

Chapter 1

Tracking Implementation

Amita Singh and Anbumozhi Venkatachalam

This book highlights the need for attending to smaller governance initiatives and practices which have successfully withstood the turbulence of the times and delivered goods and services to people. Governments belligerently adopt mega-reforms which remain underperformed due to their inability to resonate with the requirements of local people. The contributors have analysed some successful practices from across the region of Asia-Pacific and suggested ways in which such community led initiatives could involve governments, universities and NGOs to upscale and replicate them as the deadline to achieve MDGs approaches, and country governments face a performance test in United Nations.

At the time of writing this introduction to the present volume, the world is less than 3 years away from its deadline of 2015 for halving the world's population trapped in abject poverty. This is the most prioritised first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) which on achievement will usher in a world free of poverty, hunger and disease. It also directs nations towards an increasingly just and accountable system of governance with stronger institutional ability for programme implementation as they progress towards MDGs.

In September 2000, 189 countries resolved to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. These eight goals are interrelated, and to achieve them in isolation of the other is impossible. It is this entangled nature of MDGs that the Asia-Pacific countries have demonstrated varying achievement graphs in poverty reduction, health, education, gender disparity

A. Singh (✉)
Centre for the Study of Law and Governance,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India
e-mail: amita.singh3@gmail.com

A. Venkatachalam
Asian Development Bank Institute, Tokyo, Japan
e-mail: vanbumozhi@adbi.org

and environment. The present volume encapsulates country-based studies which are comparable and indicate the possibility of replication under certain conditions.

The MDGs are an expression of strong commitment by the countries to inclusive and sustainable growth. They offer a set of concrete targets that can be used to assess the quality of economic development and integrity of poverty eradication strategies. Even though critics¹ disagree with the targets and the fixed deadlines for achieving them, yet the MDGs are noteworthy in creating a lowest common denominator of progress to be achieved by all UN member states.

Amongst the subregions of the Asia-Pacific region, the greatest progress has been in Southeast Asia, which has already achieved 11 out of the 21 development indicators² and is on track for another four. Except on forest cover and carbon dioxide emission, Southeast Asia was more or less on track. Although many countries have achieved significant progress in reaching MDGs, some countries face great challenges in addressing the issues related to education, health and environment. Not surprisingly, much progress has been made by the booming People's Republic of China (PRC), India, Indonesia and Malaysia. These four fastest economies of the region have reduced the number of people living in 'absolute poverty'. The battle against disease, the sixth MDG goal has been especially encouraging. Asian percentage of people living with communicable and non-communicable disease has stabilised since 2000, though country reports indicate that the overall number of people living with HIV and TB are increasing especially in India. The MDGs have also been credited for reaching out to enhance capabilities of the disadvantaged or disempowered groups. When countries signed onto the MDGs, they agreed to work to lift the living standards of all people, particularly women and least advantaged.

Despite the best of intentions and advances made, the policy environment remains disappointing in many countries. Country reports and regional studies indicate that most Asian nations will not meet all the targets in 2015 (Heilbut 2009). Advances in fight against poverty, hunger, environmental degradation and diseases have begun to slow as a result of the global economic crisis, job losses and governance challenges. Corruption and weak governance in general undermines pace of poverty reduction and hinders the attainment of health-related MDG goals.

¹There has also been a scathing criticism of MDGs. Samir Amin the economist writes, 'while commendable the goals are vague, "ideological cover" for western neo-liberals and redolent of "pious hope".' (Special Report, "Rating Asia's Progress", Development Asia, Oct–Dec. 2009)

²To enable monitoring and objective performance evaluation of the progress towards MDGs leading experts from UN, OECD, IMF and World Bank agreed to set 18 targets and 48 technical indicators to the 8 MDGs. i.e.; Goal 1 is to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty. This is divided into two targets, first, to halve between 1990 and 2015 the number of people below \$1 a day. Second target is to halve between 1990 and 2015 the number of people who suffer from hunger. The indicators for achieving the first target are, (1) proportion of population below \$1 (1993PPP), (2) Poverty Gap Ratio (3) Share of poorest quintile in national consumption. The indicators for the second target are, (1) prevalence of under five underweight children (2) proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption. (55/2 Millennium Declaration in the 8th General Assembly Plenary Meeting, 8 Sept. 2000; UN Millennium Project 2005)

