

# Global Future



## Priorities for meeting the MDGs

John McArthur & Jeffrey Sachs,  
Earth Institute/Millennium Project

## Goal 8 - critical issues for trade and finance

Martin Khor, Third World Network

## Embracing Africa's MDG challenge

Wiseman Nkuhlu, NEPAD Secretariat

## Will the MDGs reach the forgotten poor?

Sylvia Beales, HelpAge International

the  
Millennium  
Development  
Goals

— more **broken  
promises?**

# Global Future

First Quarter, 2004

## The Millennium Development Goals – more broken promises?

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## Reality check

In this edition of Global Future, our contributors grapple with what it means to have a set of Millennium Development Goals that supposedly belongs to all of humanity and in unprecedented ways.

McArthur and Sachs, Shetty, Ramphela, Kastberg and Bradbury emphasise ways that government and civil society can own and implement the Goals. Nkuhlu reminds us that Africa adds important dimensions to this global effort.

Clearly, there is no shortage of resources to meet the Goals, even before 2015. But it is not just a matter of "more funds", and the MDGs are not a global shopping list. They claim space amid all the other real-world structures that seem bent on making or breaking human development (and human hearts).

Such as trade and finance systems that, Khor and other contributors argue, are antagonistic to the Goals and may scupper them unless urgent steps are taken. Such as exclusion and discrimination, which Nowlan argues make it critical to link the MDGs with human rights law; and while the Goals' emphasis on children is a triumph, Beales reminds us of other vulnerable people to whom they must apply.

What does all this add up to? That even as we aim squarely and purposefully at achieving the Goals, peripheral vision and lateral thinking will show us that we are pressing up against structures and mindsets that simply have to change.

Are the MDGs, as Whaites asks, just more "serial target-setting"? Are they, along with countless other unfinished or unsupported human ventures, destined for history's recycling depot? Or will we seize the challenge that they throw to us?

- Heather Elliott

# Priorities for meeting the Millennium Development Goals

John McArthur and Jeffrey Sachs

**THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT** Goals (MDGs) are more than mere aspirations. They are indeed more than shared global goals. They are the international community's time-bound and quantified commitment to cut sharply the extent of extreme poverty in the world by 2015. The MDGs are achievable, but many parts of the world are not on track to achieve them. What is needed – urgently – is international follow-through on the commitments.

Today, international momentum towards the MDGs is in an entirely different state than even two years ago. The year 2002 was a watershed year for global development policy. At the Financing for Development conference in Monterrey, Mexico, consensus was forged on the need for global partnership in order to achieve the MDGs. The rich countries pledged significant increases in development assistance – specifically, to "make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 percent of gross national product [in official development assistance]" – while the developing countries committed themselves to sound governance and use of resources. At the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, all member countries of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to reducing poverty and protecting the environment, again placing the MDGs at the centre of international development policy.

By the end of 2002, it looked as if the world had not only agreed on the centrality of the MDGs, but was also gearing up to take the actions needed to achieve them.

## 2003 – a year lost

In 2003, however, global momentum on the MDGs was eclipsed by the war in Iraq. Debates shifted from "How

can the international system reduce poverty?" to "Is there really an international system?" Rich countries failed to follow through convincingly on their Monterrey commitment on official development assistance. In the realm of trade policy, they likewise failed to follow through on their 2001 pledge at Doha to address the trading system's marginalisation of the least-developed countries. The Cancún, Mexico, meetings of the WTO failed even to improve market access for tropical agricultural exporters like the impoverished cotton-growing countries of West Africa.

The significance of these political failures was underscored by the release of the UNDP *Human Development Report 2003*, which showed that under current conditions the MDGs will be missed in nearly 60 countries, especially the poorest ones in sub-Saharan Africa, the Andes and Central Asia.

With only 12 years to go before the MDG deadline, a year lost is one too many, and the direction of global events is even more foreboding with regard to the prospects for achieving the MDGs.

## Regaining momentum in 2004

At the beginning of 2004, there is a critical need to re-establish the MDGs as the core objective of international development policy, and an even more urgent need to re-establish international development as a core objective of an international system that has completely focused on war in recent months. Success will require two things:

- There must be a highly visible call by leaders of the developing world to return development issues to the top of the international agenda.



PHOTO - DUANE FLUEGGE / WORLD VISION

*Subsistence farmer in Ecuador. Will the MDGs be missed in the Andes and other poor countries?*

- The international community – including poor countries, rich countries, and the international agencies – needs a clear operational framework upon which to base policies, programmes and development assistance for achieving the MDGs.

**Not: "What is the best we can do to reach the MDGs?" but: "What resources do we need to reach them?"**

This latter operational point is crucial in every developing country. Under current conditions, poor countries are told by the international system to ask the following question: "Given the financial resources that we have, what is the best we can do to reach the MDGs?" Starting in 2004, these countries need to ask a different question: "Given the urgency of achieving the MDGs, what resources, including increased development assistance, do we need to reach the MDGs?" The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank would then take on the role of helping to raise the needed increment in financial resources – assuming that each developing country concerned is fulfilling its part of the bargain through good policies and honest and transparent governance.

While target-setting, deadlines and planning for success are commonplace in business and many other activities, planning for poverty reduction targets has not been common at the IMF, World Bank or other international institutions. In other words, these agencies have not been properly goal-oriented towards the MDGs. It's time to make the international system goal-oriented, specifically around the goal of achieving the MDGs. For each low-income country, we need constantly to be asking the question of what more should be done to achieve success by the target year of 2015.

### Planning for success

How should a country plan for success? What steps are really needed to achieve the MDGs in impoverished countries that are currently off track? We believe that the MDGs can be met in every country if the plan is correct and if it receives adequate international support. But there is no "magic bullet", no single strategy.

In fact, we think that success must be guided by both a 10-year horizon, since human resources and basic infrastructure can only be built up over the course of a decade, and a broad-based strategy that combines actions across several policy "clusters", with priorities differing from one region to another.

For last year's *Human Development Report*, we helped to identify six major policy priorities:

- increased public investments in basic human needs – particularly health (including reproductive health and health systems), nutrition, education, water and sanitation, energy services and waste treatment – backed by a doubling or more of official development assistance directed at the poorest countries;
- increased emphasis on human rights for women and other excluded groups, with a special focus on the critical role women will play in achieving the MDGs and the actions needed to ensure women's access to economic and political opportunities;

- promotion of non-traditional industries and exports, especially in the rapidly growing urban areas of the poor countries, through a favourable business environment and increased market access in the rich countries;

- promotion of small farm productivity in marginal agricultural lands where large numbers of poor farmers struggle in extreme poverty; this includes technological investments to promote a still-needed Green Revolution for Africa;

- special attention to the specific infrastructure (including roads, energy, and irrigation) and other local needs of structurally distressed countries or regions, particularly small island states and places that are landlocked, disease-burdened, conflict-affected, or experiencing sprawling growth in slum populations; and

- increased focus on environmental sustainability, including reforestation, watershed management, coastal protection, protection of fish stocks, and reduction of airborne pollutants.

Developing country governments need to draft plans around these six areas, and need to be given the space to do so with an ambition commensurate with achieving the MDGs. In many instances countries already have bold sectoral plans, for example to scale up their public health services, but these plans sit in drawers since the countries are too poor to implement them on their own and are not receiving the official development assistance needed from rich countries.

### Supporting actors

What role should key institutions play in putting these bold programmes into practice? The multilateral system – including the specialised UN agencies, the IMF and the World Bank – should provide countries with the technical expertise needed to develop the best possible MDG plans. Civil society organisations are crucial both for ensuring transparency in the development of national plans and for assisting, where appropriate, with

service delivery. Rich country governments are responsible for providing the extra financial resources needed to support the plans of countries with committed political leadership, and for opening their markets to exports from the low-income countries.

## **The \$87 billion appropriation for Iraq and Afghanistan is a glimpse of the vast resources available**

Won't it be too expensive to achieve the Goals? Not at all. The policy and technological solutions are available to cut poverty, hunger and disease, and the costs are incredibly modest compared to what can be achieved. The rich countries have committed to development assistance reaching up to 0.7% of GNP, or about US\$175 billion of donor aid per year. This would represent an increase of roughly \$120 billion over the current levels of roughly \$55 billion.

Our own very preliminary analysis indicates that less than 0.7% of GNP will in fact be needed to achieve the MDGs. The incremental amount needed might be as low as \$75 billion per year, for a total aid flow of around \$130 billion per year, equal to 0.5% of GNP of the donor countries. That the US has recently appropriated an additional \$87 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan offers a glimpse of the vast financial resources that are in fact available. Only a fraction of that ambition will be required to achieve the international commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, and thereby to improve dramatically the lives of more than one billion people in the world today. ■

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# No excuses!

Salil Shetty



UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in Bolivia for the Ibero-American Summit, in front of the Millennium Campaign logo

**WHEN 189 GOVERNMENTS** from the North and South, as representatives of their citizens, signed up to the *Millennium Declaration* in the United Nations Millennium General Assembly of September 2000, there was a palpable sense of urgency. Urgency to "free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of

extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected".

The Declaration built on pledges made in the series of important UN Conferences of the 1990s, and seeks to recognise the rising tide of discontent with the lopsided benefits of globalisation. At the heart of the

Declaration are human rights, peace, gender equity, environment and the pressing priorities of the Least Developed Countries and Africa. The eight Millennium Development Goals, a minimal set of inter-linked outcomes that have to be met by 2015, are derived from the Declaration.

