MDG-F ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The MDG-F Secretariat in consultation with the various UN participating Agencies elaborated an Advocacy & Communications strategy to help the MDG-F advance its main goal of accelerating progress on the MDGs and related goals while advancing collaborative UN efforts. It is intended to guide the overall advocacy and communications approach for the MDG-Fund for the next three years (2009-2012) responding to its articulated need for:

- Engaging in advocacy on the goals and guiding principles of the MDG Fund,
- Creating and strengthening strategic alliances with key players within the UN system, civil society organizations and groups, Governments, the international development community and Spain, and
- Designing an advocacy and mobilization plan to achieve greater MDG results.

Rationale and Assumptions

The Advocacy and Communications Strategy is integrally linked to the overall framework of the MDG-F and is seen as a vital component in its efficacy. It is based on an understanding of advocacy and communications that focuses on citizen participation/empowerment and policy influence rather than on conventional uses of communication as mere methods of information dissemination.

It is important, at the outset, to state the rationale and some basic assumptions that drive this strategy.

From a preemptive and risk perspective the assumption is as follows. The Fund is currently in a nascent stage with the grant-making process still underway, but as of mid 2009, this period will be over and the Fund will be under increasing scrutiny in different arenas. Being the single largest contribution of any bilateral donor to the UN in its entire history, the success of this Fund will be a crucial determinant in the UN receiving future large grants from other donors in years to come. The Fund will be called upon by the Spanish Government, the Spanish Opposition and some parts of the Spanish media and civil society to show how a significant chunk of Spanish aid has made a difference. As we head towards 2010, which is the next formal review of the MDGs, there is bound to be a spotlight on the biggest global Fund for the MDGs i.e. the MDG-F.   Given the massive size of the Fund, critics will look for success in achieving the MDGs in the joint programmes even if for a small target population, but also for the multiplier effect of this

investment on the MDGs in the countries where the Fund operates. Although the public and the media will have lesser interest in this, inside the UN and development aid community, there will also be an interest in assessing the extent to which the Fund, through the joint programmes, has succeeded in getting the UN to work in a more cohesive manner at the country level.

So having a clear and informed position on what the Fund has achieved along the above lines is essential. Although this information will be supplied via rigorous and participatory monitoring and evaluation, it will shape what we are able to communicate.

Also critical, and from a positive and opportunity perspective, the MDG Fund offers a significant infusion of not just financial, but knowledge and advocacy capital at this critical juncture when there are 6 years left for the achievement of the MDGs. All high level events, reports and studies, have pointed to important successes that have been made, but they all repeatedly caution that the speed at which we are moving is not fast enough to reach the 2015 date.

The Fund presents an important opportunity to achieve concrete MDG results through the joint programmes but an even bigger opportunity to both sustain and scale up results through advocacy within the countries of operation. Equally, learning across countries and between the joint programmes could be a valuable knowledge base for the 2010 MDG Review to be organized by the UN, for national governments and for the wider development community.

Having a clear, conscious and articulated citizen and civil society dimension is one of the cornerstones of the advocacy and communications strategy since citizen involvement and public accountability are essential to achieving the MDGs. As Governments change it is important to continuously engage in efforts to keep the MDGs high on the political agenda and ensure that leaders at all levels (local, regional and national) are accountable to their citizens, particularly poor and excluded groups.

Strategy Framework

The MDG-F Advocacy & Communication strategy provides a guiding framework for all MDG-F interventions in this area and is articulated at a macro level intentionally so that countries can use it to define specific activities at the country level that will lead to the same overall goal and outcomes. The strategy will be implemented at the national and global level with the support and guidance of the MDG-F Secretariat.

The strategy is characterized by an integrated approach that combines techniques in advocacy, communication and social mobilization. Having a clear and common understanding of these terms will contribute to consistent implementation (for MDG-F used definitions of these terms refer to Annex One).

Overall Goal

Accelerate progress on the MDGs by raising awareness, strengthening broad- based support and action and increasing citizen engagement in MDG related policy and practice.

