

**A REPORT ON THE UNITED NATIONS'  
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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In 2006-2007 LWVUS, in partnership with the Millennium Campaign of the Better World Foundation, offered grants to state and local Leagues for organizing educational outreach activities about the Millennium Development Goals. We did not apply for one of these grants, but we were inspired by the LWVUS project to undertake this report, and in it we have tried to meet the grant’s requirement, set out in the application, to design a MDGs project which would “support and promote dialog and a diversity of opinions.” (Grant application, LWV Global Democracy Program, April 2006)

<b>Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)</b>	
<b>Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b>	Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day
	Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
<b>Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education</b>	Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
<b>Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women</b>	Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
<b>Goal 4: Reduce child mortality</b>	Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate
<b>Goal 5: Improve maternal health</b>	Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio
<b>Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</b>	Target 7: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
	Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
<b>Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability</b>	Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources
	Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
	Target 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers
<b>Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development</b>	Target 12: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, nondiscriminatory trading and financial system Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally
	Target 13: Address the special needs of the least developed countries  Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction
	Target 14: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly)
	Target 15: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term
	Target 16: In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth
	Target 17: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
	Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

## How Did We Get the MDGs?



### The UN Charter, 1945

**identifies 4 purposes, one of which is a progenitor of the MDGs**

“To achieve international cooperation in solving problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms.”



### UN Sponsored Summits and Conferences

The Millennium Development Goals are a crystallization of commitments which were made during the 1990s. Some issues which are important to development, such as population planning, are not included because international meetings did not produce agreement



### "Millennium Declaration" from the United Nations Millennium Summit - September 2000

The MDGs are implicit in the Millennium Declaration, adopted by all 189 member nations – and signed by 147 heads of state and government.



### "Road Map Toward the Implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration," report by the Secretary-General - September 2001

Includes the Millennium Development Goals, with associated numerical targets – e.g. extreme poverty will be halved between 1990 and 2015 – and indicators by which this change is to be measured



### "Monterrey Consensus," International Conference on Financing for Development - 2002

This embodies a commitment to a global partnership to achieve the MDGs, and addresses the financial requirements for attaining them.



### "Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Overview", report by UN Millenium Project, Jeffrey D. Sachs, Director - 2005

The UN Millennium Project was commissioned by Secretary-General Kofi Anan to propose the best strategies for meeting the Millennium Development Goals.



### Ongoing UN Direction of and Publication about the MDGs

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has overarching responsibility for tracking MDG efforts, and for issuing annual progress reports.

## INTRODUCTION

In September 2000 the world's leaders met to reaffirm the principles and objectives of the United Nations. The leaders of 189 countries agreed that they "have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level." And turning to the objective of "Development and poverty eradication," they resolved "to create an environment – at the national and global levels alike – which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty." (*Declaration*, p. 4)

Creating this environment and securing these principles is to be done in the context of the new millennium, which is the context of globalization. In the opening section of their *Millennium Declaration* these leaders acknowledged the inequities of globalization, a system whose costs and benefits are unevenly shared, and concluded "that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people." (*Declaration*, p. 1)

The *Declaration* continues for several pages which contain, in nascent form, the development objectives now known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Succinctly put, they are:

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Subsequently these MDGs have been elaborated to include a time frame, numerical targets used to measure progress and signal success, a framework for their financing, and strategies for their attainment. The Millennium Development Goals have become a *program*, and it is this we will discuss in some detail in the following pages. But first, we want to spell out more fully the *mission* this program is designed to accomplish.

As they have been elaborated in a series of UN documents, it has become clear that a great deal is expected of the goals. When attained, they are meant to simultaneously improve the lives of individuals, contribute to a country's development, and enhance global security. The following examples are intended to suggest how the goals might do this:

- It is a truism that good health is of great value to individuals: it improves the quality and extends the span of their lives. That is arguably reason enough to strive to meet the goals to eliminate hunger and disease. But there are other benefits as well.

- When good health is combined with adequate education – another goal – individuals are able to take their part in society as productive workers. This, too, improves their individual lives. And it contributes to their country’s development because having a healthy and educated workforce – “adequate human capital” – enables a country to participate more productively in the global economy, and thereby to prosper. (UN Millennium Project 2005, hereinafter UNMP, pp. 12-13)
- Eliminating poverty is the first goal on the list, and is the one most implicated in enhancing security. Just as poverty is known to produce misery for individuals and countries, so it is also known to prompt conflict. It is not difficult to conjure up examples of how in neighborhoods, in countries, and globally, violent acts can seem to be the only recourse impoverished people have. Eliminating poverty will eliminate a major cause of conflict, and so lessen the risk it will break out. (UNMP, p. 6. )

This then is the mission of the MDG program: in a context of globalization it is to overcome poverty and other disadvantages, so ensuring all the world’s people of their human rights – including dignity, equality, and equity – and to help them and their countries enter the mainstream of global exchange and prosperity.

Can it be done? A report to the Secretary-General on strategies for attaining the MDGs opens with an assurance that, indeed, they *are* within our reach because: “The practical solutions exist. The political framework is established. And for the first time, the cost is utterly affordable....All that is needed is action.” (UNMP, p. 1)

This report on the MDGs continues with four sections: I. MDG Background, II. MDG Strategy, III. MDG Progress, and IV. MDG Concerns and Critiques.

### **I. MDG BACKGROUND**

In this section we want to offer just enough about the attributes of the MDGs, and the United States’ orientation to them, for the rest of the report to make sense.