Civil society reaction to the Millennium Goals has been mixed. Whilst national governments' signing up to the Goals was seen as an important sign of commitment, there has been justifiable concern at the apolitical, quantitative and minimalist nature of the Goals and targets. Some worry that the Goals could end up being another set of donor conditionalities.

## Oh no, not more UN commitments...

Given the proliferation of UN Conferences and commitments, it's important for us to understand the uniqueness of the Millennium Goals in many respects:

- They do represent, at the government level, a compact – not only between rich and poor countries and the UN system based on shared responsibility, but also with the key institutions that determine the economic fate of the developing world: the World Bank, the IMF, the regional development banks and, increasingly, the World Trade Organisation. For the first time, the IFIs and rich-country governments have made explicit what they can be held accountable for: not just in process terms, but in outcomes.
- The world has never before seen so much prosperity. The hundreds of billions that are being spent in Iraq have put things in perspective: we might not need more than about US\$100 billion of additional aid per year to meet the Goals. Financially, in the grand scheme of things, we are talking small change.

- Performance against the goals will be monitored. These goals are not just lofty statements of intent; precise monitoring mechanisms have been put in place, in the form of national



Millennium Goals reports and the Secretary-General's reports to the General Assembly. Many civil society actors are starting to look at independent tracking processes. At the time of writing, 58 reports have already been produced at the national level.

**With today's resources and knowledge, to set the bar any lower would be morally unacceptable**

- The goals are clearly achievable. In fact, civil society actors have criticised them as being not "millennium" but "minimum" development goals. Indeed, we believe that to set the bar any lower than this would be morally unacceptable. Individual Goals have already been achieved in the space of 10–15 years by many countries, including China, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Ghana. And today, we have not only the financial wherewithal but also the technical knowledge to realise the Goals.

Of course, it is equally true that at our current trajectory – if we carry on in a "business as usual" mode – the goals will not be achieved by 2015, whether in Sub-Saharan Africa or for large numbers of poor people living in Asia or Latin America.

### "No Excuses" – the Millennium Campaign

What is keeping the world from achieving the Goals is not lack of finances or technical capability, it is the lack of political will. This is not news. What is news is the explicit recognition of this fact at the highest levels of the UN system, and this is symbolised in the conception of the Millennium Campaign.

The Campaign's explicit objective is to encourage and facilitate "we, the people" to hold their governments and other key actors to account for their promises in the *Millennium Declaration* and the Millennium Goals. National campaigns will form the



*The Millennium Campaign logo*

backbone of the international campaign. The nationalised approach also allows for the Goals and their strategies to be defined and adapted to local contexts. The first sparks of national-level Campaigning are visible in countries as diverse as Italy, El Salvador, Kenya, Albania and Cambodia, to name a few.

In developing countries, the focus is on the rights of poor people to realise the Goals: are the appropriate policies in place? are institutions responsive to the legitimate aspirations of poor and marginalised people? is there adequate public accountability and transparency in budgeting processes? But it has been clear from the outset that the credibility of the global Campaign hinges on creating pressure for the achievement of Goal 8 in rich countries.

The Campaign has tried to make Goal 8 – which had been left delightfully vague – much more specific on aid, trade, debt and technology transfer. National Millennium Goals performance monitoring reports will be published not only in the South, but also in rich countries, albeit currently on a voluntary basis. Denmark has already published its report and those of Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden are in the pipeline. Canada, Germany and the UK are actively considering this, and work is underway at the OECD Development

Assistance Committee on monitoring performance against Millennium Goals in a more systematic manner.

### Growing civil society interest

There are many reasons for the growing interest amongst key civil society organisations (CSOs), such as Social Watch, Third World Network, Civicus and Oxfam International, to engage with and campaign around the Millennium Goals:

- The Goals have become part of the dominant development discourse, not just with donors but also with many developing-country governments. The UN system is fully geared up behind the goals.
- CSOs that are struggling to make Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and national-level plans and policies meet the needs of poor and excluded peoples are finding the Millennium Goals an important point of leverage. They recognise the Goals as a legitimate alternative frame of reference – one that can create unfettered policy space to discuss with governments the underlying structural impediments to poverty eradication. In this frame, for example, trade liberalisation can only be a means – the end being achievement of the Goals for all.
- Recognising the threat to multilateralism as much in the

development arena as in the realm of security and trade, many CSOs have opted to stop simply criticising the UN for being ineffective and instead to work with the UN to make it more effective.

## **The Goals can provide civil society with policy space to discuss impediments to poverty eradication**

● The Millennium Goals do not require CSOs to start new campaigns. Many organisations are linking their existing campaigns on health, education, AIDS, trade, peace and aid to the Goals. Christian networks, like CIDSE/Caritas and the Evangelical grouping of "Micah Challenge", see clear linkages with the Jubilee movement (where the job has been less than half done) and find that the Goals offer a very useful overarching framework for many of their existing campaigns. With so many of the Goals directly linked to child rights, numerous organisations see the potential for using the space offered by the Goals to advocate and campaign on child rights issues.

### **New allies**

But the most important reason for the recent surge in interest is the potential that the Millennium Goals offer to bring new public constituencies and coalitions into campaigning on poverty and justice at the national and international levels.

Traditional campaigners from development NGOs and the human rights, environment and women's movements are finding new allies in youth groups, peace movements, trade unions, parliamentarians, local authorities and faith-based groups around the Millennium Goals. There is also enormous media interest, led by the BBC with its systematic international programme around the Goals. Key web-based campaigning organisations like OneWorld are also seeing the potential. The UN system is



PHOTO - DANIELE MASTRASPAGNA

*First sparks of the "No Excuses 2015" Campaign in Italy were visible at the Biannual Peace March, where over 100,000 people walked from Perugia to Assisi alongside eight Millennium Goals "Gates", each representing one of the Goals.*

starting to harness its Ambassadors' rich network of sports, film and music celebrities to campaign for the Goals. Legendary West African musician Baba Maal has already done his first piece on the Goals with the BBC.

It is civil society that extracted the commitments from governments which are now distilled into the Millennium Development Goals. It is easier to campaign for clearly committed targets than for flatulent promises. The Millennium Campaign is now at an early stage of its evolution. Civil society, with its intellectual and moral muscle and its boundless organising energy, can shape it.

The contours of a new global anti-poverty movement are beginning to take shape. We are the first generation that has a real opportunity to actually see poverty eradicated. And this time around, there are No Excuses. ■

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# Goal 8 – critical issues for trade and finance

Martin Khor

## MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT

Goal 8, to "develop a global partnership for development", is critical as the only MDG that generally and specifically covers international relations. The external economic environment impacts tremendously on developing countries – particularly those that are dependent on the international financial institutions (IFIs) or members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Perhaps the most important set of development policies that a country has to decide is around whether, how and when to integrate its domestic economy with the international economy. Yet most developing countries cannot freely choose their approach to economic integration, because of loan and aid conditionalities or the rules they have agreed to in the WTO.

Underlying Goal 8's global partnership for development must be an understanding that developing countries have the right to take an appropriate, pragmatic and selective approach to integration. Unless the policies, rules and conditionalities of international trade, finance, investment, aid, and intellectual property rights reflect the realities and needs of developing countries, it may even be impossible to attain Goal 8.

## Trade and development

The international trading system has many benefits, but it is imbalanced in ways that disadvantage many developing countries. Two aspects of this imbalance are the decline in commodity prices and the rules of the WTO. Development needs are often compromised when a country participates inappropriately in international trade (for example, by being too dependent on export commodities whose prices are in

decline), or when domestic policies and laws are amended in line with WTO rules or loan conditionalities.

**The commodities problem.** The continuous decline in prices for export commodities is possibly the most important trade issue for developing countries. It has led to falling incomes for millions of small producers, deprived countries of export earnings, and reduced their debt repayment capacity.

Between the 1960s and the 1980s, attempts to stabilise commodity prices at reasonable levels were a concrete form of "global partnership for development". This partnership took the form of several producer–consumer commodity agreements under the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) umbrella, and a Common Fund for Commodities. Most of the agreements closed or became ineffective, however, when consumer countries withdrew their interest and commitment – returning commodity prices to the vagaries of demand and supply.

To stem, and if possible reverse, such huge income losses by poor countries, Goal 8 should include a target to "ensure that commodity prices are stabilised at levels enabling adequate incomes for the exporting countries and producers". Countries could initiate a new round of producer–consumer commodity agreements aimed at rationalising the supply of raw materials while ensuring fair and sufficiently high prices. Or, export commodity producers could act to rationalise their global supply to better match global demand. Developed countries should not discourage producers from taking their own initiatives to improve commodity prices.

**The WTO problem.** It is now widely accepted that the rules and processes of the multilateral trading system are imbalanced, and must be improved. Failure to rectify the problems caused by existing agreements will hinder the realisation of several MDGs, including Goal 8. Developing countries' concerns include:

- that the expected benefits of the Uruguay Round – rich countries opening their agriculture and textiles markets – have not been realised;
- that implementing WTO obligations – such as prohibiting investment measures and many types of subsidies – make it harder to encourage domestic industry, let alone to pursue development strategies or meet development needs; and
- that they are under immense pressure from developed countries to support an expansion of the WTO's mandate to non-trade issues, in exchange for granting access to Northern agriculture markets or for considering "implementation issues" favourably.

Review and reform of the WTO are all the more critical given the failure of the Cancún Ministerial Conference – a wake-up call to consider what kind of trade system would serve development. We propose the following WTO reforms:

1. Developed countries should commit to meaningfully opening their markets in sectors, products and services in which developing countries are able to benefit (including textiles, agriculture, products processed from raw materials, and labour services).