Key Outcomes

> ➢ **Increased awareness and support for the MDGs and the Fund both at policy and general public level.**
> ➢ **Programmes are leveraged for increased MDG results and citizen engagement in MDG-F and MDG processes is strengthened*; and***
> ➢ **Improved accountability and transparency towards all partners**

A. Increased Awareness and Support for the MDGs and the Fund

Efforts under this outcome will aim to increase awareness, advocate and mobilize support for the MDGs, using examples of Fund supported activities where applicable to give a tangible and human face to communications. Support will also be given to national advocacy and mobilization efforts that bring together several actors from civil society, government and the UN to advance the cause of the MDGs.

Outputs

❖ Establish alliances with media to regularly cover development stories/issues on MDGs and related goals

❖ Key dates and events are used to raise awareness and link the advocacy efforts of various national actors including UN, private sector, civil society and government

❖ Linkages have been made with select civil society organizations for MDG advocacy

❖ UN Interagency Group provides a platform for joint communication, advocacy and mobilization in line with One UN and MDGs

❖ Awareness materials designed (brochures, information notes, newsletters, human interest stories, TV spots, radio spots) and distributed along appropriate channels.

B. Programmes are leveraging for Increased MDG Results and Citizen Engagement in MDG-F and MDG processes is strengthened.

Activities and outputs under this outcome aim to leverage MDG-F interventions and "One UN" efforts to have greater and more sustainable impact on both sectoral policies (e.g. youth and employment, water infrastructure, culture and development, child nutrition, etc) as well as on the larger context of MDG related policy and practice. This draws on the idea of encouraging national appropriation of positive policy frameworks that are recommended through evidence from joint programme implementation ensuring that programmes aim for national impact. Specific focus will be on facilitating knowledge sharing, highlighting promising interventions and using them for advocacy and strengthening citizens' and civil societies' effective participation in MDG policy formulation and implementation.

Joint programmes should be used as entry points and as platforms to pilot participatory mechanisms of planning, implementation and monitoring, where concrete spaces of citizen participation are fostered.

Outputs

❖ Citizen groups/networks have been strengthened to have more effective participation in MDG policy and practice.

❖ Strengthened dialogue between local governments and civil society groups as it relates to JP goals and MDGs

❖ Innovative and promising cases are highlighted and used to facilitate learning, scaling up and advocacy.

❖ Wide range of partnerships has been established in support of the MDGs.

C. **Improved Accountability and Transparency Towards all Partners**

This outcome aims to increase the transparency and accountability of the MDG-F to all its partners including citizens, ensuring the latter have appropriate access to information regarding MDG-F interventions in their area and the opportunity to actively participate in these. Citizens should be informed about JPs that are implemented in their community and the intended outcomes (e.g. increased water access, employment opportunities, etc) and to the extent possible be involved in monitoring implementation. Participatory monitoring activities can be integrated into this outcome area and many creative methods can be used such as "sms" reporting on water access, citizen score cards (to report on basic services covered in their areas), among others.

Regarding other partners, accountability and transparency will relate to transmitting consistent messages and updates to partners. This will require producing information on programme interventions, impacts attained and progress stories/videos where possible from the perspective of citizens.

<u>Outputs</u>

- ❖ MDG-F identity is strengthened and it is recognized as a trusted partner.

- ❖ Transparency and accountability to citizens in joint programme target areas is strengthened

Implementation

Annex Two provides a concise summary of the strategy outlining the overall goal, outcome areas, outputs as well as several suggested activities that can be implemented to achieve the desired outcomes. This table provides a format upon which MDG-F countries can design their National Advocacy Action plans. These should be elaborated collaboratively amongst joint programmes and key counterparts including citizen groups, think tanks, NGOs etc and should be directly linked to overall national MDG related priorities. The emphasis should be on the national, with joint programmes linking their sectoral approach to the larger context.

