



# Sustainability watch

A Southern Civil Society Network

## MDGS e-Monitor Newsletter

An electronic Lobbying & Advocacy Newsletter for Zimbabwe CSOs working on MDGs

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**ABOUT MDGs e-Monitor**

The MDGs e-Monitor is devoted to critical analysis and discussion of the Millennium Development Goals, with particular emphasis on Goals 1, 7 and 8. It also links the reader to other useful electronic and print resources by CSOs and Media locally, regionally and internationally so as to stimulate debate on developmental issues.

## WELCOME!!

Welcome to the first edition of the electronic SusWatch Newsletter! SusWatch News is a monthly newsletter devoted to critical analysis and discussion of the Millennium Development Goals, with particular emphasis on Goals 1, 7 and 8.

But this does not mean the door will be shut to other pertinent issues such as health, education, gender, education and other issues with a bearing on the achievement of the MDGs. To this end, the MDGs e-Monitor Newsletter welcomes the exchange of ideas and experiences from all disciplines and viewpoints and from different stakeholders ranging from civil society, policymakers, UN agencies and grassroots communities.

It also aims at complementing government's efforts towards meeting the MDGs by commenting on various policy issues that are likely to impact on MDGs attainment.

Stakeholders wishing to take part in this dialogue are invited to comment on articles published in the newsletter and contribute articles for possible publication. They can do so by contacting the publishers at [shepard@zeroregional.org](mailto:shepard@zeroregional.org).

## MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS NEWS FROM ZIMBABWE

### Budget Monitoring and the Millennium Development Goals

By S. Ngena-SusWatch Media Forum

Government expenditure hinges on the National Budget, which is often complemented by a Supplementary Budget when ministries exceed their budgetary allocations.

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How much a government spends, say, on the construction of roads, clinics or other infrastructure depends to a large extent on the resources allocated to the various ministries. Like most countries, the bulk of Zimbabwe's revenue comes from taxation, which contributes nearly 95% to State coffers.

The tax base is made up of Value Added Tax, corporate tax, capital gains tax, presumptive tax, withholding tax, customs and excise duties, etc. In the absence of multilateral and bilateral aid, these taxes will contribute significantly in financing the Millennium Development Goals.

A product of an unprecedented global insight and commitment to address pervasive global challenges, the MDGs aim to achieve the following targets by 2015:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- Achieve universal primary education;
- Promote gender equality and empower women;
- Reduce child mortality;
- Improve maternal health;
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- Ensure environmental sustainability; and
- Develop a global partnership for development.

The Government of Zimbabwe is aware of the mammoth task ahead, but it has committed itself to meeting the MDGs, first and foremost, from its own resources. "However, should international relations improve, the external flow of resources (grants and external borrowing) will go a long way to soften pressures on domestic resources," notes the 2004 National MDG Progress Report.

Although a commendable attempt has been made to cost the MDGs, it is not feasible, especially in Zimbabwe's hyperinflationary environment, to formulate a separate budget for the achievement of MDGs. Even in the most stable of economies, the MDGs timeframe alone makes it well nigh impossible to have a budget specifically for the MDGs. This means, to all intents and purposes, that the cost of financing the MDGs must be built into a country's national budget.

It is against this background that the Zimbabwe Sustainability Watch Network held a two-day training workshop from May 30-31 2006 to demystify the budget and transform it into a powerful tool for holding governments accountable for the achievement of the MDGs.

It was observed in the workshop that it was not enough to monitor national budgets alone. Local authorities' budgets should also be subject to the same scrutiny. This was because local authorities were the first port of call for essential services such as water and sanitation, health care and education. The primary aim of the Budget monitoring was to critically assess how ministries are implementing the programmes for which they were allocated funds; and to

provide early warning of budget overruns.

The quarterly review also provides a useful opportunity to seek explanations from the relevant ministry for either under-expenditure or over-expenditure. Under-expenditure was not necessarily a positive thing, particularly where large capital outlays were involved as the price could be a budget overrun later in the year when inflation takes its toll, it was observed.

The workshop attracted Civil Society, United Nations and Government Officials and the Media. In the coming weeks some of the participants will formulate a dedicated Budget monitoring team comprising CSOs and Media who will eventually work on a Universal National Budget Monitoring tool Kit for MDGs . “Hopefully the team will be in a position to meet with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committees for their input to influence the budgeting processes”, said Sherpard Zvigadza, the SusWatch national Focal point.-end



## **Zimbabwe Sustainability Watch Network holds workshop:**

**6-7 December, 2005, UNESCO Conference Hall.**

*by Sherpard Zvigadza - Zimbabwe SusWatch National Focal Point*

The Sustainability Watch workshop was held on 6-7 December, 2005 at the UNESCO Conference Hall in Harare. The workshop attracted 25 participants drawn from a wide cross-section of civil society organisations active in gender issues, HIV/AIDS, environment, trade and debt, advocacy, human rights and development. Also represented were officials from Government, UNDP and the print media. Specifically, the workshop sought, among other things, to appraise participants on the SusWatch Project and to design future strategies through various instruments such as media campaigns, budget monitoring and partnership building.