2. The WTO review processes should consider:

- (a) giving developing countries adequate flexibility in implementing their Agriculture Agreement obligations, on the grounds of food security, rural livelihoods and poverty alleviation (e.g. food produced for domestic consumption, and small farmers'





PHOTO - JOSEPH FERBER / WORLD VISION

**Coconut processing in Sri Lanka. Developing countries must be allowed to benefit from trade in agricultural and other sectors.**

products, should be exempted from the Agreement's disciplines on import liberalisation and domestic subsidies);

(b) amending/clarifying the *TRIPS Agreement* to take into account development, social and environmental concerns (e.g. so that member countries can provide affordable medicines, prohibit patenting of life forms, or protect traditional knowledge and practices); and reviewing the appropriateness of the WTO's mandate over intellectual property issues;

(c) amending the *TRIMS Agreement* to reverse the prohibition on "investment measures", which causes developing countries to lose some important policy options for pursuing industrialisation; and

(d) exempting essential services for the public, especially the poor, such as water supply, health care and education, from the general rules and specific sectoral schedules of the *General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)*.

**3.** The WTO's operation and rules should be re-oriented so that development becomes the overriding principle. Rules that are "development distorting" should be removed, and developing countries should aim for "appropriate" rather than "maximum" liberalisation.

**4.** The WTO proposal to begin negotiations on "new issues" should be withdrawn, as these would add new heavy obligations on and bring little benefit to developing countries.

**5.** WTO decision-making should be democratised, more transparent, and enable full participation of developing countries. In contrast to the current "consensus" system, all members must be allowed to participate in meetings, have their views adequately reflected in negotiating texts, be free from pressure to accept other members' positions, and be given adequate time to consider proposals.

**6.** The scope of the WTO's mandate should be re-thought. It fails to seriously address some key world trade issues, including commodity

prices, while involving itself deeply in domestic issues such as intellectual property laws, domestic investment and subsidy policies. Non-trade issues should not be introduced in the WTO as subjects for rules.

With these changes, the WTO could better contribute to the design and maintenance of an international trading system that would support a global partnership for development.

#### **Need for global financial reform**

Reform of the global financial architecture is embedded within the first target under Goal 8: "Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system". A note elaborates that this "includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction, both nationally and internationally".

Lack of regulation and predictability in the global financial system has been a source of financial and economic destabilisation for many developing countries. Financial speculation has

burgeoned, with investment funds and speculators moving rapidly across borders in search of profits. Many developing countries were advised to deregulate and liberalise their financial systems, relaxing controls over the inflow and outflow of funds. This led to excessive short-term borrowing by local firms and banks, and to international players investing, speculating and manipulating currencies and stock markets. Meanwhile, the international financial institutions and major developed countries, eager for more market access, promoted liberalisation as beneficial and posing little danger.

**International-level measures.** Measures are required at international level to avoid new policies or agreements that would "lock in" or pressurise developing countries into further financial liberalisation:

1. The IMF should cease pursuing the amendment of its *Articles of Agreement* to give it jurisdiction over capital account convertibility, with the aim of disciplining developing countries to open up their capital account and markets.

2. OECD countries should stop any attempt to revive their proposed *Multilateral Agreement on Investment*, which would give unfettered freedom to capital flows.

3. Nor should the proposal for a multilateral investment agreement under the aegis of the WTO proceed, as this would put intense pressures on developing countries to deregulate inward and outward financial and investment flows.

4. The WTO's financial services agreement should be reviewed in light of the lessons on negative effects of financial liberalisation learned from the latest financial crisis.

To develop a stable and development-oriented global financial system, measures or mechanisms are needed that:

1. assist developing countries to prevent or avoid future debt and

financial crises, including by regulation and control of the type and extent of foreign loans that the public and private sectors are allowed to obtain;

2. enable countries that do experience debt repayment crisis to manage this effectively, with debtors and creditors sharing the burden equitably;

3. freely permit developing countries, without fear of penalties, to establish systems of regulation and control over the inflow and outflow of funds, especially speculative ones;

4. oblige governments of countries that are sources of internationally mobile funds to discipline and regulate their financial institutions and players to prevent them from unhealthy speculative activities abroad and from causing volatile capital flows;

5. control the activities of hedge funds, investment banks and other highly leveraged institutions, offshore centres, the currency markets and the derivatives trade;

6. create an international monetary system that enables the stability of currency exchange rates;

7. reform the IFIs, especially the IMF and the World Bank, to allow developing countries a fairer and more effective role in IFI policies and processes, and a greater proportion of the total shares in IFI equity;

8. review and modify conditionalities accompanying IMF–World Bank loans so that recipient countries can "own" the priority-setting, the policy assumptions, and the choice of financial, macro-economic, trade and other policies;

9. "deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long run" (Goal 8, Target 15); and

10. identify the sources of these problems, including those outside the financial arena (such as trade policies) to prevent future debt problems and financial crises.

**National-level measures.** In the absence of such international measures, developing countries may have no choice but to institute domestic measures to protect themselves from conditions that can lead to financial crisis and debt repayment problems.

In particular, they should consider regulating the extent of public and private sector foreign loans; prohibiting manipulation of their currencies and stock markets; and treating foreign direct investment selectively to avoid build-up of foreign debt. They must have scope to adopt macro-economic policies to counter recession whilst reducing the risks of volatility in the exchange rate and flow of funds. No country should be under pressure – particularly from IFIs – to refrain from making use of such controls.

In conclusion, it is patently clear that the world's trade and finance systems require an overhaul. More detailed targets, more accurate measures, policies and frameworks, and better indicators should be developed under Goal 8 to make the financial system a key component in a "global partnership for development" rather than the problem it now is. ■

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# Will the MDGs reach the forgotten poor?

Sylvia Beales

PHOTO: JAMES EAST / WORLDVISION



Nepali grandmother Laxmi (aged 75) helps a young village boy clean his teeth.

**AS THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN** for the Millennium Development Goals gets underway in the South and North, HelpAge International is asking how MDG programmes will change to reach out to the least powerful: the forgotten poor.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations in his 2003 report on the implementation of the *Millennium Declaration* said that the MDG road map was the "best hope for the world's poor".<sup>1</sup> But those of us working with older women and men, who are often the very poorest and most marginalised in very poor countries, have found that MDG programmes to date take no account of the growing numbers of older poor. Their issues are not being addressed and they are not included in poverty and MDG consultations – they are left on the margins.

Being "left out" is the one of the most consistent themes to emerge from our many years of consultations and participatory research carried out with poor older women and men. Sarah from Kenya told us: "We have voices, we want to be heard and most importantly to be understood."<sup>2</sup>

The over-60s are the fastest growing population group in the developing world, with numbers set to double from 30 to 60 million in under 50 years. Nearly 80% of the world's older people will be living in less developed countries. The highest growth rate of any age group will be among those aged 80 and over, with older women outnumbering older men.<sup>3</sup> Older women and men continue to work and contribute to family and community throughout their later years. Yet their longer life is often associated with deep and pervasive

chronic poverty, poor access to health services and transport, gender-based discrimination and social and political exclusion.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on children is beginning to highlight the needs and rights of their primary carers, who are in the main grandparents and older relatives. However, age-based abuse and the violation of fundamental human rights are under-reported and experienced widely across the developing world. Currently, poverty reduction programmes rarely mention older persons despite the growing evidence that the older poor number amongst the very poorest. Poverty programmes rarely target older people, nor benefit them, even indirectly. How can the MDGs help change this situation?

**Older people are the fastest-growing group in the developing world, yet poverty efforts rarely target them**

## Off the margins

In July 2003, at a special meeting in Cape Town on MDG achievement, Dr Kenneth Kaunda declared:

*"Friends, crucial to the success of the Millennium Development programmes is participation. People from all walks of life need to be involved in finding solutions to their lives. We need to bring to the centre all the people on the margins. These include young persons, the elderly, women, people of various ethnic groups, people from other religions and spiritual beliefs, the poor..."*

These words go to the heart of the MDG challenge. The problem is not only the shamefully limited resources that are being invested in equitable development. The core of the problem is that the poorest and the most marginalised are not being reached by, and are excluded from, MDG and

other poverty-related programmes. Reasons for this include:

- limited disaggregation or analysis of poverty's impacts on different categories of the poor;
- lack of attention to issues of difference, including age, gender, ethnicity and disability;
- MDG poverty-monitoring indicators not being inclusive of all poor groups;
- issues relating to older populations, the disabled and minority communities not being picked up in MDG-related programmes and data; and
- the poorest not participating in MDG consultations.

No wonder there are serious doubts as to whether the goals can be achieved by 2015.

Public policy on ageing is now explicitly linked to the existing international frameworks governing rights and poverty. In 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing committed all governments to explicitly include older populations in MDG programmes and analysis. Both consultation with the poor, and delivering their rights under the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which is applicable to all people of all circumstances, are essential to achieving the MDGs.

### **A more inclusive approach**

As John Hendry of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) put it at a UN/HAI/ Government of Tanzania-sponsored Ageing and Poverty workshop in October 2003, held in Tanzania: "Because the Millennium Development Goals are equated to be universal rights, they should be achieved in every country, equally between both male and female genders and for all age groups." At this workshop, UNDP affirmed that ageing is a relevant issue for poverty

reduction and MDGs, but this acknowledgement has not yet been translated into action. The 12 governments of Africa present admitted the invisibility of older populations in national poverty programmes and their related MDG initiatives, and pledged to take action to correct this, calling on the international community and civil society organisations for support.

