



The Chance of a Lifetime – an evaluation of the Swedish Millennium Campaign

In 2002, the Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation initiated a campaign for the Millennium Development Goals – the first of its kind in the world. The campaign ran through 2005 under the auspices of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and has now been evaluated.

The evaluation was conducted as two sub-studies – the first consisting of interviews with opinion-formers and decision-makers in politics, civil society and the media, and with people who were directly involved with the campaign. The second sub-study consists of a survey of the measurements and follow-ups conducted in the project of results from various activities. The following is a summary of the evaluation.

The Chance of a Lifetime project

Through the Millennium Declaration, Sweden has undertaken to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Creating the political will needed to implement the necessary measures requires supportive public opinion. Efforts in the form of spreading information and opinion forming activities are therefore essential to the work of realising the Millennium Development Goals.

This was the starting point when Jan O. Karlsson, then Minister for International Development Cooperation, took the initiative for a Swedish Millennium campaign in 2002. The aim was:

- to increase awareness and knowledge of the Millennium Development Goals and make clear that Sweden has a commitment to contribute to their achievement;
- to create public opinion to facilitate this and thus make it easier for politicians to implement measures necessary for achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
- to encourage, participate in and inspire cooperation at the international level to contribute to strengthening global opinion in favour of the Millennium Development Goals.

In order to implement this initiative, the Chance of a Lifetime millennium project was set up at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The project's three goals were:

1. to keep the Millennium Development Goals on the agenda in Swedish politics and debate during the years 2003–2005;
2. to increase awareness of the Millennium Development Goals in various key groups such as decision-makers and opinion-formers;
3. to create cooperation and opinion in favour of the Millennium Development Goals internationally and globally.

These goals have formed the basis for the project evaluation. The evaluators also draw certain conclusions from the results of the campaign.

Conditions

In order for the project to be conducted as professionally and successfully as possible, long-term and strategic efforts were required, both nationally and internationally.

The total budget amounted to about SEK 30 million, distributed relatively evenly over the three years. This included three administrative officials as well as an assistant during the last year and a half.

The project maintained close cooperation with an informal consultative group consisting of Sida, the UNDP Swedish office and the United Nations Association of Sweden.

Project strategy

The project was intended to act as a catalyst. By getting key groups interested and involved in the Millennium Development Goals, they would in turn spread knowledge and commitment to their respective networks, members and stakeholders. Broader public awareness was also necessary, and the tool for achieving this was primarily advertising campaigns in daily and evening newspapers and the specialist press.

As the result of continuous network building, 85 different organisations, institutions, government agencies and companies were part of the Chance of a Lifetime network in December 2005.

Knowledge is essential if people are to believe that the Millennium Development Goals are realistic. Realisation that the Goals can be achieved is necessary for individual commitment. Individual commitment ultimately leads to opinion, discussion and political lobbying.

During the project period, the work with the Millennium Goals focused on four areas:

1. policy work concerning a Millennium Development Goal mindset and Sweden's policy for global development;
2. internal support within the Government Offices;
3. external work within different sectors of society;
4. international efforts.

The external work, which in many cases was conducted together with the network that emerged, can subsequently be divided into network building, advertising campaigns, distribution of material, conferences, seminars and media follow-up.

Results

Government and Riksdag

Meetings, training, conferences and seminars have been conducted for information departments, Members of the Riksdag, Members of the European Parliament and others. Participation levels have been high.

Of the politicians interviewed, 90 per cent stated that they were aware of the Millennium Development Goals, and 44 per cent also knew of the Chance of a Lifetime project. Thirty-three per cent felt they had sufficient knowledge to be able to discuss the Millennium Development Goals. Even so, the Goals only come up as questions in the Riksdag a few times each year.

There has been no success in making the link between the Millennium Development Goals and Sweden's policy for global development (a policy for coherence between all policy areas) as clear and as frequent as was hoped. Even for leading politicians, the Millennium Development Goals deal more with development assistance than with the coherence policy.

Network and advertising

Joint advertising, signed by all members of the network, spread information and commitment, and also showed that many people in Sweden are actively involved in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In order to become a member of the network, the organisation, company etc. had to work for one or more of the Millennium Development Goals in its activities.

The advertising campaigns have been successful. To a great extent, the public has understood what the advertisements are about. It is also reasonable to assume that the advertising campaigns have increased a number of the key actors' awareness of the Millennium Development Goals.