Poor governance carries both social cost and real economic cost, and it is the poor and the vulnerable who inevitably bear the brunt. Funding gaps are evident for programmes needed to improve maternal health, the MDG goal towards which least progress has been made. Developing countries have had a major reduction in donor funding. The ability of most Asian countries to finance development programmes adequately may be in jeopardy. Salil Shetty, the director of the UN Millennium Campaign, laments that the overseas development assistance in the last 50 years for development has been a meagre US \$2 trillion as compared to US \$18 trillion given in the last 1 to bail out financial companies from their mess (Heilbuth 2009).³ The social upheavals in the form of ‘London Protests’, ‘Occupy Wall Street’ or ‘Occupy Boston’ indicate the mood of people ready to rampage the unjust institutions of decision making. Therefore, the success of community-based entrepreneurial models, such as the Kerala model of development, which suggests better utilisation of public resources on the principles of decentralisation, harnessing community efforts for local empowerment and educational revitalisation for disadvantaged could be a good governance practice to replicate elsewhere with suitable modifications. Most chapters of the present volume suggest that many MDG initiatives in the Asia-Pacific require a bottom-up approach involving grassroots and local community structures and are often encouraged by public service deliveries and governmental aspirations for e-governance. Studies indicate that further decentralisation and creation of market cooperatives or small private enterprises based upon cooptation⁴ are more suitable for resuscitating failed poverty reduction strategies.

The region of South Asia has the largest concentration of the poor in the world as it supports 22% of world population with just 2% of world production which it is able to generate. This poorest region of the Asia-Pacific also has the highest youth illiteracy which is above 23% for males and 40% for females resulting into non-implementation of health programmes, increased corruption of implementing administrators and waste of public money. The various studies also indicated the pathetic and patchy achievement graph of Asia-Pacific region. While the region is constituted of 18 economies, it includes the five most populous and poor regions such as Bangladesh, People’s Republic of China (PRC), India, Indonesia and Pakistan. China has the best achievement results as it has reduced poverty of those living on USD 1.25 a day to as low as 16%. This is followed by Pakistan (23%), Indonesia (29%), India (42%), and Bangladesh (50%). The five economies with the largest poverty gap ratios are Nepal (19.7), Uzbekistan (15.0), Bangladesh (13.1), Lao PDR (12.1) and India (10.8). These economies will find it especially hard to

³ Ibid p. 9.

⁴ Cooptation is a kind of cultural appropriation when subcultures replace a settled way of living and transacting in society. Cooptation is a strong theme in the literature that looks at developing countries (Tandon 1989; Najam 2003; Fisher 1998). Third sector organisations have a long and illustrious track record of influencing (i.e. coopting) government policy to reflect their interests.

meet the MDG poverty target thus straining and loosing out on efforts of health departments which are investing in programmes for making health more affordable and accessible.⁵

MDGs occupy much of the contemporary governance design and direction in the Asia-Pacific. The principles set in the *The Paris Declaration*, of March 2005, would primarily target poverty reduction through institutional improvements, mutual accountability of actors and corruption control, reliance upon local systems, appropriate simplification of procedures and measurement of results. There is fervent activity going within countries on speculations about progress and the reliability of strategies which are being adopted to attain the targets. These countries are undergoing a period of frantic nervous activity by formulating new programmes for livelihood generation and experimenting on their efficacies. The flow of wealth, service industry and manufacturing units from the developed countries to Asia-Pacific region has created increased confidence in these governments about improved possibility of achieving the MDGs yet the results present a different scenario. Governance is neither apolitical nor a treatise on public finance; hence, the balance tilts in favour of the more consolidated vested interests. Governments look towards the nearer electoral outcomes rather than sustainable gains which may have long gestation periods. Thus most administrative structures created to facilitate service delivery have an inbuilt tendency to deviate from the new policy demands emanating from the commitments for MDGs. It is due to the embedded influences which direct the way governance functions that development in the Asia-Pacific region is too uneven, sluggish and in some countries regressive. It is more feasible to innovate implementation methods, reduce extraneous controls in decision making, build local capacity to decide and enhance fund management skills and training.