### **Older persons must be seen as contributors to growth, partners in development, and agents for change**

Civil society organisations present called for inclusive approaches to policy development to ensure delivery of the MDGs for all persons, and offered their support to ensure that this happens. They pointed out the need to co-operate in analysing existing evidence on marginalisation, ageing and poverty, and demonstrated the benefits to development of increased budgetary allocations to all marginalised groups, including older people, in poverty programmes. They asked that older persons be accepted as contributors to growth at country level and that they be acknowledged as partners in development and as agents for change.

HelpAge International is calling for an affirmative rights-based framework to include older people and other marginalised groups in MDG and other poverty-related policy and programme development. This framework is based on two core principles:

- recognition and support of the contributions of marginalised people to poverty reduction and MDG achievement; and
- inclusion of the excluded in policy-making on poverty reduction and MDG programmes.

We recognise that the key challenge is to change policy makers' "mindsets" – to be willing to seek out the views, ideas and aspirations of the excluded

poor and incorporate these in policies and programmes that affect them directly. ■

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<sup>1</sup>Report of the Secretary General to the 58th Session of the General Assembly, *Implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration*, A/58/323, 2 September 2003, para 72. <sup>2</sup>HelpAge International, *The State of the World's Older People*, 2002, page 35. <sup>3</sup>HelpAge International, 2002.



# Why the serial target-setting must finally produce results

Alan Whaites

PHOTO - ARMAN AYALEW / WORLD VISION



*The MDGs spur us to tackle the world's skewed priorities which cause poverty.*

**THE G8 ARE SERIAL TARGET-**setters. Many politicians love targets – they seem so decisive, optimistic and bold – but achieving them is usually seen as a problem for the future, not the present. Whether it is the environment, development, HIV/AIDS or trade, the G8 has set a raft of targets. The proliferation of targets however, does not mean that the objectives can be divorced from some form of organisational ownership.

As is so often the case, this ownership is left with the multilateral system, which must try to bring some kind of substance to agreements that have been made. In the case of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations system has thrown itself into this task with considerable enthusiasm. The MDGs have, after all, largely emerged from processes that include the UN's own

Copenhagen development summit and subsequent initiatives on AIDS.

The UN is realistic enough to know that its commitment alone is not sufficient to achieve the goals. Only if G8 governments are held to account for their words do the goals have any chance of success. This means mobilising public opinion in richer states. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has therefore embarked on an MDG campaign that intends to create the momentum to put action behind the words. The campaign must first and foremost give meaning to MDG Goal 8, concerning international cooperation – the only MDG that has no numerical targets assigned.

## **UN, IFIs and G8 – lack of policy coherence**

For international co-operation, read

also "policy coherence". Here we encounter the thorny fact that some G8 countries undermine the good effects of their meagre levels of ODA by pursuing anti-developmental policies in crucially important areas such as trade. Until the rich world is willing to align more of its policies in pursuit of pro-poor economic growth, the MDGs will be tough to achieve.

## **The MDGs will be tough to achieve until the rich world's policies are aligned**

The UNDP campaign will not have an easy ride. In addition to the problem of pressing the G8 to act in pursuit of the MDGs, it must also secure important changes from their cousins in the multilateral system: the international financial institutions.

In principle, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund are fully committed to the MDGs. How could they not be, when the goals (as concepts) have reached a status akin to democracy and human rights? Yet neither institution has yet shown many signs of actually changing its practice substantially to bring the Goals any closer.

The World Bank maintains that its existing approach is already geared fully to poverty reduction. It also believes that its own Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper initiative is an important part of developing the practical infrastructure that can work towards the Goals.

The IMF has been less adept at painting its current activities as inherently MDG-friendly. Indeed, this would be a difficult argument to sell, given that the Fund has not yet fully shown signs of integrating its 1999 commitment to poverty reduction into all aspects of its work. But the most critical issue facing the Fund in relation to MDGs is the degree to which its lending advice actually leads to a stalling of the pro-poor growth that might hasten the achievement of

the Goals. Recently both Oxfam and World Vision have released briefings questioning the lending advice offered by the Fund, which usually favours a cautious, even contractionary approach. The Fund itself has now recognised that the low growth rates achieved by its poorest clients mean a 40-year timeframe for them to catch up with the current incomes of other poor countries.

The IMF's influence on macro-economic policy in developing states will be a key determinant of the degree to which they succeed in making the MDGs real. The Fund must consider carefully the importance of issues such as income distribution, policy flexibility in relation to inflation and fiscal policy, and also the political economy of economic policy.

#### **From words to action – the G8's task**

But just as the UN cannot single-handedly achieve the MDGs, neither can policy changes on the part of the IMF bring forward the Goals without the crucial actions that must be taken by G8 governments in the North.

These actions are not simply a question of money; the Goals cannot be achieved just by an injection of cash. Yet it is also true that they won't be achieved unless realistic levels of resources are available. The G8 made some very hopeful noises regarding their overall levels of official development assistance in 2002 at the time of the Monterrey summit on Finance for Development, but this has not yet proven to be more than another case of serial target-setting. Indeed, in recent years only the UK has made serious and consistent efforts to significantly increase its ODA. The UK, in many ways the honourable exception among the G8, has also pressed the cause of an International Finance Facility that would substantially increase the resources available for development.

If the MDGs are to be achieved, then other members of the G8 must also go beyond the perennial murmuring under their breath about that original

target of 0.7%. Richer countries need to dig into their own pockets for the sensible amounts of funding that are needed to overcome the appalling manifestations of poverty that are still with us.

After all, the G8 can view the task of poverty reduction as a matter of simple vested interest. The economic gains that development brings to richer states are well established, and the benefits for international stability have been much discussed. There is an underlying moral fissure in the wholeness of a world in which an affluent minority stands by while its poorer neighbours struggle on with problems that could be resolved readily – for a fraction of the G8's expenditure on defence, or even of their population's spending on vacations and luxury goods.

### ***The MDGs should not be allowed to become another expression of the world's fickleness***

World Vision believes that the MDGs are one set of targets that should not be allowed to simply become another expression of the fickleness of promises from the rich world. The MDGs represent a real opportunity to make inroads into the terrible consequences of poverty. They also spur us to tackle the causes of poverty – the skewed priorities of a world in which indifference, ideology and selfishness are allowed to block so many initiatives that might benefit the poor.

World Vision is committed to working for the realisation of the MDGs, both through its programmatic commitment to the poor and also through its advocacy for a more just and equitable world. As a Christian organisation, World Vision is conscious that each person is made in the image of God, and that God's desire is for each child to be able to live life in all its fullness.

The MDGs offer a rallying call to those who believe in the right of

every child to live in this fullness of life. An inevitable part of their mission must be pressing for real action and commitment on the part of the G8. Governments in all nations must be held to account for the wrong priorities that allow preventable diseases to kill so many children, that see two billion people living on less than US\$2 per day, and that tolerate the appalling costs of conflict in many parts of the developing world. ■

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<sup>1</sup>Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States

# Embracing Africa's MDG challenge

Wiseman Nkuhlu

PHOTO - WINNIE OGUNA / WORLD VISION



*Mozambique continues rebuilding after a long civil war, but has widespread unemployment. Can its young people look forward to a bright future?*

**THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT** Goals (MDGs), accepted by the United Nations and its organisations in 2000, reflect the currently dominant "human development" approach towards development facilitation. The eight MDGs incorporate a wide range of subsidiary goals and touch on the full spectrum of economic, social and environmental governance goals.

A comprehensive monitoring of development progress in individual countries would have to focus on as many of these goals and related indicators as practically feasible, given the problems of data availability and limited measurement capacity.

In as far as available statistics may limit the range of indicators relevant within the MDG spectrum, or sensitivities about some of the indicators may put limitations on their use by political leaders, the question arises whether alternative, adjusted or simplified sets of indicators may suffice. Underlying this question are a number of issues which seem relevant and important for the overall momentum in

the development-monitoring and development-facilitation process.

## Monitoring development in Africa

A key milestone in the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) process is to develop an all-African monitoring framework with respect to progress in human development, which will help drive future continental, sub-continental and national development and change processes. To be effective, it is envisaged that this approach:

- should not disregard realities, facts, documented trends and dynamics, whether negative or positive for the advancement of the continent and its states;
- should fully recognise the primary challenges facing the continent at this stage and in the foreseeable future, viz: poverty, unemployment, economic and social deprivation, inequalities, lack of democratic rights and practices, etc.;
- has to appreciate African countries' precarious position in the

globalisation process, a process that needs concerted and far-reaching reform in order to reduce disadvantageous developments and strengthen advantageous developments, but that also needs recognition as a process that cannot be reversed or ignored;

- has to squarely face problems of structural transformation and social upheaval currently confronting individual African countries and groups of countries; and
- has to creatively, and whenever relevant collectively, search for practical ways to address these challenges.

The broadening of the agenda of development goals and targets creates major challenges for NEPAD, with its focus on the African development environment.

## Africa's country reports will add value to MDG reporting and provide new insights for others

The United Nations Development Programme and other international institutions expect low-income countries to each prepare an MDG Country Report, outlining in a very concise way how (far) different targets have been met – i.e. what the different indicators reveal and how reliable the quantitative results are. NEPAD shall take the matter further and as a value addition to the MDGs shall:

- encourage countries to explain why (according to their own interpretation) they achieved (or failed to achieve) the targets;
- show how strategies often demand implementation at sub-national and local levels, rather than merely at national level;
- link the responses from groups of countries or regions on particular goals and targets to constitute bundles of real-life experiences;

- help explain the successes or failures in the light of changing perceptions about existing strategies and further feedback from those countries; and

- propagate the "lessons from experience" among regional or other groupings of African states and provide wider feedback to all African states about new insights into obstacles and breakthroughs in the process of pursuing MDGs in Africa.