- Surveys conducted show that about half the members of the network feel that the network meetings have been useful.
- A number of members have taken part in meetings, exhibitions and seminars together with the project.
- The perception of the joint advertising has been positive.
- One problem the network encountered was the highly disparate circumstances and motivation of the different members.
- Representatives of the business sector felt the network meetings mainly focused on information. They wanted to spend time discussing questions of how things should be done and to better define the work.
- Some larger NGOs considered that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was unsuitable as the sender since the members of the network, by participating in the cooperation, de facto legitimise the Government's policies.

The points below provide a description of the current situation. It is difficult to assess what results can be attributed to the activities of the Chance of a Lifetime in particular or

those of other specific actors. It is reasonable to assume that a number of parties have contributed to the situation described.

- Surveys show that awareness of the Millennium Development Goals has increased from 42 to 57 per cent and that the belief that they can be achieved has gone from 10 to 22 per cent. Something has obviously happened in the last few years.
- Interest in and discussion about development issues is perceived to have gained momentum in the past year in light of the UN Summit, the G8 Summit in Gleneagles, the White Band campaign, Bono's concert, the tsunami disaster and, not least, the Chance of a Lifetime.
- SIFO Research International's annual survey shows there is a realisation in society that there are other ways for rich countries to influence development in poor countries besides aid. Eighty per cent consider this to be true. Reduced agricultural subsidies and fair trade conditions are high on the list of suitable measures. However, realisation of this coherent picture does not automatically imply awareness of the Millennium Development Goals.
- The perception of the situation in poor countries is still much more dismal than reality. The perception is that only 10–40 per cent can read and have access to medical care and clean water. The correct proportion is 70–80 per cent.

The project has conducted many expensive and ambitious outreach activities. Material has been distributed in editions of some 830 000 copies, and 6 100 persons have attended various seminars.

- Cooperation with UNDP, Sida, the UN Association and the network has been very important to the outreach activities.
- Strategic individuals in a number of areas have been informed, the communicative planning has been good. The results of the measures cannot always be substantiated.
- Most of the measures were of an informative nature. Questions of how things should be done have not been clearly defined, and there has been a lack of discussion about them.

International aspects

The Swedish campaign was the first Millennium Campaign in the world. For long periods, the project has been one of the most prominent examples of campaign work on behalf of the Millennium Development Goals. Many of those interviewed in the assessment are of the opinion that Sweden's work with the Millennium Development Goals has received greater recognition around the world than at home and that Sweden's policy for global development is perceived as being courageous and even revolutionary.

Broad commitment at the global level was of great importance for achieving the project's overall goal. An obvious strategic contact in the international work was the global UN campaign for the Millennium Development Goals.

It was hoped that the international work would have stimulating and challenging effects on other countries which, over time, can help strengthen global opinion in favour of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Sweden was the second OECD country after Denmark to produce a Goal 8 report.

During the initial stages of the project, contacts were established with Nordic counterparts. Initiatives included the adoption of a joint Nordic Declaration to promote the Goals. The international dimension also involved working catalytically through managers and colleagues.

One individual considered that from an international perspective, the Chance of a Lifetime had great significance because it succeeded in showing other countries that the Millennium Development Goals were not just another UN paper tiger.

Evaluators' comments

The fact that the project was not integrated into the Ministry's line organisation has resulted in both advantages and disadvantages for the Chance of a Lifetime.

One advantage has been that the project has been able to maintain flexibility and use unconventional methods.

The principal disadvantage for the Chance of a Lifetime was that the project lacked clear, firm support at the political level throughout the Government Offices.

The first interim target, to keep the Millennium Development Goals on the agenda in Swedish politics and debate during the years 2003–2005, has only been achieved to a limited extent. One reason for this is weak political backing from the Prime Minister's Office and the ministries, with the exception of some sections of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The fact that the Millennium Development Goals are a sub-set of the policy for global development adopted by the Riksdag should have resulted in increased commitment in many policy areas, not only development assistance policy.

We consider that the Chance of a Lifetime and its project management, in view of the conditions, has in many ways conducted a very good and successful information campaign. Key people and the public now have greater awareness of the Millennium Development Goals (57 per cent according to a SIFO Research International survey autumn 2005) and consider it possible to achieve them. A general sense of a coherent picture and global development seems to have spread following the tsunami, the UN Summit, the White Band campaign and the Chance of a Lifetime.

In brief summary, it can be concluded that the Chance of a Lifetime has been successful in increasing awareness about the Millennium Development Goals. The project has also received well-deserved international attention and appreciation.

Continuation

The Chance of a Lifetime project will now continue under the auspices of the UNDP Swedish office and the United Nations Association of Sweden.