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Tsunami Spotlights Long-Term Development Needs

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Tsunami Spotlights Long-Term Development Needs

Bold Action Plan to Halve Poverty by 2015 Unveiled Today Across Asia

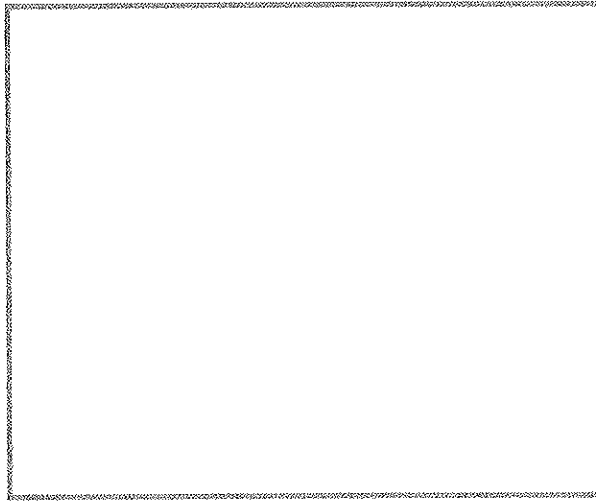
18 January 2005, Bangkok –“Each year, half a million women die giving birth – that is the death toll from one Asian tsunami every four months. Every year, three million people die of AIDS. That is one tsunami every three weeks. Every year, 11 million children die of hunger and poverty-related and preventable disease. That is one tsunami every 5 days,” said Joana Merlin-Scholtes, the Resident Representative for United Nations Development Programme in Thailand , today at the Asia launch of The UN Millennium Project report, Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

This ground-breaking action plan was released as the Asian tsunami disaster focuses global attention on the need, scale and effectiveness of aid to the world’s poor. The enormously generous response to the tragedy sent a powerful message that ordinary citizens in wealthier nations do in fact support such aid - if they clearly see the need and if they believe the funds they provide will reach and help the people in need. The Project’s plan addresses these legitimate concerns - and shows that targeted investments in essential public services such as health, education and infrastructure make poor communities less vulnerable to such disasters and to the hardships of disease, hunger and environmental degradation.

“It is of utmost importance not just to think about the immediate emergency response, but to start focusing on the medium to long-term work of restoring livelihoods, getting people back on their feet, rebuilding social infrastructure, rehabilitating the environment, and mitigate the impact of the tsunami on the longer-term MDGs,” said Ms. Merlin-Scholtes. “There is a natural tendency for dramatic disasters to capture people’s attention and overshadow the less photogenic long-term development work.”

Global Poverty-Related Deaths According to the Millennium Project Report

Relative to Current Tsunami Deaths



- 3 million people die annually from the AIDS virus – that's the death toll from 19 Asian tsunamis.
- 10.8 million children under 5 die annually from preventable diseases – that's the death toll from 68 Asian tsunamis.
- 2 million people die annually from malaria – that's the death toll from 12 Asian tsunamis.

- 2.2 million people die annually from contaminated water – that's the death toll from 14 Asian tsunamis.

- 530,000 women die annually from poor access to medical care – that's the death toll from 4 Asian tsunamis.

"The most pressing issues facing the developing world today are poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, natural disaster and civil strife. These problems are aggravated by the lack of access to education, employment, energy, food, healthcare, sanitation, shelter and water," said Dato' Ir Lee Yee-Cheong, Chair of the Millennium Project Task Force on Science and Technology at the launch of The Millennium Project. "The big hearted global response from governments, the rich and the poor alike, to the tsunami disaster gives us hope that our global village can and will achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that will help the same poor, starving and disadvantaged humanity over the next decade."

"The tsunami puts an end to the myth of aid fatigue among taxpayers and voters in rich countries," said Ms. Merlin-Scholtes. "We could do business as usual, with inadequate resources, poorly used development aid, and unfair terms of trade, or, 2005 can be a turning point for long-term development investment in the form of rigorous action taken, new resources flowing, and the world working together to make the goals in the Millennium Project a reality."

ABOUT THE MILLENNIUM PROJECT

The Millennium Project is the most comprehensive strategy for combating global poverty, hunger and disease. A blue-ribbon team of 265 of the world's leading development experts have proposed a package of scores of specific cost-effective measures that together could cut extreme poverty in half and radically improve the lives of at least one billion people in poor developing countries by 2015.

"Until now, we did not have a concrete plan for achieving the Millennium Development Goals," said Prof. Jeffrey D. Sachs, the economist who directed the three-year UN Millennium Project. "The experts who contributed to this huge undertaking have shown without a doubt that we can still meet the Goals—if we start putting this plan into action right now."