### **African ownership**

The MDG setting and monitoring process present challenges for NEPAD. African governments, state departments, parastatals, academic and research bodies, civil society organisations and private sector leaders have to be made aware of the evolution of the MDGs, their significance for the attraction of external development funds, and the challenges arising for each country out of those goals. African countries have to be assisted via the NEPAD process to initiate the necessary steps towards MDG acceptance, adjustment and implementation. This process is likely to be easier or more accessible if African countries co-operate at various levels – national, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, business communities, and so on. To be manageable, it will be necessary to simplify the range of targets or indicators that are proactively pursued.

NEPAD recognises the importance of Africans taking ownership of and establishing a long-term vision for achieving the development goals. This will be pursued in close co-operation with relevant (local and national) stakeholders. Such an approach will further open up opportunities for efforts to prepare and disseminate "case studies" of successful and unsuccessful strategy implementation, as a learning tool for member countries and policy stakeholders. And it will assist in drafting an African approach towards development strategising and the monitoring of development progress. ■



PHOTO - ALISON PRESTON / WORLD VISION

***This trader in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, lost his small shop following a volcanic eruption which devastated 16,000 homes and the economy in this area already ravaged by violent conflict.***

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# The MDGs – under threat

Patricia Forner

**GIVEN THE RIGHT PUBLIC POLICIES,** and the political will to carry them out – in wealthy and developing countries – the eight Millennium Development Goals can be achieved. Although poor- and middle-income countries are at different stages of social, political and economic development, the MDGs have proven adaptable.

The first seven Goals are predicated on developing country governments' political will for reforms and wealthy donor nations' desire to co-ordinate development aid. Using the MDGs as a framework, developing country governments are committed to cutting poverty and hunger in half, improving health care, attacking TB, malaria and HIV/AIDS, increasing economic opportunities for women, promoting environmental sustainability and guaranteeing primary education for all by 2015. In wealthy and developing countries, government and civil society have the combined capacity to manage the resources and make the changes required to realise those goals. Meanwhile, Goal 8's call for a "global partnership" is heavily dependent on the will of wealthy country governments to honour just and fair trading rules and investment policies, as developing countries improve their own governance.

## Do we really mean business?

Trade agreements between wealthy and poor nations do not always result in the poor (in either wealthy or poor countries) suddenly prospering. Exports from the developing world are hit with tariffs, quotas and other protectionist mechanisms in wealthy countries' "competitive" markets.<sup>1</sup>

Wealthy countries' agricultural subsidies amount to over US\$300 billion a year – more than five times their total foreign aid budgets,<sup>2</sup> and \$30 billion more than Africa's entire gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>3</sup> If wealthy countries eliminated their agricultural subsidies and tariffs on manufactured goods by 2015, the World Bank estimates, low- and middle-income

countries would experience a net gain of 6% in their GDP. For an African country with an annual income per citizen of \$500 in 2000, this translates to \$503 [or \$1198 compounded] by 2015.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, halving poverty can't be accomplished by merely tweaking the GDP.

Highly indebted countries need special consideration for debt cancellation from international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the private banking sector. Many developing countries suffer poverty not only because they can't export products for hard currency, but also because they must service and pay the odious debts incurred by former dictators and despots. In sub-Saharan Africa, the burden of unpayable debt is more than the countries spend on health care and education combined.<sup>5</sup> Brazil, on the other hand, is a middle-income country, but how can it meet the goal of primary education for all and cut hunger by 50% through its *Escolar* and *Zero Hunger* programmes while it is paying a 26% interest rate on its market-imposed IMF loan, and producing 4.25% surplus of its annual budget (more than all investment in poverty reduction) for lowered capital?

## Poverty will not be halved by merely tweaking the GDP

The IMF continues to argue that fast economic growth will alleviate poverty, and the US preaches the panacea of free trade. They believe that if developing countries could increase their exports to earn enough hard currency, they could grow an economic base to break the poverty cycle. However, that has not worked for Latin America, where most countries liberalised their trade policies in the 1980s and 1990s, and where the greatest inequality between rich and poor persists.

Inimical social, political and economic structures need to die before they can be replaced with pro-poor policies and

reforms. Fledgling democratic developing countries must be allowed to decide for themselves – just as Europe and the US did over the past century – which trade and investment mechanisms they will apply, and when, in order to grow their own domestic industries. They also need the freedom to access and develop technology for the benefit of their citizens at an appropriate pace and an equitable price.

## New threat to global partnership

Indeed, the MDGs' battle against poverty, hunger and disease is now facing a new threat. Terrorist violence has to date directly affected a small proportion of the world's population.<sup>6</sup> Yet the war on terrorism, which is earning huge dividends for the security industry, is also undermining foreign aid investments in low- and middle-income countries that account for more than one third of the world's population. To prevent terrorism from threatening the Millennium Development Goal of global partnership, national leaders need to be reminded of the moral impetus for just social, political and economic reforms that work to reduce terrorism. This will take massive public pressure from voters in democratic societies everywhere. ■

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<sup>1</sup>For an excellent discussion of this issue, see Oxfam International, *Rigged Rules and Double Standards: Trade, globalisation and the fight against poverty*, 2002, at [www.maketrade4fair.com/assets/english/Report\\_English.pdf](http://www.maketrade4fair.com/assets/english/Report_English.pdf) <sup>2</sup>OECD figures show 2002 OECD agricultural subsidies at \$318 billion. <sup>3</sup>"Africa's Elusive Dawn", *The Economist*, 24 February 2002 <sup>4</sup>M. Weisbrot and D. Baker (of the Center for Economic Policy Research, Washington, DC), "False Promises on Trade", letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 24 July 2003. Even the compounded projection of \$1198 may not reflect improvement in poor people's incomes, since middle-class and wealthy people often benefit most from GDP increases. Purchasing power parity (PPP) is a more useful indicator of improvement in poor people's incomes. <sup>5</sup>Ibid. <sup>6</sup>See J. Sachs, "The World Must Not Let America Set Its Agenda", *The Financial Times*, 15 October 2003. It can of course be argued that "economic terrorism" affects far more people.

# The MDGs in an unaccountable global order

Nancy Alexander and Tim Kessler

## THE MDG CAMPAIGN IS NOT

likely to achieve its noble goals if it helps legitimise existing institutions that govern economic policy. During the 1990s, 54 developing countries suffered "negative growth", and 71 experienced only 0–3% growth.<sup>1</sup> The richest quintile increased its average per capita consumption by 18% between 1993 and 1997, while the poorest gained less than 2%.<sup>2</sup> From 1980 to 2000, growth in most countries implementing neo-liberal policies declined significantly compared to the previous 20 years. As Jan Vandemoortele of the United Nations Development Programme concludes: "If the 1980s were the 'lost decade for development', the 1990s were the 'decade of broken promises'."<sup>3</sup>

Clearly the Campaign must call for alternatives to neo-liberal policies. Yet these cannot be achieved while the international financial institutions (IFIs) undercut the creation of national poverty plans. The IFIs require that low-income governments prepare a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) – viewed as a "roadmap" to meeting the MDGs. Although PRSPs are touted as country-owned, the IFIs must "endorse" them for governments to qualify for finance and debt relief. As one World Bank official noted: "The PRSP is a compulsory process wherein the people with the money tell the people who want the money what they need to do to get the money."<sup>4</sup>

The IFIs use PRSPs to promote familiar structural adjustment policies, like privatising public services or cutting agricultural subsidies. UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown was quoted as saying that a "guerrilla assault" is needed on the so-called

Washington Consensus, which promotes neo-liberal policies as solutions to virtually all problems.<sup>5</sup> Another UN official said: "Pursuit of the MDGs could well be undermined...if there is no change in adjustment policies."<sup>6</sup>

## Poverty and *realpolitik*

Although PRSPs have time-bound performance benchmarks – ostensibly to help reach MDGs – these are also used to discipline borrowing countries. And the IFIs "trump" the PRSP in key policy domains:

- The IMF's *PRGF Factsheet* states that "the targets and policy conditions in a PRGF-supported program are drawn directly from the country's PRSP". In practice, the reverse is true: the IMF requires that MDG goals in PRSPs be consistent with its prescribed budget and structural policies. Since the IMF does not publicly disclose its own goals, participants in PRSP consultations proceed without participants knowing if there will be resources to implement policy priorities.

- The World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) can matter more than a PRSP in determining aid levels and policies. The Bank has focused its policy prescriptions on "weak" aspects of the CPIAs. Some borrowers, to make their PRSPs acceptable, have included privatisation of social and infrastructure services – but without adequate regulation, this is unlikely to help meet the MDGs.

Only one MDG – a "global partnership for development" – addresses the accountability of rich countries. This goal has commendable targets (e.g. debt relief, pro-poor trade), but nobody is likely to be held

accountable for achieving them. Far from using the international finance and trade system to reduce poverty, powerful countries are pursuing *realpolitik*. Comments by a senior US trade official<sup>7</sup> suggest that only countries backing Washington's policy of trade liberalisation should receive trade-related assistance from the World Bank and IMF – raising serious concern about the direction of US trade policy. The World Trade Organisation is asking that priorities from its trade policy review be integrated into PRSPs, making a mockery of "country ownership".

The MDGs may become a distant dream if global governance institutions are not radically reformed. Economist Dani Rodrik suggested a useful starting point: "International economic rules must incorporate 'opt-out' or exit clauses [that] allow democracies to reassert their priorities when these priorities clash with obligations to [IFIs]."<sup>8</sup> Critics of development assistance rightly maintain that governments will not achieve the MDGs until they are made accountable to their citizens. But that accountability cannot be imposed externally through blueprinted policies.