A total of four papers were presented on the following topics:

- Background to the Sustainability Watch Project (SusWatch NFP)
- The Role of the UNDP in the MDG Process (UNDP)
- The MDGs: A Government Perspective (Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social welfare)
- Budget Tracking as an MDG Monitoring Tool (Consultant)

Keeping networks together has not always been an easy task the world over, and Zimbabwe is no exception. This, without a doubt, will be one of the biggest challenges facing SusWatch in the years ahead. However, a positive outcome

of the workshop was that participants demonstrated their commitment by openly critiquing the existing structure and offering suggestions for improvement.

The need for a robust institutional framework, mapping exercise, a database of civil society projects and a clearly defined reporting structure was emphasised.

The other strategy identified for CSOs is that media, private sector and civil society should establish partnerships with universities to boost their research capacity. Media practitioners should be co-opted into the SusWatch taskforce rather than being invited to report on issues, when the need arises.

It is clear that for Zimbabwe attaining the MDGs is an important challenge, one that can only be tackled through open dialogue and increased collaboration between citizens, civil society practitioners, multilateral representatives, government officials (including local), parliamentarians, representatives from the business community and the labour sector, indigenous peoples, academia as well as media practitioners.

Hence, the relations between Government and civil society should be cooperative rather than adversarial. Together we can "score" the Goals!!

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## **SusWatch Zimbabwe Network Gets Down to Business**

*by John Chimunhu - Suswatch Media Forum*

The SusWatch Zimbabwe Network has revamped its activities by approving a formal organisational structure, adopting its Terms of eference and setting up a media forum to raise its public profile.

During a workshop held at the UNESCO Conference Centre on 9 March 2006, task force members mandated goal leads to look into the draft Terms of Reference and formalise the media's position in the SusWatch structure.

At a subsequent meeting held at the ZERO offices on 16 March 2006, the goal leads amended and approved the Terms of Reference. They also deliberated on the setting up of a media forum. This would have a cross-cutting role and would participate in meetings and activities of the working group.

The forum was tasked to draft a media strategy to raise awareness about the work of SusWatch and the three MDGs (1,7 and 8) specifically. Forum members also agreed to provide articles for the SusWatch newsletter. Shepard Zvigadza the SusWatch NFP informed members that he had designed a local version of the SusWatch newsletter and was just waiting for input from members.

It was also agreed that goal leads would work out details of the activities outlined in the 2006 SusWatch work plan and come up with practical ideas on how to implement them.

The goal leads are as follows:

- Goal 1 : Practical Action and Environment Africa
- Goal 7 : Wildlife Environment Zimbabwe and SARDC-IMERCSA
- Goal 8 : ZIMCODD

The meeting was chaired by Charlene Hewat and was attended by all the goal leads and media representatives.

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## Zimbabwe Civil Society, NGOs Probe Official MDG Report

*Report by John Chimunhu - Zimbabwe SusWatch Media Forum*



Zimbabwe has made some progress towards attaining the United Nations sponsored Millennium Development Goals but a lot more needs to be done if targets are to be met by 2015, SusWatch says.

In a 29 page report (National SusWatch Report) critiquing the government's official MDG report published in 2004 and launched in September 2005, SusWatch highlights some glaring shortcomings in the state's presentation. According to SusWatch, the official MDG report paints a rosy picture which is quite possibly misleading.

"This assessment does not seem to be supported by evidence on the ground. The absence of updated data on key indicators on poverty, environment and health are of major concern. Even in those areas where data was collected, capacity to analyse and timely produce reports is very weak", the SusWatch report says. However, after the Summit the Government embarked on reviewing the 2004 report in question and a draft 2005 report is being finalised. However, the process indicated that not all CSOs participated, but the fact that some participated is a clear indication by CSOs to complement government's efforts towards sustainable development and the attainment of MDGs in Zimbabwe.

It says the official report plays down the lack of capacity in state institutions to capture, analyse and track data e.g. while the MDG reporting process was initiated in 2002 it was only finalised in 2004. Other examples cited include the 2002 population census whose results were only published in 2005. SusWatch says monitoring Zimbabwe's implementation of Goal 1, which calls for halving of extreme poverty by 2015, has been made difficult by government's failure to



publish the report of the 2003 National Poverty Assessment Study and the absence of a poverty reduction strategy paper. This has left Zimbabweans to estimate poverty levels in the country, with some putting them at over 60 percent.

