



Making the EU's MDG initiative a reality

Opportunities for CSO engagement in the planning and implementation

Summary

In September 2010 the EU committed € 1 billion to support activities in ACP countries that would make a real impact on achieving the MDGs relating to malnutrition, child health, maternal health, water and sanitation. The planning process for the use of this € 1 billion is now taking place.

It will be implemented through the existing country strategy frameworks and build on existing programmes and activities. However the Commission envisages that it may be difficult to identify viable initiatives in many countries and will be open to looking at all potential options.

As a result there are opportunities for CSO and NGO implemented programmes and projects relating to these specific MDGs to potentially benefit from the initiative. The period during which such potential programmes/ projects are identified and included in proposals put forward by ACP governments will run until **15th June 2011**.

Introduction

At last September's UN summit reviewing the MDGs, the European Commission President José Manuel Barosso announced a €1 billion commitment from the EU for the implementation of the MDGs. The planning for this commitment is now being taken forward. Over the next few weeks the EU will work with governments and other stakeholders in developing countries that are part of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group to define how these funds will be used.

The funds can only be directed towards ACP countries because it is being drawn from unallocated funds within the 10th European Development Fund. This will include resources from the EDF that were being held for "unforeseen needs" (envelope B of the EDF), as well as from the reallocation of resources not yet utilized (as part of the Mid term reviews - MTRs) and from the allocation for countries that have not yet ratified the revised Cotonou Agreement who cannot therefore benefit from the EDF¹.

¹ 77 September 2010, blog by Simon Stocker, Development Portal.eu, <http://www.developmentportal.eu/wcm/blog-by-simon-stocker.html>

Parameters for the use of the € 1 billion

The EU is targeting the €1 billion to actions that:

- Have a direct linkage with either MDGs 1c (malnutrition), 4 (child health), 5 (maternal health), or 7c (water and sanitation). These have been selected as they have been identified as the most off track MDGs.
- € 300 million of the €1 billion will go to 19 countries judged as “good performers” following the mid term review of the MTRs. These are countries that are considered to have met criteria on “good governance”, and on the current economic and social situations within the country. The funds allocated to these 19 countries could add an additional 20% of their initial allocation under the 10th EDF.
- € 700 million will be available to all ACP countries, including the 19 good performers, which submit acceptable and viable proposals that meet established criteria for the use of these funds.
- The countries that can potentially make proposals on using these funds are the following:
 - The 19 “good performers” (which can draw from both the € 300 million and the €700 million):
 - Other eligible ACP countries (which can only draw from the € 700 million):

Procedure for allocating funds

The allocation of funds will be made on the basis of proposals submitted by ACP governments of eligible countries. Such proposals have to be submitted by **15 June 2011**. The preparation of the proposals should be pursued in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement, which in principle makes provision for the involvement of a range of stakeholders in the preparation of the proposals, including non state actors and local authorities. For the EU the allocation of these funds is being pursued in the framework of the commitment of funds for ACP countries for the period 2012 – 2013.

The primary involvement of such stakeholders should therefore take place in the period up to 15 June. First, policy dialogues on the progress of the MDGs are to be organized at country level. National governments have to take the lead in this phase but relevant stakeholders must be convened at relevant meetings; namely the EU embassies, other donors, local authorities, national parliaments and civil society organizations. The second phase of the process focuses on the identification of the interventions to be financed that relate to the MDGs mentioned above. The proposals should be worked out by governments with potential support from the EC.

Once proposals have been received by the Commission and the European External Action service (EEAS), they will be assessed according to the guidelines sent to the EU delegations. Assessment, as stated in the guidelines, is expected to be completed by 30 June 2011. Initial conclusions will be presented to the EU’s member states at the end of 2011. Once the allocations have been adopted a process of discussion will take place with relevant ACP governments which should lead to the signing of contracts.

It is likely that the initial disbursement of funds will only start towards the end of 2012.

Implementation

The Commission, as already specified, is seeking to allocate the € 1 billion to programmes/projects related to the four most off track MDGs. This will be done within the framework of existing country strategies and in principle, no changes to these strategies or the country's focal sectors are envisaged. The only modification to the existing National Indicative Programmes (NIP) will be with respect to financial allocations.

The Commission's assessment of the proposals will be based on criteria such as relevance and clarity of the proposal, impact maximization and feasibility, and efficiency. The general idea is to identify high impact projects/programmes and to allocate funds to targeted sectors within a limited number of countries instead of trying to cover the entire ACP group.

According to the guidelines sent to the EU delegations, the funds should be allocated taking into account the existing Commission's programmes and mechanisms for aid delivery. Where there are viable proposals that meet the criteria for the use of the funds, and which are seen as making a potential impact for the achievement of the specific MDGs identified, the Commission will consider making allocations to projects and programmes of EU member states or multilateral donors. In all instances there is potential for including proposals that would increase the capacity of NGO activities relating to the targeted MDGs and are already supported through government, the Commission, an EU member state programme or a multilateral organization.

Delivering the money through Budget Support (BS - general or sector budget support) is also envisaged in countries where BS has proven to be efficient. In the case of fund allocation through General Budget Support (GBS), specific indicators will be set up to ensure the agreed results are being achieved.

Conclusion

While the EU's commitment of the € 1 billion is not additional funding (as it comes from the EDF), it does increase the focus on the MDGs and this should be welcomed. The process to define the use of these funds provides opportunities for civil society to promote some re-orientation of strategies within ACP countries and to promote dialogue around the importance of addressing these key targets. The best opportunity is when the proposals are being prepared – i.e. until the middle of June 2011, but there will be other moments during the process in the following months when civil society can promote further dialogue.

The most significant opportunity for NGOs could be in identifying how existing activities being implemented by NGOs and other civil society organizations could benefit, either to increase the effectiveness of existing programmes and projects in the areas identified (i.e. malnutrition, child health, maternal health, water and sanitation), or by extending their scope. This would require a rapid identification of potential projects/programmes for inclusion in any proposal made by an ACP government, and a process of engagement with the government, EU delegation, EU member states and/or multilateral organization with whom this is being implemented.

As recognized within the Cotonou partnership Agreement, it is important that all development actors, including ACP civil society organizations, get involved in the consultation process at national level if they want to influence its outcome and reflect the notion of development ownership. Moreover, as the initiative focus is restricted in terms of targeted policy sectors but also in terms of allocated funds (concentration on a yet undefined but limited number of ACP countries), it will be crucial to contribute in defining good strategies within a given country if it wishes to benefit from the initiative.

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