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<sup>1</sup>Human Development Report 2003 charts decade-long income drop in 54 countries", press release, UNDP, New York, 8 July 2003 <sup>2</sup>"MDGs at work at the country level", *New Millennium, New Agenda*, UNDP, March 2002 <sup>3</sup>"Are the MDGs feasible?", UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, July 2002 <sup>4</sup>John Page speaking to NGO Forum at InterAction in Washington, DC, 12 April 2000, quoted by Nancy Alexander <sup>5</sup>Quoted in Naomi Koppel, "Programs to Help Poor Nations Criticized", press release, Associated Press, 8 July 2003, at [www.pcusa.org/pcusa/wmd/hunger/undp-ap.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcusa/wmd/hunger/undp-ap.htm) <sup>6</sup>Richard Jolly, "Global Goals: The UN experience" for UNDP *Human Development Report 2003*

<sup>7</sup>Deputy US Trade Representative Peter Allgeier quoted in "US links trade aid to support for its trade policies", Reuters, Washington, 5 November 2003, accessed via <http://web.worldbank.org/> (News & Events, Press Reviews) <sup>8</sup>Dani Rodrik, "Four Simple Principles for Democratic Governance of Globalization", unpublished paper, May 2001

# Turning our challenges into opportunities

Mamphela Ramphela

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**SETTING OF QUANTITATIVE** goals as guideposts to assessing development progress, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is a new approach to national and global development. Our individual and collective commitments to fighting poverty, universal primary education, gender equality, child and maternal health, combating HIV/AIDs, promoting environmental sustainability and development partnerships are at the core of public policy. But the imperative of meeting the MDGs can sustain momentum at the institutional, operational and policy levels, and increase our awareness of the challenges ahead.

A global consensus on what the MDGs are does not necessarily translate into a consensus on the how and who of their implementation. And it is here that our challenges lie.

The first challenge is to create a long-term context specifically translated into a holistic, inclusive vision of development. The second is for the MDGs to be embraced and embedded within local, national and global identities, with this ownership driving MDG implementation. The third is to create civil, political and institutional spaces so that every part of society actively participates in and benefits from the implementation processes; this will certainly make the scaling-up process smoother, more meaningful and effective. The fourth is that these spaces must be permeated by the transparency, good governance, and accountability of actors and processes.

These issues form a quilt of opportunities, even in adverse situations. It is essential not to forget the macro aspects of development – the environment and conditions to fulfill these elements, including economic growth, investing in people,

sustainable development, and empowerment, equity and social justice. There is need for strong policy coherence as we advance the goal of poverty alleviation. This central mission of the World Bank demands that we create an enabling environment to assist those in poverty, since poverty is not only a matter of income, but also of freedom, institutions, human rights, identity, opportunity and security.

***If our global society is to be more than the sum of its parts, we need to embrace new values and new coalitions for change***

Societies at the national level cannot achieve this alone. If our global society and environment is to be more than the sum of its parts, we need global goals to match global values and global practices to attain progress for global beings. Economic policies of some countries are essential to the development of the rest of the world. Not only must development assistance help the poorest countries truly escape the traps of poverty, but trade policies must not work at cross purposes to development assistance. Agricultural subsidies and trade barriers in rich countries run into the hundreds of billions of dollars annually – not only outweighing their aid budgets, but also directly undercutting incomes and jobs in developing countries. Other trade policies slow down technology and skills transfer that can accompany more liberalised trade – yet science and technology are central to poverty alleviation and can provide innovative tools for empowerment and inclusion.

A concerted human development strategy is key to sustainable

development. Thinking about people, including people, empowering people, investing in people. Capacity, institutions, governance structures and MDG implementation must take people's quality of life as the true measure of development.

The challenge of developing-country resource constraints must be faced right now. Even under optimal circumstances, many countries are unlikely to generate sufficient domestic resources to finance the attainment of all of the MDGs. To illustrate: Ethiopia currently spends US\$74 million per year on primary education (less than \$14 per student); only 60% of the age group are enrolled and only about 25% complete primary school. To reach the 2015 target of every child completing primary education, expenditures would need to double, quality and delivery of schooling would need to be enhanced, and some US\$200 million in external financing would be needed annually. If Ethiopia were to rely solely on its own domestic resources, some estimates predict that the goal of 100% primary school completion would not be reached before 2060.

Just as critically, much of the \$52 billion of annual ODA is given under rules that make it difficult or impossible for recipient countries to spend it on their own terms and priorities. Untying aid and ensuring that it strengthens countries' capacity to tackle their own development challenges is key.

The MDGs must be pursued in a world of rights and responsibilities. Sustainable betterment for humanity demands embracing new values and new coalitions for change. Let us not forego this important moment. It is up to us to see that history is also written by those who are powerless, voiceless and dispossessed. It is our moral and ethical ethos that is calling for action now. ■

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# The MDGs and human rights

Kirsty Nowlan

PHOTO - PATRICKO CUEVAS / WORLD VISION



*Linking the Millennium Development Goals to human rights law will help ensure that minority groups benefit. About 70% of Chile's Mapuche indigenous people live in extreme poverty.*

**THOSE COMMITTED TO A** rights-based approach to development may find it useful to consider the numerous points of convergence between the MDGs and human rights. Primary among these are:

**1. The MDGs promote the realisation of the right to development and also of specific economic, social and cultural rights.**

The Goals relating to eradicating hunger, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (Goals 1, 4, 5 & 6) address Article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) and Articles 10 and 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR).

Goal 2 (universal primary education) promotes the realisation of Article 26 of the UDHR and Articles 13 and 14 of the ICESCR. And the commitment to building a global partnership for development (Goal 8) is responsive to the obligations outlined in UDHR Article 28 and ICESCR Article 2.

**2. Although human rights are not explicitly referred to in the text of the MDGs, they figure prominently in the *Millennium Declaration* from which the Goals are derived.**

This framework is important to achieving both the substance and spirit of the Goals. To illustrate: while the MDGs focus on attaining aggregate increases in the well-being of populations, the (human rights law)

**We need to prevent a scenario where MDG targets are achieved while inequalities are exacerbated**

principle of non-discrimination requires disaggregation in implementation and monitoring of the Goals, to attend to the experience of particular groups – such as minorities, indigenous peoples, women and children.

Incorporating the principle of non-discrimination into strategies to achieve the MDGs will help prevent a scenario where targets are achieved,

but existing inequalities are entrenched or exacerbated.

**3. The MDGs offer human rights advocates an opportunity to strengthen arguments for the legal status of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCRs).**

Debate persists around whether ESCRs occupy the same status in international law as civil and political rights, because the fulfilment of ESCRs is regarded as conditional on the capacities of duty holders (States). Although these arguments have been addressed through the development of the "progressive realisation" concept, and although the *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* confirmed the indivisibility of human rights, the perception remains that ESCRs are dependent on the largesse of parties other than the duty holders (such as wealthy states).

In the absence of an effective coercive authority to compel compliance, addressing the fulfilment of ESCRs appears to be more a question of politics than of law. What can solve this dilemma is a clear demonstration (in legal terms: "evidence") that action by developed and developing country governments towards attaining the MDGs is on the basis of international legal obligation. We need to establish a public discourse that recasts governments' MDG commitments as legal, rather than political, acts.

Fulfilment of MDG obligations can be characterised as action in accordance with Article 2 of the ICESCR. The *Millennium Declaration* locates the values and principles of the MDGs in the "[c]ollective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level" and "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms".

Conceived through reference to international human rights law, the MDGs recognise that poverty is a violation of fundamental rights and freedoms, and commit all nations to act to substantially reduce poverty. Arjun Sengupta has argued that if poverty is identified as a violation of human rights, "its eradication will have



all the moral and legal force of human rights obligations".<sup>1</sup>

**"If poverty is a violation of human rights, then poverty eradication has the moral and legal force of human rights obligations" (Sengupta)**

**Getting the message out.** The burgeoning number of civil society organisations that are committed to supporting the MDGs are uniquely positioned to promote MDG fulfilment as a realisation of international human rights obligations.

Those in developed countries can characterise commitments made under Goal 8 as a fulfilment of the ICESCR obligation "to take steps, individually and through international assistance" to achieve ESCRs. They

can communicate that developed countries are required to commit resources, and make appropriate changes to their trade and debt policies, not as a matter of charity, nor even of good foreign policy, but in compliance with their international human rights obligations.

Those in developing countries can leverage existing initiatives aimed at empowering poor communities to hold the State accountable for rights violations. This will become increasingly important as resources are made available for achieving the MDGs. The imperative is to work with local communities to ensure that those resources are used for the purpose for which they were intended: the progressive realisation of ESCRs. ■

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<sup>1</sup>Sengupta, Arjun K, 'Poverty Eradication as Implementing the Right to Development – Human Rights Approach to Development Cooperation', Presentation to Human Rights in Developing Countries, [www.dse.de/ef/human\\_rights/sengupta.htm](http://www.dse.de/ef/human_rights/sengupta.htm) (downloaded 12 November 2003). Arjun Sengupta is Adjunct Professor of Development and Human Rights at the Harvard School of Public Health, and Independent Expert on the Right to Development in the Human Rights Commission, India.



# Development of people, not just pockets

Nils Kastberg

## THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT

Goals to reduce poverty and hunger, improve health and strengthen global partnership by 2015, are not the first promises governments have made in these areas. In health, education and child survival, to name a few, goals were set in the 1970s and 1980s to be achieved by the year 2000.

