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**MDG PROCESS:
THE SYRIAN EXPERIENCE**

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MDG process: The Syrian Experience

Summary of the main stages of the MDG process in Syria and the involvement of the UN team in each stage:

I. Launching of the MDG process in Syria -2002

A letter was sent by UNDP Resident Coordinator to the Prime Minister and Head of State Planning Commission introducing the MDG process and outlining the steps that need to be taken by the Government and the UN in preparing the report. The letter was copied to all heads of UN agencies.

II. UN Task Force for MDGs

A UN task force was formed (under the leadership of UNDP) with representation of the following agencies

UNDP - UNICEF - WFP - UNFPA - FAO

III. National Advisory Committee:

Based on a request from UNDP, the State Planning Commission formed a national advisory committee with senior representation from various ministries and national institutions and UNDP (in its capacity as the coordinating body other UN system in Syria) and the occasional participation of the aforementioned UN agencies.

UNDP actively liaised between the advisory committee and the UN task force for MDGs.

The UN task force also participated in one of the advisory committee meetings and shared with other members some of the surveys that they have conducted and the data that they have available.

IV. UN- Government High-level Meeting:

Based on a request from UNDP, SPC organized a high level meeting in its premises to which all the heads of agencies and the task force members were invited. The participants basically discussed the overall purpose of the MDGR and agreed on a general outline of the MDGR process in Syria, including the 'post-report stage, i.e the advocacy and monitoring of progress

V. Technical Committee

The Government also formed a less senior, more technical committee that was entrusted with collecting data and drafting the report. UNDP was also represented in this committee.

VI. Role of the UN Task Force:

As a liaison between the government and the other UN agencies, UNDP invited the UN task force for a number of meetings to brief them on the progress made by the technical committee. After the first draft of the report had been prepared by the technical committee, UNDP sent it to all members of the task force and asked them to *verify* the data and provide any additional comments on the text. Later, UNDP called for a meeting for the task force to get all their comments in writing on the report. Accordingly, the minutes of meeting with all the comments of the UNDG was prepared and submitted to the technical and advisory committees for incorporation in the report.

The report was revised by the technical committee in accordance with the comments received from both the Government institutions and the UNDG.

VII. Bottlenecks and Challenges:



No major problems were encountered in terms of cooperation with the Government. On the contrary, they were very cooperative and they took the MDG process very seriously.

The MDG process in Syria was characterized by the following:

Nationally owned by the Government with overall guidance and participation of UNDP

- Full involvement of concerned Government officials – **participatory approach** adopted to the extent possible

Partial involvement of civil society

Ad hoc participation by UN agencies (UN MDG task force)

Complete reliance on national data

VIII. General problems faced in terms of data:

1. Unavailability of data for some indicators

Solution: In some cases, we had to drop the indicator and comment on it in the text (e.g. poverty). In other cases, we replaced some indicators with others that we found more relevant for Syria

2. Unavailability of data in 1990

Solution: Where data in 1990 was not available, the first year after 1990 where data was collected was used e.g. goal # 4 where the first survey was conducted in 1993

3. Reliability and accuracy of data?

Solution: We relied essentially on the data of the Central Bureau of Statistics considering that it is approved by the Government. In most cases, data was checked again and validated with technical ministries and relevant UN agencies that have conducted studies in the pertinent sector.

4. Unavailability of disaggregated data (e.g. urban-rural areas; male-female)

Solution: In some cases, disaggregated data was not available, so we had to rely on totals while commenting on them in the text. In other cases, data was available as disaggregated by urban and rural areas; nevertheless sometimes there was a need to have the data disaggregated by Governorates. This was also highlighted in the text.

5. Problem with using averages

Solution: The use of average sometimes hid a lot of discrepancies between areas. This problem is related to the one before and should be dealt with in the next report.



IX. Examples:

Below are some specific examples on the above problems:

1. Goal # 1 poverty- no data was available for 4 out of 5 indicators

Other indicators were used: e.g. proportion of people with extreme shortness and medium shortness

2. Indicator # 11 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

More detailed information was available, whereby data was available on the different non-agricultural sectors e.g. material production sector, collective and social services, etc.

