

Role of Media in Achieving Millennium Development Goals

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"The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our forefathers but on loan from our children. So we have to hand over to them at least as it was handed over to us."

- Mahatma Gandhi

Abstract: Sustainable development refers to a mode of human development in which resource use aims to meet human needs while ensuring the sustainability of natural systems and the environment, so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. Sustainable development encompasses four domains - economic, ecological, political and cultural sustainability. In order to have a sustainable world, it is very important to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The role of mass media has been phenomenal in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Today, attaining Universal Primary Education has been on the top of the agenda of every government. Today women are more empowered, there is reduction in the Child Mortality Rates and improvement in maternal health which have been possible due to the intervention of mass media. Further, media have been able to create ample awareness across the globe in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. To achieve MDGs, it is very essential to have a global partnership for development wherein developed countries contribute for the progress of developing countries. Through its preventive, curative, rehabilitative, developmental and correctional approach, mass media have become a key stakeholder contributing to move towards accomplishing the MDGs. The paper discusses on role of mass media in realizing all the eight MDGs.

Key Words: Sustainable Development, Millennium Development Goals, Mass Media, Human Development.

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INTRODUCTION

It may be little surprising to know that the first civilization in the world to collapse due to ecological factors was Sumer in Mesopotamia more than 4000 years ago. One might perhaps think that it was some natural disaster that led to the extinguishing of the Sumerian civilization. But the reality is different. In fact, it was, in a great measure, a man made catastrophe caused by the increasing salinity in the extensive irrigation channels built by the Sumers for cultivation. Historical and archaeological evidence points out that ecological factor played a crucial role in the collapse of a number of ancient civilizations like the Indus Valley, Greek, Phoenician, Roman and the Mayan. Today again, a similar possibility is in front of us.

In the present context, we cannot turn our back towards development. Development brings advantages as well as challenges. Sustainable development is the key for success. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD), which had been set up in 1983,

published a report entitled *Our Common Future*. The document came to be known as the Brundtland Report named after the Commission's Chairman, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the then Prime Minister of Norway. This document developed the guiding principles for sustainable development as it is generally understood today.

Meaning of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is defined as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The word 'sustainable' itself means something that lasts long while 'development' implies a change that is considered desirable in a society. It involves socio-economic change leading to improvement in the conditions of life (Agarwal, 2008).

The above definitions contain two key concepts within it;

- * the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given;
- * the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

Thus, sustainable development refers to a mode of human development in which resource use aims to meet human needs while ensuring the sustainability of natural systems and the environment, so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come.

Domains of Sustainability

The concept of sustainable development has in the past most often been broken out into three constituent parts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and socio political sustainability. More recently, it has been suggested that a more consistent analytical breakdown is to distinguish four domains of economic, ecological, political and cultural sustainability.

Indigenous peoples have argued, through various international forums such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Convention on Biological Diversity, that there are four pillars of sustainable development, the fourth being cultural. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001) further elaborates the concept by stating that "... cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature"; it becomes "one of the roots of development understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence". In this vision, cultural diversity is the fourth policy area of sustainable development.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** are eight international development goals that were officially established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. All 193 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve these goals by the year 2015. Mass media has played a catalytic role in ensuring the progress in Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals Report (MDG Report, 2012) stands testimony to the role of mass media in all the eight development areas:

1. Eradicating Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Extreme poverty is falling in every region. For the first time since the World Bank started to monitor poverty trends, both the number of people living in extreme poverty and the poverty rates fell in every developing region-including in sub-Saharan Africa, where rates are highest. In the developing regions, the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day fell from 47 per cent in 1990 to 24 per cent in 2008. In 2008, about 110 million fewer people than in 2005 lived in conditions of extreme poverty. The number of extreme poor in the developing regions fell from over 2 billion in 1990 to less than 1.4 billion in 2008.

2. Achieving Universal Primary Education

In the developing regions, the net enrolment rate for children of primary school age rose from 82 to 90 per cent between 1999 and 2010. However, a closer look at the data reveals that nearly all of this growth occurred between 1999 and 2004, and that progress in reducing the number of out-of-school children slowed considerably after 2004. At the same time, many of the countries facing the greatest challenges have recorded significant progress towards universal primary education. Enrolment rates of children of primary school age increased markedly in sub-Saharan Africa, from 58 to 76 per cent between 1999 and 2010. Total enrolment of children of primary school age in the region rose by more than two thirds, with 43 million more enrolled. Not only did countries succeed in reducing their relatively high out-of-school rates, they also improved their enrolment rates even as the primary school age population was growing by more than one quarter between 1999 and 2010 (28 per cent, or 31 million children).

3. Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women

Achieving parity in education is an important step toward equal opportunity for men and women in the social, political and economic domains. Driven by national and international efforts and the MDG campaign, many more of the world's children have enrolled in school at the primary level, especially since 2000. Girls have benefited the most! Progress is reflected in the gender parity index (GPI), showing the ratio between the enrolment rate of girls and that of boys. The gender parity index grew from 91 in 1999 to 97 in 2010 for the developing regions as a whole-falling within the plus-or minus 3-point margin of 100 per cent that is the accepted measure for parity. From 1999 to 2010, girls' participation in primary education, as measured by the gross enrolment ratio (ratio of girls enrolled regardless of age to all girls of primary school age) increased from 72 to 96 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and from 87 to 97 per cent in Western Asia. At the country level, 71 out of 131 countries in developing regions reporting data by sex had achieved gender parity in primary education by 2010. Boys' participation rates were higher than those of girls in 53 countries, while the opposite was true in the remaining 7 countries.