The chapters of the present volume suggest that the state is not an isolated factor in approaching MDGs singlehandedly. Some of the most successful governance initiatives or the so-called Best Practices in the Asia-Pacific have been the ones where governments have stepped backwards to accommodate new strategies, programmes and techniques initiated by non-state actors or local communities. The transformation of Asia-Pacific is claiming the wisdom of smaller actors such as local NGOs and indigenous communities since the pursuit of public administration reforms in this region has never been a straight forward process (Cheung 2005). The process of indigenisation of reform initiatives in this region is likely to create a base for a more appropriate alternative to Anglo-American or Eurocentric approaches. Asian values have since long been a clarion call of political leaders who have passionately transformed their countries. During the 1990s, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew or Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamed has generously indulged into the Asian values discourse to motivate, mobilise and achieve social cohesion as these political leaders knew too well that the wealth creation programmes in this region can be accepted

⁵ Asia-Pacific Regional Report, "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an Era of Global Uncertainty"

2009/10, ESCAP, ADB, UNDP, 9–37.

and supported only if they are able to generate respect for traditions along with social cohesiveness. As Gray (1994:192) rightly explains that 'market institutions are viewed instrumentally, as a means to wealth creation and social cohesion, not ideologically, as ends in themselves.' The crises wrecked Asia-Pacific of the 1970s, and the 1980s has enormous embedded energy as the four tiny dragons South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong have shown as progenitors of 'the East Asian Miracle' (World Bank 1993). Asian values are generated through cultural and communitarian embeddedness of reform initiatives. Sheridan (1999:2-3) suggests that 'though these Asian values have an anti-Western tinge in the sense that they are always defined in contrast with the West, but that is not really what drives them either. They are much more to do with an internal Asian debate about the nature of the good life, about regional community, about the dynamics of modernisation, about whether modernisation means Westernisation, about the civic dimensions of life, about the reconciliation of indigenous traditions with new cosmopolitan dynamics and about the challenges of globalisation.'

These values have dispersed versatility of approaches, diversity of structures and a multiplicity of actors in driving the wheels of development and progress towards the achievement of MDGs.

The contributors to this volume have captured the above mentioned diversities and distinctions in their analysis of governance initiatives where communities have shown the way forward. Various local level experiments have been evaluated and examined, and their impact is studied in close approximation to the commitment to MDGs. The book has one detailed country case study of Malaysia which has successfully achieved many MDGs in contrast to several others in the region which are trailing behind. The rest of the book has highlighted successful governance initiatives and the neglected areas of appropriate leadership in e-governance and university education to resonate with communities and neighbourhood. A study also suggests the need for upscaling the localised practices to achieve faster progress towards MDGs.

The country case study of Malaysia by Shamsulbahriah Ku Ahmad and Norma Mansoor investigates Malaysian progress towards MDGs in their study 'Narrowing Disparities via the New Economic Model (NEM): Is Malaysia Set to Excel Beyond its MDGs Targets'. Malaysia is one of the fast achievers in the region yet as authors indicate that the need to address issues relating to ethnicity, gender, vulnerable groups and the rural urban divide in the New Economic Transformation Model, and Vision 2020 is a governance imperative. Nonetheless, Malaysia's recently announced Government Transformation Programme, the Economic Transformation Programme, the New Economic Model and the Tenth Malaysia Plan which aim to guide Malaysia in achieving Vision 2020 are set to consider lessons and weaknesses of previous policy instruments. The case study of Malaysian government initiatives establishes the need for narrowing disparities and dispersing the benefits of growth to all sections of society. The key theme of narrowing disparities as outlined in second document of NEAC report on the NEM addressing the needs of the bottom 40% of households and reducing income disparity among others are testimonies to Malaysia's continued commitment to ensure that all Malaysians benefit from growth and economic progress as the nation approaches the MDG deadline.

Eduardo T. Gonzalez in 'The scaling-up process and health MDGs in the Philippines' suggests that unless upscaling of implementation is attended to, the country's 2015 MDG health target is unlikely to be fully met. This is equally true for other governance initiatives as upscaling and effective replication has never been a sincere priority of most governments. The paper makes an important suggestion on effectively integrating the centrally sponsored and the locally initiated health programmes. This implies that centrally based, top-down governance and locally driven, bottom-up governance is considered complements rather than substitutes. But pilot projects seldom spread geographically and centrally directed health programmes have reached bureaucratic exhaustion. The key to unlocking this dilemma is to reinvent the scaling-up process: in the process of reaching out, centrally directed health programmes should be 'localised' down without loss of coherence, and local initiatives should be scaled up without loss of context.

The concern with implementation processes of programmes to achieve MDGs has been one of the prime concerns of policymakers in the Asia-Pacific. The uneven and iniquitous development and the social and linguistic fragmentation and disparities obstruct and slow down most initiatives. The impact of climate change has further added to the already difficult times for governance. The contributors to this book have brought out valuable suggestions out of their country experiences which indicate a change from conventional approaches to a more vibrant and participatory system which is able to provide greater elasticity and decisional freedom to local communities, while at the same time ensuring continuous social security against poverty, exclusion and disease during transitional times.