To the extent possible the overall goal and outcomes should remain the same, although countries may choose to work on one or two of the outcomes rather than all three (noting that ideally all three will be integrated in the plan). Countries may also choose to give higher priority to outcome one in the first year and then step up other outcome efforts in other years. The idea is to plan and implement advocacy and citizen participation actions that are flexible yet point in the same overall direction.

The national Advocacy Action plan should be embedded in national MDG and related priorities. Many joint programmes have integrated awareness raising, civil society and/or advocacy components in their design and budget. These should stem from the programmes desired policy impact and complement and/or be integrated into Advocacy action plans.

The implementation of the advocacy action plans should not lead to the creation of new structures within the UN but rather, where possible, should build on capacities that already exist. The UNCT has a long established experience with advocacy and communication for development and policy change. Articulating this strategy at the national level intends to give an impetus to these efforts and to the process of UN Reform and under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator ensure that the United Nations partners and communicates collaboratively to have greater impact at the national level.

Branding

The MDG-F "brand" image and logo (illustrated below) should be used on all print and communication materials, helping to build a clear and recognizable identity for the MDG Achievement Fund. The logo has been designed to reflect the Funds focus on the MDGs, its collaborative nature under the "One UN" umbrella and the recognition of the Government of Spain contribution.

It has been agreed by the MDG-F Steering Committee consisting of the UNDP Administrator/ UNDG Chair and the Government of Spain that for the purpose of the MDG-F, that this logo replaces all individual

Agency logos and any other representation of Spanish Cooperation at the country level (including the AECID logo). The MDG-F logo therefore should not be accompanied by any other UN or Spanish Government logos. The only other logos that should be included on any printed materials are those of national/local partners such as the national (or local) governments, NGO's/networks, or others. This decision on additional logos should of course be taken at the country level in consultation and agreement with programme partners.

Until now, the MDG-F logo has only been designed on a white background and in a horizontal position as reflected above. High resolution formats can be obtained from the MDG-F Secretariat or downloaded from the Fund website for use at the country level. (http://www.undp.org/mdgf/).

Messaging

The overarching message for all communications, advocacy and mobilization interventions should be focused on eliminating poverty and achieving the MDGs by 2015. All the thematic areas that the MDG-F works in are understood both as symptoms and causes of poverty and therefore this should be the overarching message with subsidiary messages elaborated as and when needed (e.g. the right to decent work for all, climate change adaptation, water access for all, etc).

Messages should be shaped by the **what** question. What are the specific changes that are sought from a programmes or from the national MDG context? Is it an increase in budget allocated towards water access? Is it an increase in youth employment strategies? Is it a specific behavior related to child nutrition and/or breast feeding? These questions help articulate messages which should be directed towards targeted audiences that you wish to influence.

Sticking to clear, short, consistent and targeted messages that speak to the changes and people that are required to make the MDGs a reality for poor people will be instrumental in building support for overall programme and MDG-F goals.

At the tail end, when communicating about the MDG-F in general and joint programmes in particular, these should again always be framed under the overall goal of poverty eradication and MDG achievement but with specific information on the results, outcomes and/or impacts that programmes are having on the ground as they relate to:

- Improvements in the lives of the poor
- Participation of women, minorities and excluded groups
- Innovations and scaling up
- Influencing national policies and governance
- Processes of UN Reform and joint programming

- Aid effectiveness as seen in the Paris Declaration/Accra Agenda for Action
- Number of programmes that the Fund is engaged in (total, thematic, by region, etc)
- Amount of $ investments global, regional, by country, thematic window, etc.

Highlighting impacts of MDG-F interventions as they relate to the overall national MDG picture will contribute to building the Funds identity and earning support as a trusted partner and legitimate mechanism of multilateral aid.

Strategic Partnerships

Also understood as social mobilization, establishing strategic partnerships that galvanize support for the MDGs and related development goals has proven to be a powerful means of bringing about change. To the extent possible and where relevant UN advocacy efforts should seek linkages with media organizations, local governments, academia, faith groups, youth/women groups, NGOs, CSOs, citizen networks, private sector, celebrities etc mobilizing their support on the MDGs and related goals. This will give greater legitimacy to efforts (when same message is repeated by several constituents, its weight increases), increase coverage and outreach (by tapping into groups that the UN may not usually have access to or work with), avoid duplication of efforts and can be more cost-effective.