4. Reducing Child Mortality Rates

Considerable progress has been made in reducing under-five mortality since 1990. In the developing regions, the mortality rate declined by 35 per cent, from 97 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 63 in 2010. Despite population growth, the number of under-five deaths worldwide fell from more than 12 million in 1990 to 7.6 million in 2010. Five of nine developing regions show reductions in under-five mortality of more than 50 per cent from 1990 through 2010. Northern Africa already has

achieved the MDG 4 target, bringing down the child mortality rate by 67 per cent, and Eastern Asia is close, with a 63 per cent decline.

5. Improving Maternal Health

An estimated 287,000 maternal deaths occurred in 2010 worldwide, a decline of 47 per cent from 1990. Sub-Saharan Africa (with 56 per cent of these deaths) and Southern Asia (29 per cent) together accounted for 85 per cent of the global burden in 2010, with 245,000 maternal deaths between them. The number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births-the maternal mortality ratio, or MMR-was also down, from 440 in 1990 to 240 in 2010, for the developing regions as a whole. But the MMR in developing regions was still 15 times higher than in the developed regions. At the high end, sub-Saharan Africa had an MMR of 500. At the other end of the scale in developing regions, Eastern Asia had the lowest level, at 37 deaths per 100,000 live births.

6. Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

Fewer people are becoming infected with HIV, with the decline in new infections happening faster in some countries than in others. Of the 33 countries where new infections have fallen, 22 are in sub-Saharan Africa, the region most affected by the AIDS epidemic. Annual new infections in 2010- 2.7 million people, 390,000 of whom were children-were 21 per cent lower than the 1997 peak and 15 per cent lower than in 2001.

7. Ensuring Environmental Sustainability

The reduced rate of forest loss is due to less deforestation plus the establishment of new forests, as well as the natural expansion of existing forests. As a result, the net loss worldwide decreased over the last 20 years, from -8.3 million hectares per year in the 1990s to -5.2 million hectares per year in the last decade.

8. Developing a Global Partnership for Development

In 2011, net aid disbursements amounted to \$133.5 billion, representing 0.31 per cent of developed countries' combined national income. While constituting an increase in absolute dollars, this was a 2.7 per cent drop in real terms over 2010, the year official development assistance (ODA) reached its peak. Aid had been increasing steadily for more than a decade. Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) rose by 63 per cent between 2000 and the peak year, 2010. ODA has long been considered a stable source of development financing. It cushioned the immediate impact of previous financial crashes, such as the Mexican debt crisis in the early 1980s and the recession of the early 1990s.

ROLE OF MEDIA IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Media has played a pivotal role in achieving considerable progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Broadly, the role of mass media can be classified as follows:

Preventive Approach:

Media has been promoting messages to adopt "Prevention is better than cure" especially in reducing child mortality, reducing maternal mortality, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

Curative Approach:

Media propagates the curative services like medical services, health services, services related to HIV/AIDS Counseling, psycho-social and mentalhealth, psychiatric services, child guidance, child welfare services, services for the women etc.

Correctional Approach:

Media has been instrumental in disseminating correctional services be it at an individual level, family level, community level or at national and international levels. It is educating the needy people about the need for primary education, correcting abnormal behaviour and eliminating poverty and hunger.

Rehabilitative Approach:

With HIV/AIDS stigma being a taboo subject, role of media in disseminating the rehabilitative services for the affected is certainly a silver lining in their lives.

Developmental Approach:

Above all the approaches, the developmental approach adopted by media is worth mentioning. It is bringing together all the developed and developing nations together along with corporate sector to commit themselves to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Thus, socio-economic, environmental and cultural development is taking place in the society.

CONCLUSION

In summary, media should adopt the SHINE formula:

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| S | Sensitivity | Be sensitive to the needs, culture, feelings and emotions of the people |
| H | Honesty | Be honest in its approach, far from biased and judgmental reporting |
| I | Innovative | Adopt innovative technology and share novel experiments to the people |
| N | Newsworthy | Always report newsworthy news in public interest. Avoid trivialization of newsworthy news. |
| E | Empathy | Media must have human face and cover human interest angle. |

To conclude, media has been playing a pivotal role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It needs to focus more on the developmental aspects rather than focusing too much on the entertainment aspects of society. It has been creating public opinion and whenever media participates wholeheartedly, it has brought in sea change in the society. Hence, the role of media in sustainable development is very significant.

ACRONYMS:

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| GPI | : | Gender Parity Index |
| HIV | | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| MDG | : | Millennium Development Goals |
| MMR | : | Maternal Mortality Rate |
| ODA | : | Official Development Assistance |
| WECD | : | World Commission on Environment and Development |

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