Two papers on climate change-related concerns and solutions suggest changed roles for the private and public sector. First paper of Md Khalid Hossain and Sharif N. As-Saber in 'Healthcare governance and climate change adaptation: A pharmaceutical industry perspective' attempts to understand the interlinkages of health care and climate change within which the role of pharmaceutical industries gains prominence. As climate change adaptation entails both risk aversion and opportunity utilisation, it may, therefore, be considered useful to study the pharmaceutical industry in relation to its exposure to climate change, and subsequent adaptation measures to the demands of MDGs. Second paper by Suman Sharma has adopted a political economy approach to suggest both international and regional action in governance studies or a South Asian initiative in the area of poverty, health and climate change. She points out that the virtual failure of global and regional efforts due to prolonged, action-less deliberations, lack of political will to accept the inevitable and change course for the survival of humankind has been holding back development and progress towards MDGs in the region. Poverty reduction is also dependent on the governmental ability to prevent the sinking of millions of poor in poverty due to high cost of health care. Health-care financing has so far remained a neglected area in most studies on MDGs despite its overwhelming control of inclusive governance in Asia.

Rumki Basu, Sheila and Neha Rai revisit health-care financing for the poor and highlight the Government of India's recent initiative on providing security and support to the disadvantaged sections through health insurance. Basu's 'Interrogating the

PPP Model in Health Insurance’, highlights the need for caution in making use of private companies in the health insurance sector. With the introduction of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) in April 2008, vulnerability and marginalisation has been reduced as it is the first government social sector scheme to embrace a business model of profit. National health accounts data (2010) reveal that the government sector (centre, state and local) together accounted for only 20% of all health expenditures and 78% took the form of out-of-pocket payments – one of the highest percentages in the world. Poverty reduction exercise is set at naught without health insurance. Sheila and Neha Rai look into the RSBY initiative from its multidimensional outreach to rural areas incorporating IT networks and the active participation of state and insurance companies.

The chapters by Emilia Pedrosa Pacoy and Isaias S. Sealza have suggested ways to obviate gender disparities and bring in a more gender just development and service delivery systems. Pacoy in ‘Local Innovations in Service Delivery: Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Davao City, Philippines’ writes about the need for advocacy through gender-responsive budgeting. Her paper addresses two basic issues: one, how is the 5% gender budget utilised for gender and development? And two, does the mandate of allocating this budget manifests the effort to ease gender gaps and improve women participation in development? Further on engendering programmes to achieve MDGs Isaias’s in ‘women empowerment through LLP in southern Philippines’ demands greater community networking for women. Learning and livelihood project (LLP) chose to use informational isolation and powerlessness as entry points for development intervention to help women and to lessen gender inequality. With the idea that women could be empowered via literacy and numeracy trainings, LLP promotes women in project planning and implementation for better transparency in community development works.

More suggestions arrive on the need for involving communities in implementation through a more knowledgeable interaction. Martadha and Raudah Danila in ‘Revisiting the Role of Universities in Achieving MDGs’ lament that much of the action towards the achievement of MDGs escapes the synergy required in making university education relevant and impactful. The sterility of degree-based education and the creation of ivory tower intellectuals is not the role which any university can boast about in present times. Education which resonates with public action is the most important contribution of universities. This paper therefore, attempts to explore Malaysia’s public universities’ role in helping its surrounding community. Using stakeholder’s theory and corporate social responsibility’s model as a framework of study, the study argues that public universities should move beyond its traditional mission of education and research and instead be more sensitive to and aware of the needs of its local community. This collaborative effort in Malaysia has increased the accessibility of ICT among rural communities, strengthened e-governance and expanded the base of people’s participation which would not have been possible without the active roles of academia. Mervin Gascon goes further on the roles universities are expected to play to suggest in ‘Community-University Partnerships for Improved Governance’ that the gap between theory and practice can be bridged oriented curriculum for BS in Public Administration (BSPA). This effort hopes

to produce public administration professionals who are equipped with the necessary research skills and knowledge. Research as a capability is believed to improve the quality of local governance by ensuring that decision making at all levels of the government must be based on the real dimensions and state of things in the community.