Goal #4 Data on all indicators was available

Goal # 5 Data on all indicators was available

Goal # 6 HIV prevalence among 15-24 year old pregnant women – this indicator was not available replaced by number of registered AIDS cases and number of AIDS cases per 100,000

Goal # 7 Ensure Environmental sustainability

Some indicators are not measured GDP per unit of energy used is not measured

Goal 8 – Only some data was relevant to Syria

X. Summary of the Role of UNDP and the UN Team in the MDG process:

a. UNDP

UNDP has been acting as a **scorekeeper** in the MDG process in Syria. Its role could be summarized as follows:

- Launching the process,
- Providing advice on the approach and modality of implementation, -
- Engaging, on behalf of the UN team in substantive discussions with the Government both at senior and technical levels,
- Leading the UN team in the MDG process both in terms of assigning tasks and gathering and verifying the Government's data,
- Coordinating between the Government and the rest of the UN team.

b. UN Team

The UN agencies were involved to varying degrees in the MDG process. While they were not involved in all the discussions between UNDP and the Government, they did make important contributions to the content of the report, both in terms of verifying the data provided by the Government and giving comments on it, and providing feedback on the actual text.



XI. Future Role of the UN Team:

The role that the UN team could play in the future in the MDG process:

- participate in the launching of the report (campaign, workshop, press conference, etc.)
- participate in public awareness program (both at the central and local levels) that will be initiated once the report is launched
- Incorporate MDGs in their programmes

XII. Activities planned in the near future:

With respect to the post MDGR activities, a few activities are planned with an ultimate objective of ensuring the widest dissemination of the Syrian MDGR. The specific objectives are listed below:

Ensuring the widest involvement of all stakeholders. These include relevant governmental authorities (top planning bodies, line ministries, and technical departments), research institutions and academia, popular organizations (unions), parliamentarians, private sector representatives, chambers of commerce and industry, representatives of the developmental international organizations in Syria.

Initiation of MDG policy dialogue at all levels (national, governorate, and sectoral) using the outcomes and indicators of the Syrian MDGR.

Using the outcomes of the policy dialogue to contribute to the formulation of policies, and subsequent action, towards the timely and proficient achievement of the MDGs by 2015.

- a. Activity # 1: Launching Ceremony of the MDG report followed by a press conference; planned date: 29 June 2003

Invitees:

Governmental authorities, Members of the General People's Assembly (Parliamentarians), Academicians: Popular organizations (unions), Private sector representatives, Media, Representatives of the developmental international organizations in Syria.

Suggested events:

An opening speech by the Head of the Planning Department/ Head of the MDGR committee.

This speech shall summarize major findings of the MDGR stressing the way ahead in relation to organizing the MDGR-Policy Dialogue workshops

Speech of the UNDP-RR stressing the importance and commitment to achieve the MDGs on the national, regional and global levels.

Speech of the Prime Minister.

Press conference to be held by the Head of the Planning Department and the UNDP-RR.

Supporting activities: Media representatives in the country shall be invited to the launching ceremony. It shall be announced prior to the event in local newspapers. Media coverage,



including TV, shall be secured to the event and press releases shall be formulated and distributed (one before and a second after the launching ceremony).

b. Activity # 2: Policy-level dialogue workshop, planned for 10-11 July 2003

Objectives of the Policy Dialogues:

The policy dialogues are intended to:

Disseminate the MDG/MDGRs knowledge and reports to the widest segments of relevant stakeholders, and the population at large, on the national and local levels.

Involve, towards mobilizing, in the MDG/MDGR processes all relevant stakeholders from governmental and non-governmental agencies and the private sector.

Examine outcomes of the first Syrian MDGR.

Establish basis for localization of the MDGs

Examine the basic policy and executive requirements needed for the proficient and timely achievement of the MDGs on the national and local levels.

Establish the foundations of effective linkages between the MDGs and the existing social and economic policies of the country in the most participatory manner possible.

Set the ground for the second MDGR, which should be prepared in a better and more inclusive/participatory manner.

XIII. Some envisaged activities as a follow up to the policy –level dialogue workshop

- Establishment of an MDG monitoring unit at the Central Bureau of Statistics in order to ensure that Syria's progress towards achieving MDGs is being tracked
- Development of an MDG poverty map
- Mainstreaming MDGs into all future developmental projects.