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## 'Double aid to end global poverty'

Correspondents in New York  
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MORE than 500 million people will escape abject poverty, 250 million will no longer go to bed hungry and 30 million children will be saved if rich nations double development aid over the next decade to \$US195 billion (\$256 billion), according to a UN-sponsored report.

The report, considered the most comprehensive assessment ever of global poverty, says the money should be spent on long-term projects and quick fixes, such as supplying mosquito nets, repairing roads and creating free school-lunch programs.

Lead author Jeffrey Sachs, a prominent US economist, said most rich nations, including Australia, were not doing enough. Among industrial nations, only Denmark, Norway, Sweden, The Netherlands and Luxembourg were spending what they had promised on development aid.

"We have the world's eyes focused on the tsunami of the Indian Ocean," Professor Sachs said yesterday.

"But the world continues to overlook the silent tsunamis of deaths from malaria which take every month the number of people that died in the Asian tragedy."

Lifting aid spending would enable countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals to combat poverty, hunger and disease that all nations agreed to at a UN summit in 2000.

"The goals are not utopian. They are eminently achievable," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said after receiving the report.

The millennium goals include halving extreme poverty and hunger for at least 1 billion people living on \$US1 a day, reversing the spread of AIDS and malaria, and providing basic education by 2015.

Professor Sachs' report lays out plans for achieving those goals by setting deadlines for specific, often simple, projects that experts say have been proven to work, rather than just calling for scatter-shot aid.

"The system is not working right now," he said.

"The practical solutions exist. The political framework is established. And for the first time, the cost is utterly affordable. All that is needed is action."

His report, Investing in Development, commissioned by Mr Annan, will be presented to the G8 meeting of industrial nations in July and to world leaders at the UN General Assembly two months later.

Government aid from rich countries should double to about 0.54 per cent of rich nations' gross domestic product by 2015, the report says.

World leaders agreed on 0.7 per cent of GDP for development aid for the millennium goals and other projects. But few are anywhere near this benchmark.

Although the US is the world's largest donor, it contributes the smallest proportion of GDP to development aid among 22 industrial nations.

Washington spends about 0.16 per cent of GDP, or

\$US25 billion, and to reach the 0.7 per cent target would have to increase that to \$US80 billion.

Japan, the world's second largest economy, is low at 0.2 per cent, as is Italy at 0.17 per cent, Germany 0.27 per cent and Australia 0.25 per cent.

"According to the most recent data, which is a year old, Australia spends about 25c

out of every \$100 of income on aid," Professor Sachs said. "That's about the average for all the high-income countries and we suggest that should reach 70c for every \$100 by 2015.

"We are not asking for one new promise from any country in the world, only to follow through on what has already been committed."

*Reuters, AFP*

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