The UN Country Team should be able to draw on these strategic partnerships to gather on key dates/events and advocacy opportunities bring groups together under the overall umbrella of MDGs and poverty eradication. One such example is the yearly Stand Up Against Poverty global advocacy event that has mobilized millions of people over the past few years, providing on the one hand a concrete platform upon which to build partnerships, but also an opportunity to bring issues of development and poverty into the public eye through media. In 2008 Stand Up and Take Action saw the participation of 116 million people. This is an event that is supported by the Secretary General of the United Nations. The MDG-F encourages UNCT to participate and help mobilize participation in this event to be held October 17-19, 2009.

ANNEX ONE: Definitions

Advocacy, Communication and Social Mobilization

The lines between communication, advocacy and mobilization are inextricably linked and often overlap but they should fundamentally reinforce each other for greater impact.

Straight communication relates mainly to flows of information and is designed to create and improve knowledge amongst your target audience. This communication informs and can be oriented towards the dissemination of program objectives, implementation and results. The information that is conveyed can serve to shape perspectives and opinions about the MDGs. Strategic communication is a more targeted way of communicating with the goal of creating public awareness and response that leads to behavioural and/or policy changes.

This type of communication overlaps with advocacy which is an umbrella term used for a variety of means available for influencing outcomes (decisions) that directly affect people's lives.   Advocacy is the strategic use of information that is organized into an argument that can then be communicated through various channels to gain the acceptance of political and social leadership for a specific cause (MacKee, 1992). To be most successful, advocacy should work at two complementary levels: policy influence and citizen empowerment (World Vision, 2008) with the aim of influencing MDG policy and practice, building transparency and accountability and strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations and networks to organize and act for change (MacKee, 1992).

This dimension ties in with the concept of mobilization, which can be understood as the process of building inter-sectoral alliances to raise awareness and demand for the MDGs (WHO, 2007). Advocacy and mobilization rely on communication to reach their goals.

ANNEX TWO: MDG-F Strategy Format

	OVERALL STRATEGY GOAL		
	Accelerate progress on the MDGs by raising awareness, strengthening broad- based support and action and increasing citizen engagement in MDG related policy and practice.		
Strategy Outcomes	**Outputs**	**Indicative Activities**	**$$$**
I. Increased awareness and support for the MDGs and the Fund both at policy and general public level.			
	Media		
	• Establish alliances with media to regularly cover development stories/issues on MDGs and related goals	• Organize media field visits to programmes • Host regular informational sessions with journalists to brief them on development issues and programmes. These could be breakfasts, monthly lunches, etc. • Launch a media awards program or establish a network of development oriented journalists to stimulate journalists to cover development issues. • Negotiating media space to air news/video documentaries made by citizens involved in programs thereby encouraging different views and alternative media	
	Key dates and Events		
	• Key dates and events are used to raise awareness and link the advocacy efforts of various national actors including UN, private sector, civil society and government	• Identify key dates that can be used to bring different stakeholders together. • Participate in the Stand Up and Take Action Against Poverty mobilization campaign for 2009 using existing networks and the multiplier effect to mobilize as many people as possible to participate and use this event to articulate policy demands.	
	Citizen Engagement and Civil Society Participation		
	• Linkages have been made with select civil society organizations for MDG advocacy	• Organizations that are interested and active on MDG related issues are identified and activities are joined as and when relevant. • Participate and support events that will facilitate partnership building with relevant organizations	
	United Nations Communications Group and Coordination		
	• UN Communications Group provides a platform for joint communication, advocacy and mobilization in line with One UN and MDGs	• UN coordinates participation in key dates/events that highlight the MDGs and the work of the MDG-F in relation to these. • UNCG establishes media contacts that are shared amongst Agencies and used for engaging with media. • Strategic partnerships with media organizations are brokered to increase visibility of MDGs on media channels- e.g. through talk shows, radio/TV interviews, • UN Goodwill Ambassadors are brought together to speak out on MDGs issues- other advocates /champions can also be identified to rally for MDGs.	
	Public Outreach and Communication		
	• Awareness materials designed (brochures, information notes, newsletters, human	• Agree upon key messages and designs and print materials that will help in raising awareness and stimulating action on programme goals and MDGs These should be done in accordance with MDG-F	

