



United Nations Development Programme

PRESS RELEASE

UNDP Chief Helen Clark meets Indian Prime Minister

UNDP-India to explore ways to expand and deepen partnership in India and globally

New Delhi, 11 March 2010: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Helen Clark met with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the last day of her five-day official visit to India. They discussed how UNDP could enhance its partnership with India to foster human development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals globally.

Few countries have embraced the human development approach as strongly as India. India has produced a series of influential national, state, district, and municipal-level human development reports. With UNDP support 21 Indian states have published human development reports and 80 district level human development reports are underway.

“Local governments are now using disaggregated human development indices to allocate local budgets to address disparities in human development. Efforts like these to localize development goals are especially important in a country as large and diverse as India, where challenges and opportunities vary sharply across geographic areas and communities” said the UNDP Administrator.

“UNDP’s partnership with India in the 21st century should also have a global dimension. India has many experiences to share and technologies available to assist other developing countries to meet their development challenges.” said Helen Clark speaking at a symposium on ‘Millennium Development Goals and Human Development in India; Achievement and Challenges’.

With support from UNDP, Rwanda is engaging with India to learn from its experience of the Green Revolution. In Guinea Bissau, India is introducing solar power for rural electrification with assistance from UNDP. Lessons have also been shared between India and Brazil to expand access to low-cost HIV/AIDS treatment with UNDP assistance. UNDP is a significant partner with India in delivering development initiatives in Afghanistan.

“Building on these experiences, UNDP looks forward to taking its relationship with India to a new level of engagement in South-South cooperation” added Helen Clark.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), the world’s largest “cash for work” scheme that guarantees rural households in India with 100 days of manual work if they come forward to volunteer, is an example of the knowledge and experience that India could export to other developing countries for transformational change.

During her visit to India Clark went to Bhilwara District in Rajasthan accompanied by Union Minister for Rural Development C. P. Joshi to see the implementation of NREGS a programme which fights poverty in India by providing employment for those who want it.

In Bhilwara Helen Clark saw at first hand the innovations that UNDP is collaborating on with the Ministry of Rural Development under the NREGS . These include: ways to improve transparency, develop skills and literacy of workers, promote financial inclusion, and create knowledge networks for action research to find new innovations to bring a human development dimension to the programme. While there, she visited a water conservation work site and discussed new projects which allow for workers to receive wages through fingerprint technology. A simple mobile based SMS system also enables workers to access information just by sending an SMS.

“There are very many exciting aspects to this scheme, but most exciting of course is the benefit it can bring to women, men, and families,” said Clark. “We hope by working 100 days per year, there will be more money for food for the family, more money for health care, and more money for people to be able to support themselves.” Afterwards, she discussed the programme with local women who had been elected representatives in the district.

The country also faces challenges to achieve the MDGs, including reducing infant and maternal mortality, increasing access to basic sanitation and addressing disparities - such as those between rich and poor, urban and rural, men and women, social groups, and ethnic communities. UNDP has been assisting the national authorities with gender budgeting, and supporting women’s participation in local government. UNDP also works closely with India on issues of energy efficiency, renewable energy, and efforts to combat land degradation and deforestation. UNDP will continue to work closely with India as it seeks to promote its own human development and meet the MDGs.

In Delhi, on International Women’s Day, Helen Clark released the latest Asia Pacific Human Development Report which focuses on women and gender equality in the presence of Member, Planning Commission Syeda Hameed. The Report, *Power Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific* explores three key areas —economic power, political decision-making and legal rights— to analyse what holds women back, and how policies and attitudes can be changed to foster a climb toward gender equality. Asia, the Report asserts, is standing at a cross-road and by putting the right policies in place now, countries in the region can achieve positive change.

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