



## UN urges action in lifting millions out of poverty

By Caroline Overington, Herald Correspondent in New York

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The number of people living on less than \$US1 (\$1.30) a day could be cut by half in less than 10 years, a United Nations report says.

The result would be tens of millions of lives saved, with women and children benefiting most. Moreover, the UN says its plan, published on Monday, is "utterly affordable".

"The practical solutions exist," the report says.

"All that is needed is action."

However, in order to lift 500 million people out of dire poverty, developed nations, including Australia, need to double the amount they spend on foreign aid.

"Australia's aid program is clearly not sufficient," the lead author of the UN report, Jeffery Sachs, a professor at Columbia University, said on Monday.

"According to the most recent data, which is a year old, Australia spends about 25 cents out of every \$100 of income on aid."

Dr Sachs said Australia should aim to spend 50 cents of every \$100 on foreign aid, as should Japan, Germany and Italy, which at present spend half as much.

The United States would need to increase its aid from \$US25 billion to \$US80 billion a year to meet the UN's target.

But the report does not place the burden of eradicating poverty entirely on developed nations. Dr Sachs said nations ruled by dictators, and that denied basic human rights, needed to be reformed.

Dr Sachs's report incorporates the findings of 265 scholars and researchers. It is the first of a series of initiatives designed to focus the world's attention on poverty, and comes five years after world leaders agreed to the UN's Millennium Development Goals, which aim to erase poverty, get girls into schools, and give more people access to safe water.

Between 1990 and 2002 the number in extreme poverty fell by an estimated 130 million, but some countries, particularly in Africa, are going backwards.

The report says 1 billion - or one in six - people live on less than \$US1 a day. Another 2.7 billion live on less than \$US2 a day.

Dr Sachs said developed nations should make it a priority to "help the poorest people in the world get a foothold on the ladder of development".

However, the report also noted that only 30 cents of each aid dollar reached the poor.

Dr Sachs said the developed world should increase foreign aid from 0.25 per cent of gross national product to 0.54 per cent in 2015. Among industrial nations, only Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and Luxembourg meet that goal.

The report says there is "little case for large-scale aid" for the likes of Burma, North Korea and Zimbabwe, whose political leaders are not committed to improving human rights. The report also recommends 17 "quick win" policies that it says could swiftly translate into millions of saved lives.

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

The report, *Investing in Development*, will be presented to the Group of Eight meeting in Britain in July, and to the UN General Assembly in September.

## First steps for immediate gains

### What can be done immediately to save millions of lives in the developing world:

- Distribute free mosquito nets and anti-malaria medication to all children in regions where malaria is a problem.
- End fees for primary school, and for essential health-care services.
- Get anti-retroviral AIDS treatment to 3 million AIDS patients in developing countries.
- Provide school meals to all children in "hunger hot spots", using locally produced food.
- Replenish soil nutrients by providing free chemical fertilisers to small land holders in developed countries.

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