		interest stories, TV spots, radio spots) and distributed along appropriate channels.	branding guidelines. • Identify local radios, TV channels, newspapers, magazines etc that are most effective in disseminating the message at local, regional, national level. These should take into consideration means that reach remote/rural areas.	
Strategy Outcomes	**Outputs**		**Indicative Activities**	**$$$**
II. Programmes are leveraged for increased MDG results and citizen engagement in MDG-F and MDG processes is strengthened				
	Support to citizen engagement and civil society			
	• Citizen groups/networks have been strengthened to have more effective participation in MDG policy and practice.		• Identify and reach out to relevant citizen groups and CSOs to determine what their current participation is and how it can be strengthened. Tapping into existing relationships between distinct UN Agencies and citizen groups could be a starting point as well as any existing mapping. • Ensure that marginalized groups such as religious and ethnic minorities are included in efforts to strengthen effective participation with particular attention to women. • Organize workshop and open forums at the local and/or national level to discuss key development /MDG priorities and channels to increase effective citizen participation. These efforts should result in concrete action points or policy papers that can be channeled to the relevant decision makers and used for lobbying and advocacy. • Link CSO with Universities and/or think tanks to conduct training and/or other activities that can help organizations strategically orient their work. Larger more active CSOs may also help to strengthen smaller ones. • Train CSOs to use video making, photography, storytelling, and other communication tools to report on local realities, solutions, progress, obstacles and to make their voice heard. These communication products should be used to raise awareness among general public and decision makers. (This will require identifying candidates and linking with trainers to train them on using these mediums).	
	Support to Local Governments			
	• Strengthened dialogue between local governments and civil society groups as it relates to JP goals and MDGs		• Ensure that regular contact and communication is established with Mayors/local governments and institutions putting them at the forefront of JP interventions and MDG localization. • Discuss and identify existing and new ways to increase citizen participation in local policy. • Use JP interventions as an opportunity to open neutral spaces for dialogue between citizens and government on key issues. These could be open forums.	
	Documentation and knowledge sharing			
	• Innovative and promising cases are highlighted and used to facilitate learning, scaling up and advocacy.		JP examples are identified and documented through multi-media to interesting, appealing and effective case studies.	

	Partnerships		
	• Wide range of partnerships has been established in support of the MDGs.	• Identify other actors working on MDGs and related development goals and establish contact to determine ways to come together at key moments (e.g. events, mobilizations, media inductions, etc.). Use other existing networks to advance the development agenda such as faith based organizations, private sector associations, celebrities, artists, etc.	
Strategy Outcomes	**Outputs**	**Indicative Activities**	**$$$**
III. Improved accountability and transparency towards all partners			
	Branding and Identity		
	• MDG-F identity is strengthened and it is recognized as a trusted partner.	• Ensure that all printed materials and events related to the MDG-F are branded according to the Fund's guidelines- using MDG-F logo to represent both the Spanish Government and all the UN Agencies.	
	Citizen Engagement and Accountability		
	• Accountability to citizens in pilot areas is strengthened	• Ensure that key CSOs are informed about the intent of the JPs, the resources that will be channeled towards their community and who will be responsible for the implementation, giving an opportunity for their participation including potentially taking responsibility for implementing certain elements of programme. • Involve citizen groups in the monitoring and evaluation of programmes and in reporting on the status of development goals in their locality. This can be done through participatory video, storytelling, shadow reports, community assessments, citizen report cards, etc.	