While significant progress was made in many areas of human development, it was clear at major global conferences in the 1990s – on Children, Human Rights, Food Security, Sustainable Development, and other pressing issues – that the many earlier targets would not be reached by the fêted "Y2K". So governments set new targets to be achieved by 2015, using 1990 data as the baseline, and summarised the broad ambitions of those conferences in the *Millennium Declaration*, and the many targets into the eight Millennium Goals.

The Millennium agenda has a deeper significance, beyond the setting of targets. If the fight for human rights in earlier decades concentrated on civil and political rights, the Millennium Goals accord the economic, social and cultural rights the equal standing and recognition they should always have had. Furthermore, this simple set of broad goals brings together North and South – not on the basis of charity or goodwill, but finally, in acknowledgment that both have homework to do if justice and peace, fair trade and prosperity are to be the air we breathe in our countries, and between our countries, in coming years.

UNICEF shares the firm belief, with many other development and humanitarian organisations, that poverty can best be reduced if you start with children and their mothers.

Children and adolescents are over-represented among the poor: in Latin America, for instance, while 44% of the population lives in poverty, 59% of youth live below the poverty line. In terms of the MDGs, children and adolescents represent the highest proportion of the poor and the hungry (Goal 1), and of those without access to safe drinking water and who live in slum areas (Goal 7); and UNICEF of course applauds the MDGs' explicit focus on the rights of the young generation: universal primary education (Goal 2), gender equality in primary and secondary education (Goal 3), infant mortality (Goal 4), maternal mortality (Goal 5) and youth employment (Goal 8).

Yet with so many past broken promises at national and international levels, are the *Millennium Declaration* and its Goals also set for failure?

### A shaky start

Implementation has not started well. Economic woes in the period following 11 September 2001 have pushed many countries into recession. On the issue of increased development co-operation, the March 2002 Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey saw new pledges of official development assistance (ODA), yet many fear that these pledges, if they materialise, will concentrate into high-profile commitments such as reconstruction in Iraq. And few developed countries have set a timetable to increase their ODA to 0.7% of their Gross National Income, with only four having reached or passed this target.

Meanwhile, trade issues – such as developing countries' access to Northern markets, and agricultural

subsidies in Europe, the US and Japan – were to be negotiated within the World Trade Organisation (WTO), but the September 2003 talks at Cancún collapsed, and bilateral trade agreements being worked out do not give the human development dimension the space it deserves.

Fifty countries are poorer today than they were ten years ago; the gap between rich and poor within countries and between countries has greatly widened; the HIV/AIDS pandemic is cutting average life expectancy by a decade or two in many countries. Worldwide, there are 190 million children under 15 in hard labour; a culture of violence and exploitation in families, communities, towns and countries; conflict and war. Children and adolescents are suffering, used and abused on an unprecedented scale.

## **The Goals belong to all of us – they must not remain the talk of the uncommitted, cynics or development enthusiasts**

Perhaps reinforced by these challenges to the spirit and letter of the Millennium Goals, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the UN agencies and organisations, and a broad spectrum of development, humanitarian and other civil society organisations, see the Millennium agenda as an opportunity for change. But how will this change happen?

### Take it to the people!

**First**, the Millennium Agenda and Goals do not belong only to the UN or to governments. They represent the rights and the duty of all people. Goal 8's "global partnership" thus concerns all: every church, every non-governmental organisation, each association of women and each individual. The goals must become known by all citizens, and not remain the talk of uncommitted governments, cynical media or development enthusiasts.

As citizens North and South learn in concrete terms what the Millennium Development Goals mean in their own contexts, they can start demanding that their politicians make the Goals national development priorities. In health, for instance, the "Health For All" revolution of 1977 must now become the "All for Health" revolution.

**Second**, all governments should be required to have a national implementation plan. Some countries developing their national plans are aspiring to surpass the Millennium Goals: the effort of President "Lula" of Brazil, one of the world's larger countries, goes beyond the Millennium Goal of reducing hunger in half by 2015 – he has made "Zero Hunger" his national agenda.

**Third**, implementation must be measured, reported upon and political leaders held accountable for progress or lack thereof. The UN is setting in place a common system for reporting. In 2005, the Secretary-General will provide a "one-third of the way to 2015" report to the world community.

**Fourth**, we know that enormous disparities hide behind global averages, between and within countries. Thus, the Goals must be translated to concrete, measurable targets all the way down to the local level. For example: if half of the school children within a municipality drop out before completing primary school, municipal authorities and residents must be aware of and support local targets to achieve full enrolment.

**Fifth**, countries with the highest achievements in human development are those that have continuously and efficiently invested in children and adolescents, creating decent paying jobs for adults at the same time. Investing in children is a way to release them from the "hereditary" poverty into which they were born – to give them a better world than the



PHOTO - SANJAY SOHWAL / WORLD VISION

*Village girls studying at a World Vision evening class near Bangalore, southern India. Many of them left school to work as domestic servants. Local authorities and residents alike must support the goal of all children completing their schooling.*

one we got. Even without economic growth, the health of children can be improved if those sectors of the state budget are protected. This is an advocacy challenge for us all!

**Floor, not ceiling**

In conclusion, the Millennium Development Goals do not "design" a development model, nor seek to replace the knowledge and experience gained in years of development and community work.

**We must release children from "hereditary" poverty – giving them a better world than the one we got**

Rather, they provide a "meeting place" for collective action and a beacon on the time horizon, by which to measure progress as we go along.

Above all, they embody a new ethic – that of placing people above pockets and purses of money. Our work towards the Goals must be guided by respect for human rights and respond to the enormous social debt that has

accumulated, especially our debt to the children and youth left behind and excluded in the past decades of unfulfilled promises.

But the Millennium dream will remain a dream unless we all demand it and hold governments, economic actors and all sectors of society accountable for making it a true priority. The Millennium Goals are a floor, not a ceiling – below which we cannot live in a true global world. The clock is ticking: get involved and contribute! ■

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# The MDGs and NGOs

Jaisankar Sarma

PHOTO - ANDRES VERA / WORLD VISION



*This woman in a World Vision-assisted community in Cochabamba, Bolivia, now has clean running water at her house. Previously she walked two kilometres a day to collect water.*

**SINCE THE MILLENNIUM** Development Goals (MDGs) were agreed as a global agenda for poverty reduction, several governments and multilateral agencies have adapted the Goals as a framework for policy and programme formulation. Targets and indicators have been developed for monitoring and reporting progress towards the Goals.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are often mentioned as a key civil society actor in contributing to the achievement of the MDGs. Presumably, their grassroots development experience and knowledge can support the implementation. But how might this actually happen? Many NGOs have begun to reflect on the relevance of the MDGs to their work, and to make

explicit the links between their work and the Goals.

An immediate problem for both is that the MDGs exclusively focus on tangible aspects of development. The philosophy underlying the Goals does not reflect the more holistic understanding of poverty to which many NGOs subscribe, and which was seen in the earlier World Bank study *Voices of the Poor*. It leaves out important dimensions of poverty such as isolation/exclusion, powerlessness and vulnerability. MDG targets and indicators have a heavy bias towards socio-economic development concerns.

Nonetheless, advocacy NGOs recognise that the MDGs provide a platform for advocacy and public policy work in both the North and

the South in relation to the poverty reduction agenda. Operational NGOs envisage being able to demonstrate their effectiveness by measuring and reporting their own contributions towards achieving MDG targets. This article concerns itself with the latter.

## Measuring NGO contributions

On the practical level, there are inherent limitations in NGOs' capacity to measure MDG indicators. The MDGs were developed for monitoring at macro levels. Many of the methods used to measure indicators of MDG attainment cover large populations, are expensive, and in some cases don't provide useful information for NGOs programme management purposes. It is important for outcome-oriented NGOs to be able to identify their contributions to the MDGs. The table on the opposite page shows a simple analysis of what might be possible for NGOs to measure.

## The table at right shows some possible NGO contributions

In summary, the macro-level objectives of the MDGs are beyond the reach of "hierarchy of objectives" programme designs developed by NGOs such as World Vision, but many of the methods for measuring MDGs involve secondary data collection might provide opportunities for NGO participation. It would be very difficult for NGOs to establish attribution, or a cause-effect relationship, between their programme interventions and MDG progress, however, and more work may be needed to convince outcome-oriented development NGOs that their role in aligning their work with the MDGs will be worth the time and effort required. ■

