to provide capacity building and financial support to ensure their efficient functioning.

3. Empower vulnerable groups for community development.

Empowering vulnerable groups, such as women and indigenous people, is essential to addressing inequalities and reaching the most marginalized populations.

4. Support governance through empowered institutions.

Strengthening institutions is key to enabling them to deal with policy, regulations, implementation and delivery in an effective manner. This embraces governance reforms, legislation, apex bodies, local authorities, river basin organizations, water utilities and a range of other institutional arrangements at different levels.

Distilling and sharing knowledge

In addition to the field experience, the MDG-F is also promoting knowledge exchange by establishing partnerships with leading institutions. Regarding water issues, two partnerships were developed with the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI):

“Knowledge Management Strategy for the Economic Democratic Governance Thematic Window”, which has supported the MDG-F in generating and collecting best practices and lessons learned from the joint programmes. Their valuable experiences have been shared through workshops and conferences, as well as through online platforms such as teamworks.

More information:

www.watergovernance.org/DEG-KM

“Towards transcultural transparency in water governance for indigenous communities”. This research examines the perspectives of communities, service providers, development cooperation actors and local authorities regarding how water and sanitation should be organized in indigenous areas to provide more cost-effective services that are designed and operated to sustainably meet the needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples.

More information:

www.watergovernance.org/TTTen



Results

The MDG-F has helped accelerate progress towards MDG 7, ensuring environmental sustainability and access to water and sanitation. For example,

More than

540,000

citizens gained access to safe, affordable drinking water.

31
million

people have improved their lives through **41** new laws **78** policies and **157** plans to boost water and sanitation services.



669 community organizations and **556** local providers have been strengthened or created – providing the critical ingredient to ensure long-term, healthy and sustainable water and sanitation systems for the world's poorest citizens.

The MDG-F's experience in the area of water and sanitation proves that fostering democratic economic governance of water services contributes to the creation of sustainable systems, to increasing national ownership and to giving a voice to those who are frequently unheard. By encouraging these users' participation, the MDG-F has supported their transformation from beneficiaries to agents of change.

story

Guatemalan village takes water problem into its own hands.

In the village of San Rafael Sacatepéquez, in Guatemala, midnight treks for water have been replaced by household taps and a village-run water management project supported by the MDG-F. The 465 families of San Rafael dug a well and established a Community Assembly to manage the village's water needs. Now every villager participates in managing the water project. As a result, San Rafael's community saw a significant decrease in gastrointestinal diseases, a strengthening of the community's organizational culture and an increase in residents' environmental awareness.





The MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) was established in 2007 through a landmark agreement between the Government of Spain and the UN system, with the aim of accelerating progress on the MDGs. With a total contribution of approximately US\$ 900M, the MDG-F has financed 130 joint programmes in eight programmatic areas in 50 countries around the world, in addition to global partnerships and thematic knowledge management initiatives. Our programmes cover nutrition, youth and employment, gender equality, environment, culture, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, water resources management and private sector development.

For more information: www.mdgfund.org