Chamila Jayashantha and Wijekoon, in 'Regulatory Mapping in Local Governance and The Economic Governance Index in Sri Lanka', emphasise the need for developing administrative and local capacities for creating holistic access towards MDGs. In Sri Lanka, the role of local authority is important today more than ever after the government aligned its development agenda with United Nation's Millennium Development Goals and implemented Local Economic Governance (LEG) programme. The Asia Foundation (TAF) carried out Economic Governance Index (EGI) study in 19 local authorities to understand government-influenced constraints to economic growth at the local level. Based on the findings, TAF introduced regulatory mapping to synergise public and private actions. However, any amount of governance reforms may fail to work in the absence of a meaningful leadership. Awang Anwaruddin has explored the contours of 'leadership' in 'e-leadership for e-government in Indonesia' as a dimension which had occupied the management thinkers for long but has not been studied appropriately in the politico-administrative studies. As administration works within the framework prescribed by the country's political system, the impact of political leadership has strong ramifications for implementation. e-Governance programmes have been failing in the absence of leadership. The Nepal experience in e-governance is an indispensable study by Ishtiaq Jamil and Tek Nath Dhakal titled, 'Benefits and Challenges of E-Governance for Service Delivery in Nepal'. It brings out the socio-technological framework of support which came from e-governance processes in Nepal which enhanced accountability and performance but could not be inclusive.

One important fall out of the present decade is the whiff of confidence which has seeped into local communities. These communities have become new centres of implementation and capacity building for progress. Three papers have studied local community-based initiatives which have worked well in regions where the government was either not interested or did not have the capacity to deliver. Rabindranath Bhattacharyya in his work on the 'Impact of NGCSOs in developing capability of the low-income people in South Australia' unleash the latent energy of people so far trapped within rigid local structures. On the basis of arguments given in the text, the author concludes that NGCSOs deliver immense services to the isolated communities for coping up with the challenges posed over them by their economic position. Sylvia Yambem in 'From Reinvention to Communitization: The Himalayan Indian State of Nagaland Shows the Way', suggests that despite being conflict ridden and economically backward, communities in this border state of Nagaland joined hands with the government to tackle the problem of failing public service standards. Nagaland's communitisation initiative thus emphasises upon the significance of the state in public service reforms. Irina Ningthoujam in 'Reaching out to the people: The role of Leikai-Club in the state of Manipur (India) in achieving the MDGs' has brought out an analysis of a

unique community grouping or a club which became a successful partner in public service delivery. The role of Leikai-Club in the state of Manipur has mobilised community support and patronage to implement local empowerment programmes in places where the state led administration had been quite indifferent, demotivated, corrupt and ineffective.

The last section 'Thinking About Reaching Out: Analytical Approaches To Develop Feasible Projects' is an epilogue by RFI Smith on the process of implementation which at best is an inclusive, time bound and cost-effective exercise generating wealth and empowerment of people's institutions. The paper proposes that logic models can help managers and staff think about opportunities to implement development goals by improving focus, accountability, feasibility and targeting. In this analysis, lack of focus and accountability aggravates shortfalls. Targeted interventions backed by financial and political resources make a difference. Approaches to improve targeting therefore deserve high priority in the Asia-Pacific progress towards MDGs.

Conclusion

Most contributors to this volume believe that the Asia-Pacific's growth momentum must be fostered and further strengthened. Yet, most MDG-related policy interventions are silent on the mechanisms of an intervention; these need to be outlined in order to trigger implementation processes beyond a particular context. A meaningful convergence of planned activities within a holistic framework of governance is one option which is difficult to formulate but is the only option which can facilitate speed and progress towards MDG deadlines. Also, by promoting regional cooperation, including sharing good policy practices, governance models, efforts to increase intraregional trade and investments in services, to build resilience to external shocks can be made part of convergence planning.

Greater political will and leadership is required to attain a transparent and accountable delivery of public services. The formulated programmes for implementing developmental policies and plans are likely to fail the destination MDGs if the focus is diverted from pro-poor and excluded groups to serve the powerful lobbies and corporates. This would entail that programmes need to prioritise expenditures on the MDGs, ensure accountability and transparency in managing public money and prioritise domestic resource mobilisation. Countries and states that have made good progress towards MDGs have shown strong leadership and competent administrative systems which have not only collaborated with civil society groups but in turn have trained them to participate more meaningfully in the implementation process. In conclusion, MDGs have united the Asia-Pacific governments to look beyond their petty historical disputes and concentrate their attention to their sociocultural capabilities in overcoming the bane of poverty, hunger and disease.

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