Meanwhile the National Poverty Assessment Study results are ready for publishing. However, one of the sentiments from CSOs is the late publication of these results. Non-availability of official updated poverty statistics and related data impacts on poverty alleviation programmes and related initiatives.

Efforts to monitor Goal 7 on environmental sustainability are also constrained by a lack of reliable information and lack of resources, says SusWatch.

"Data on environmental issues is also very weak, making it difficult to give an objective assessment of the status of the environment. The last State of the Environment Report was produced in 1998, creating a data vacuum of astronomic proportions", the report said.

On Goal 8 (Partnerships for Development), the SusWatch report said frosty relations between government, CSO and international donors were a major drawback.

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## **MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE**

### **Analysis - International Perspective**

## **The Trouble with the MDGs: Confronting Expectations of Aid and Development Success - Working Paper 40**

*by Michael A. Clemens, Charles J. Kenny and Todd J. Moss*

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are unlikely to be met by 2015, even if huge increases in development assistance materialize. The MDGs are a set of quantitative, time-bound targets for indicators such as poverty, education and mortality in developing countries adopted unanimously by the UN in 2000.



However, the rates of progress required by many of the goals are at the edges of or beyond historical precedent. At the same time, there appear to be limits to the degree to which aid can contribute to development outcomes. Estimates of the 'cost' of reaching the MDGs are nevertheless frequently misinterpreted

to mean that a certain quantity of aid—such as the oft-cited \$50 billion—could cause the Goals to be met.

Despite many benefits of the MDGs, there has been little discussion so far of potential costs of the specific form taken by these goals, especially the creation of unreasonable expectations about what is achievable in a short time frame and about the role of aid in the development process. Many countries making extraordinarily rapid progress on MDG indicators, due in large part to aid, will nonetheless not reach the MDGs. Unrealistic targets thus may turn successes into perceptions of failure, serving to undermine future constituencies for aid (in donors) and reform (in recipients). This would be unfortunate given the vital role of aid and reform in the development process and the need for long-term, sustained aid commitments. Though goal-setting can be useful, these particular goals might be better viewed not as practical targets but instead as valuable reminders of the stark contrast between the world we have and the world we want, and as a call to redouble our search for interventions to close the gap more rapidly. [full paper](#)

For full paper [pdf] visit <http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/2749>  
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## CAPACITY BUILDING

### **Toolkit for researchers and practitioners who wish to communicate to policymakers**

*by Hovland, I. / Research and Policy in Development (RAPID), ODI, 2005*

The tools in this kit are specifically geared towards the needs of researchers and practitioners in civil society organisations (CSOs), including development NGOs, research institutes, think tanks, universities and networks. The toolkit addresses the questions of how researchers and CSOs can best communicate evidence in order to inform or influence policy, to achieve their own stated development objectives, or simply to make their own knowledge accessible and understandable to a wider audience. [more..](#)

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## Member Profile

### Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE)

#### Background of SAFIRE



SAFIRE was established as a PVO (Private Voluntary Organisation) in October 1994 at the behest of the UNHCR, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the hosting RDCs and other humanitarian organizations. The vision of the founding members of SAFIRE was to establish SAFIRE as a local NGO with a regional mandate to address environmental issues in Southern Africa.

#### Vision of SAFIRE

To be the regional leader and service provider of first choice in benefit-driven sustainable natural resource management by rural communities.

#### Mission of SAFIRE

To facilitate the development and application of Innovative approaches to diversify and improve rural Livelihoods, based on the utilization, commercialization and sustainable management of natural resources.

The primary thematic area of intervention for your SAFIRE is Natural resource management, utilization and commercialization.

Province	District
Eastern Region (Manicaland)	<i>Mutare, Chimanimani, Chipinge, Nyanga.</i>
North East (Mashonaland East)	<i>Muzarabani, Rushinga, Hurungwe, Binga.</i>
South East (Masvingo-Matabeleland):	<i>Masvingo, Chiredzi, Bulilima, Mangwe, Gwanda, Mwenezi, Mberengwa, Beightbridge, Plumtree, Matobo.</i>

SAFIRE can be contacted on [info@safire.co.zw](mailto:info@safire.co.zw)

Website: <http://www.safireweb.org>

Each month, the MDGs e-Monitor will profile a different organisation within the Sustainability Watch Network (SusWatch).



## CONTACT MDGs e-Monitor

We value your comments, suggestions and contributions. Please send these to Zimbabwe SusWatch at: [info@zeroregional.com](mailto:info@zeroregional.com) or [shepard@zeroregional.com](mailto:shepard@zeroregional.com)

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