

## SWEDEN'S MDG CAMPAIGN 2002-2006



### Objectives

- To keep the MDGs on the agenda in Swedish politics and in current debates.
- To inform and build awareness of the MDGs with key groups.

### Rationale

- Improve knowledge - clarify that Sweden has made a commitment.
- Create public opinion to support fulfilling the commitment.
- Create policy space - make it easier for politicians to take the measures necessary to achieve the MDGs.
- Participate in, and inspire, cooperation at the international level in strengthening global opinion for the MDGs.

### Key features of the Campaign 2002-2005.

- Long term key message is **"It's possible to halve poverty until 2015"** with annual sub-themes. The sub-theme for 2004/05 was HIV/AIDS, and Gender in 2005/06. The idea was to illustrate how poverty can be reduced by working in various sectors/themes.
- The kick-off message in December 2002, which was presented as a billboard/poster was **"a present to us all for us all – the MDGs, halving global poverty by 2015"**.
- **Products** varied each year and for each theme. For the HIV/AIDS theme there was: a TV commercial; a supplement in the 27 largest daily newspapers; advertisement in weekly magazines; a brochure; special theme section on the website; an annual conference focusing on the theme; media coverage, etc.
- **Key activities in 2005** were the Annual Conference on Development that is held on the 17th of October every year - the International Day of Poverty Eradication. The TV commercial that normally runs for 4-5 weeks in conjunction with the conference and other, related, media activities focused on the MDGs.
- **Target groups:** part of the general public that is interested in global issues (approx 20% of the population), youth, opinion leaders (incl. media), the development community (NGOs, consultants etc) and Sida/Ministry staff.

### Campaign material can be viewed at

<http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/3102/a/49490;jsessionid=aV14CB0bliZ>.

### Budget and resources

- Project group: three fulltime staff and an assistant after the first year.
- Budget: 30 million SEK for the three years (EUR 3.2 million)

## Strategy

- **MDGs were used as a platform** for all communication about aid and development.
- **There was a core positive message** ‘It’s possible to halve poverty by 2015” and then thematic focus. Addressing all of the goals in the campaign, particularly Goal 8, is the biggest challenges. Public support for the eighth goal is not easily won and may be more complex in terms of current public perceptions about aid and development cooperation (predominantly humanitarian). Mass communication revolved around the annual Conference on Development and starts one week before the conference.
- **Informal coordination group** with representatives from MFA, SIDA, UNA of Sweden and UNDP Sweden.
- **Partnerships** and/or collaboration with Swedish civil society, private sector, unions, researchers, universities and other institutions.
- **International dimension:** adverts were placed in the Financial Times and the International Herald Tribune.

## Results

- Thousands of references to the MDGs in the media.
- Ad-campaign “The Chance of a Lifetime” in 2003-2004 reached 3 611 000 Swedes.
- Eurobarometer survey (Feb 2005), 27 per cent of Swedes know about the MDGs.
- A survey conducted by Sida (Sifo, Sept 2005) shows that it was 57%. Question asked: “Have you heard of the MDGs, i.e. that poverty is to be halved by 2015?”
- The information/educational component was more successful than the advocacy – putting pressure on the government to keep its promises – as the info/education contributed to a more informed opinion.
- The weakest result was keeping the MDGs on the political agenda.
- The clothing chain, H&M, relates their efforts in corporate social responsibility to the MDGs.
- One of the big obstacles in the Campaign was the lack of political interest and the lack of a formal mandate from the government for the campaign. The campaign was a mission given to a project-group, which managed to open a number of doors.
- The campaign was successful in meeting its objective: to raise awareness and knowledge of the MDGs in key target groups.

## Factors of success

- **Buy-in:** the strategy was owned by a network of actors (85 members) from different parts of society, eg. CSOs, academic and the private sector. In some cases co-arrangements were made with special actors.
- All the members of the network supporting the MDG Campaign could sign up to the public advertising with no extra cost. The Government covered this cost because it would have been too complex for them to receive finance from these actors – logistically and administratively.
- **International dimension:** the strategy to spread the message outside Sweden through advertising in the international press raised the popularity of the MDGs among national politicians who were inter alia ‘proud’ that Sweden had pioneered the first MDG Campaign in the world.
- **Seizing windows of opportunity:** the organisers brought the campaign to events that were already planned in Sweden. They did not create a special MDG event. For example, the MFA and Sida cooperated so that SIDA’s annual conference on poverty focused on the MDGs. Fifty NGOs and the government collaborated around the annual book fair in Gothenburg to set up a variety of stands on the MDGs in the international section.
- **Targeting parliament:** The organisers persuaded the Parliament’s Foreign Policy Club to arrange a parliamentary seminar on the MDGs. Members of the MDG Campaign Network also prepared an MDG exhibition in parliament.  
**The human factor and good cooperation:** the lead organisations (MFA, SIDA, UNDP Sweden and the Swedish UNA) had a clear division of labour, identified and played on their respective comparative advantages in driving the campaign and there was very good personal chemistry.

**Lessons learnt**

- Public mobilisation for the key message “it is possible to achieve the MDGs’ was much easier than mobilisation around the ‘How to do it” messages.
- A strong political signal or demand for the Campaign is useful and necessary in terms of sustaining efforts, access to specific target groups as well as the participation of the politicians as campaign messengers.
- Building awareness and support for the MDGs was most difficult within the MFA and SIDA. At the early stages staff resisted in making references to the MDGs in internal papers and memos. However, over time this changed and by the end of the campaign the MDGs underpin and are referred to in most policy papers.
- Leadership role by the MFA has both advantages and disadvantages when working with a broad network of non-state actors. Larger, more independent NGOs, were cautious in signing up to the campaigns in terms of how it would affect their independent voice and freedom to criticise the MFA when necessary. At the same time, the non-state actors appreciated the space provided by the government which was perceived as a more neutral arena for campaign meetings. Furthermore, many of them gained credibility from working with the MFA on the campaign.