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Millennium Development Goals /	MDG indicators	Comments
<b>ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER</b>		
<p>1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day</p> <p>2. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proportion of population below \$1 a day</li> <li>- Poverty gap ratio (incidence x depth of poverty)</li> <li>- Share of poorest quintile in national consumption</li> <li>- Prevalence of underweight in children (under five years of age)</li> <li>- Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X - NGOs may not have the resources to study poverty gap ratio at programme level.</li> <li>✓ - NGOs do measure underweight as part of their nutrition programmes.</li> <li>? - Measuring dietary energy consumption is not beyond the realms of NGO programmes, however, this is not a commonly used indicator in NGO programmes.</li> </ul>
<b>ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION</b>		
<p>1. Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Net enrolment ratio in primary education</li> <li>- Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5</li> <li>- Literacy rate of 15- to 24-year olds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ - These indicators are regularly measured in NGO programmes and there are standard instruments available. NGOs might be able to measure their contribution towards this goal.</li> </ul>
<b>PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN</b>		
<p>1. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education</li> <li>- Ratio of literate females to males among 15- to 24-year olds</li> <li>- Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector</li> <li>- Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ - The only indicator that could be beyond the scope of NGOs to measure is ratio of women in non-agricultural waged employment – this might require a complex method. Simple proxies could be researched and developed for NGO use.</li> </ul>
<b>REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY</b>		
<p>1. Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under-five mortality rate</li> <li>- Infant mortality rate</li> <li>- Proportion of one-year-old children immunised against measles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ - Immunisation against measles is commonly measured in the health programmes of NGOs.</li> <li>? - Sampling for under-five mortality rate from within NGO programme areas might be difficult. NGOs might be able to measure crude mortality rates.</li> </ul>
<b>IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH</b>		
<p>1. Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maternal mortality ratio</li> <li>- Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? - Mother and Child Health programmes of NGOs measure proportion of births attended by skilled personnel. However maternal mortality ratio might be beyond the reach of NGOs to measure.</li> </ul>
<b>COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA, AND OTHER DISEASES</b>		
<p>1. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS</p> <p>2. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HIV prevalence among 15- to 24-year old pregnant women</li> <li>- Contraceptive prevalence rate</li> <li>- Number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS</li> <li>- Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria</li> <li>- Proportion of population in malaria-risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment measures</li> <li>- Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis</li> <li>- Proportion of TB cases detected and cured under DOTS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ - All the indicators for this goal are specialised indicators and should / could be part of specific NGO programmes aimed at these issues. These indicators should be the focus of programmes / countries with high prevalence and the expertise to measure these things.</li> </ul>
<b>ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY</b>		
<p>1. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes, and reverse the loss of environmental resources</p> <p>2. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water</p> <p>3. Have achieved, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Change in land area covered by forest</li> <li>- Land area protected to maintain biological diversity</li> <li>- GDP per unit of energy use</li> <li>- Carbon dioxide emissions (per capita)</li> <li>- Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source</li> <li>- Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation</li> <li>- Proportion of population with access to secure tenure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ - NGO programmes do study the issues of access to improved water sources and improved sanitation.</li> <li>X - Most of the environmental measurements are national-level and sophisticated – not so relevant at the programme (micro) level.</li> <li>? - Urban/rural disaggregation of several of the above indicators may be relevant for monitoring improvement in the lives of slum dwellers)</li> </ul>
<b>DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>		
<p>1. Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some of the indicators will be monitored separately for the least developed countries, Africa, landlocked countries, and small island developing states.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X - These are macro-level indicators beyond the scope of NGOs to track.</li> <li>✓ - However, NGO indicators on local community participation, CBO capacity building, etc., do measure civil society development, participation in local development processes, and ability to influence policy.</li> </ul>



# Seizing the time – global advocacy on the MDGs

Steve Bradbury

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## **NOW IS THE TIME.**

The endorsement of the Millennium Development Goals by the world's heads of state provides us with an extraordinary opportunity to dramatically shrink the world of poverty. What makes these goals so remarkable is their clear commitment to a timetable.

By being so time-specific, they give us an exceptional set of "advocacy levers". The development community, and all who are committed to working for a more just and compassionate world, can and must use these levers to hold our leaders accountable and insist that they fulfil their promises. If we fail in this, the MDGs will undoubtedly go the way of many other "commitments" to end poverty: another set of broken promises to the poor, another tragic joke at their expense.

In his compelling address at the Annual Meeting of the World Bank in September 2003, James D. Wolfensohn stressed this time-sensitivity – the urgency of acting now against poverty and injustice:

*"It is time to take a cold, hard look at the future. Our planet is not balanced. Too few control too much, and too many have too little to hope for... If we act together now, we can change the world for the better. If we do not, we leave greater and more intractable problems for our children... There is no better time than now to join in a common effort to make a better world. You are the global leaders to make it happen. Delay is reckless. This is time for courage and action – for a new vision of the future." (emphasis mine)*

Now is the time. This same theme was picked up by the authors of the 2003 *Human Development Report*:

*"...today the world has an unprecedented opportunity to deliver on the commitment to eradicating poverty. For the first time there is genuine consensus among rich and poor countries that poverty is the world's problem. And it is together that the world must fight it." (emphasis mine)*

## **Momentum for change**

I hope and pray that over the next few years we will see the emergence of a host of national and global grassroots campaigns clustered around the MDGs. Together, reinforcing one another, these campaigns could build an inexorable and irresistible momentum for change. Now is the time. Poverty can be halved by 2015.

In recent years we have seen the enormous potential for good of well-organised, IT-savvy global campaigns that express the widespread moral outrage in our communities against the persistent violence of poverty. We can take heart from the achievements of recent campaigns such as those that have urged the elimination of landmines and cancellation of the crippling debt repayments required of most low-income countries. When political will to fulfil the MDGs wavers, as it surely will, a massive grassroots campaign in support of those goals will reinvigorate it.

## **The Micah Challenge**

This conviction is one of the core motivations behind the Micah Challenge, a global MDG advocacy initiative of the Micah Network and World Evangelical Alliance. We are

persuaded that this may well be a God-given time of unique potential. Has there ever been an occasion before when the intentions of the world's leaders echo something of the mind of the Biblical prophets and the teachings of Jesus concerning the poor? What better time, then, for Christians around the world – poor and rich – to raise our voices in a prophetic and urgent call to governments, insisting that they deliver on their MDG promises to the poor?

## **Has there been an occasion before when world leaders' intentions echoed the Biblical prophets?**

At the heart of the Micah Challenge is a deeply spiritual conviction: that the Creator of the universe requires all governments to "give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and destitute", and to "rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (Psalm 82). That regardless of their political ideology or religious persuasion, all governments are accountable to God for their performance in delivering policies that respond effectively to the needs of poor and oppressed communities. We will insistently remind our leaders of this accountability.

Alongside the political dimension of the Micah Challenge is its call to Christians everywhere to commit to work as agents of hope, for and with the poor. In the words of the prophet Micah (6:8), we are required to pursue justice, be passionate about mercy, and walk humbly with God. The implications of this are profoundly spiritual, and practical: it is not enough to "talk the talk"; we must also "walk the walk" of justice and mercy. ■

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*Steve Bradbury is National Director of TEAR Australia, Chair of the Micah Network, and International Co-Chair of the Micah Challenge. See [www.micahnetwork.org](http://www.micahnetwork.org)*

# Faith to reach out

Dean Hirsch

PHOTO: JON WARREN / WORLD VISION



*Members of an HIV-positive AIDS support group in Malawi visit, talk and pray with HIV+ orphans and their caregivers, and help with tasks like carrying water and cooking. The group's leader has strong words for Christians around the world who think the pandemic doesn't concern them.*

**IN THE GOSPEL STORY,** "a man full of leprosy" approaches Jesus, falls prostrate to the ground and pleads to be made clean. Jesus stretches out his hand, touches the man and says, "Be made clean". And the leprosy is gone immediately.

I often think of that story when I encounter people living with AIDS. In many ways, those living with AIDS are the lepers of today. They are often shunned and feared. They suffer exclusion and discrimination. And many die ashamed and alone, afraid to reveal their disease.

One of the UN Millennium Development Goals is to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS. To achieve this goal, we have tended to concentrate on education (preventing HIV infection through abstinence, fidelity and condoms) and medical science (drug treatments to prolong life and avoid mother-to-child transmission).

As vital as these approaches are, we have often failed to reach out – as Jesus did – and touch the people living with this deadly disease. We currently have no cure for AIDS, but we do have

a cure for many of the symptoms and situations that surround AIDS. We can cure people of loneliness, of shame, of fear, and of isolation. We can provide emotional and material support to their families. And we can offer acceptance and love.

A recent UNICEF study on the response of faith-based organisations to children orphaned or made vulnerable by AIDS in Africa had some noteworthy findings. While faith-based organisations – typically local churches – enjoy very little funding, they are very successful in addressing the multi-dimensional impact of AIDS on children. Local churches are providing food, shelter, counselling, foster care, school assistance, health services, and social and spiritual support to children and others affected by AIDS.

They're able to provide these services because their members volunteer to do the work. And why do they volunteer? Because like Jesus and the leper who begged to be made clean, they are inspired by faith – a faith that sees past the obstacles to the human heart.

Education and medicine are important tools in combating the AIDS epidemic. But faith in a loving God who desires fullness of life for all His creation is equally important. ■

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*Dean Hirsch is International President of World Vision.*

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## WORLD VISION

is a Christian relief and development partnership that serves more than 85 million people in nearly 100 countries. World Vision seeks to follow Christ's example by working with the poor and oppressed in the pursuit of justice and human transformation. Children are often most vulnerable to the effects of poverty. World Vision

works with each partner community to ensure that children are able to enjoy improved nutrition, health and education. Where children live in especially difficult circumstances, surviving on the streets, suffering in exploitative labour, or exposed to the abuse and trauma of conflict, World Vision works to restore hope and to bring justice. World Vision recognises

that poverty is not inevitable. Our Mission Statement calls us to challenge those unjust structures that constrain the poor in a world of false priorities, gross inequalities and distorted values. World Vision desires that all people be able to reach their God-given potential, and thus works for a world that no longer tolerates poverty. ■

# MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## 1 - Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

### Target for 2015:

- Halve the population of people living on less than a dollar a day and those who suffer from hunger

## 2 - Achieve universal primary education

### Target for 2015:

- Ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school

## 3 - Promote gender equality and empower women

### Target for 2015:

- Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

## 4 - Reduce child mortality

### Target for 2015:

- Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five

## 5 - Improve maternal health

### Target for 2015:

- Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio

## 6 - Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

### Target for 2015:

- Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

## 7 - Ensure environmental sustainability

### Target for 2015:

- integrate sustainable development principles and reverse environmental loss
- halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water
- by 2020, significantly improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

## 8 - Develop a global partnership for development

### Target for 2015:

- an open trade & finance system; good governance, development & poverty education
- address least developed, landlocked and small island countries' needs
- deal comprehensively with debt
- decent and productive work for youth
- affordable essential drugs
- access to the benefits of new technologies

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