#### **MDG Attributes**

The Millennium Development Goals are expressed in terms of measurable progress to be made between two points in time: 1990 and 2015. This is the span of a generation, which intuitively seems like enough time in which to achieve big things. For each goal, targets specify just how much progress should be made, for example:

Goal 1: Eradicate Poverty Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day

Why halve it? Why not reduce it by 25% or 75% instead? The targets were based on extrapolating past rates of change into the future, and so, because the global trend over the previous 25 years showed a 50% reduction in poverty, the projected target for the next 25 years was also set at 50%. (Vandemoortele, p. 2) This was

how each target was set, and accounts for why they differ from one another.

The MDGs are expressed as numerical targets not only for global change, but for change within every developing country. This attribute of the goals has important implications: some countries are better poised than others to mimic the global trend. This further implies that strategies for attaining the goals need to be different in different places, with some countries needing much more assistance than others.

### **U.S. Commitments vis-à-vis the MDGs**

Without digressing too far into a discussion of U.S. foreign assistance, we want to take note of where the U.S. stands in terms of its MDG policy and financial commitments.

**Policy Commitments:** The United States signed the Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus, and has regularly reconfirmed its support for the MDGs at the annual G8 meetings of leading industrialized nations. But it has not supported all the subsequent elaboration of the goals, and this became a highly visible issue in the weeks before the UN's 2005 World Summit. (See *Seattle Voter*, May 2006). The document which finally emerged with U.S. support continued the emphasis on development as a core focus of the UN and reaffirmed the financial agreements as spelled out in the Monterrey Consensus.

One underlying issue going into the summit concerned the targeted level for official development assistance (ODA in development lingo). In 1970, the General Assembly adopted the position that developed countries should allocate 1% of their gross national product (GNP) to foreign aid – with 0.7% to be ODA and 0.3% to be private giving from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The United States has never committed to this target, and so resisted an attempt at the summit to exact a firm pledge to reach it. The Monterrey Consensus reiterates the desirability of the target, without exacting a firm pledge to reach it, so the U.S. found it acceptable.

The Monterrey Consensus says: “(We) urge the developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7% of Gross National Product (GNP) as official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries...” (*Consensus*, Para. 42) In 2007, experts Hindery, Sachs, and Smith noted that “the U.S. has no timetable or political consensus to reach that goal, despite (its) pledge at Monterrey to make concrete efforts to do so.” (HSS, p. 187)

**Financial Commitments:** So, what is the current level of U.S. foreign aid? In 2004-05 U.S. foreign assistance included:

1. ODA at 0.20 % of GNP
2. NGO at 0.06 % of GNP
3. Totaling a commitment of 0.26% of GNP

In 2004-05, assistance in the form of debt relief was high; it is now tapering off and in 2006 ODA was at 0.17 % of GNP where it remains. (HSS, pp. 171, 174) This would surprise most Americans who, surveys show, believe the U.S. foreign aid program is larger than it is – guesstimating ODA to be around 5% of GNP. (HSS, p. 171)

President Bush proposed, and in 2004 Congress established, the Millennium Challenge Account to focus specifically on promoting sustainable economic growth aimed at reducing poverty. Based on the principle that aid is most effective when it reinforces good governance, economic freedom and investments in people, these factors are evaluated in determining eligibility for assistance through this program. A government corporation, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, was established to run the program. MDG oriented, and novel in its structure, this program is still small; the Agency for International Development remains the principal conduit for U.S. bilateral assistance.

In looking at ODA, it is important to bear in mind that only part is devoted to economic development as described by the MDGs; it also addresses humanitarian crises and serves U.S. political aims. Hindery, Sachs, and Smith have looked at current aid to sub-Saharan Africa, since that region is “the epicenter of the world’s economic development challenge.” They report that in FY06, ODA for Africa “came to around \$3 billion,...(which is) approximately \$4 per African per year.” (HSS, p. 172)

These writers are critical of the United States’ level of development assistance, and its refusal to embrace the 0.7% target. Others take another view. Supporters of the U.S. policy point out that in absolute amounts, the U.S. contributes more assistance than any other country, and that giving by U.S. NGOs is at the high end of the spectrum. Moreover, they note that remittances sent home by immigrants and capital investment flows contribute significantly to the financial transfers from the U.S. to developing countries. And finally, they point to the defense commitments the U.S. has made to other nations – tying up U.S. funds and concomitantly freeing up the funds of other nations for assistance. (HSS, p. 86)

The other side has rejoinders, of course. But while we know this is a debate worth understanding, it is not one we can explore further now. The MDGs await!

## **II. MDG STRATEGY**

2005 saw the publication of multiple goal-specific reports and an *Overview* outlining concrete plans of action for achieving the various goals. This body of work was written by a UN advisory commission – the UN Millennium Project (UNMP) – directed by Professor Jeffrey Sachs. In what follows we draw extensively on the *Overview*, which is cited as UNMP; references in the text are to the UNMP authors.

**General Strategy:** In their *Overview* of the best strategies for attaining the MDGs, the UNMP authors express a certain urgency, pointing out that on the one hand, the world community of nations has signed on to the Millennium Development Goals,



but on the other hand, developing nations, donor nations, and multilateral aid organizations have not yet lived up to their commitments. The timeline runs from 1990 to 2015, which means this train has left the station and now everyone who wants to reach the destination needs to scramble on board.

Now is the time, they insist, for developing countries to recommit to the goals, frame their development plans to include them, and begin implementation; and for developed countries to recommit to the goals and meet their pledges to support them – with development assistance as well as appropriate trade and debt policies.

As is probably already apparent, the overarching attainment strategy for the MDGs is assistance – financial and technical – flowing from developed to developing countries. Various organizations and entities, public and private, have worked out their idiosyncratic ways of defining and labeling “developed” and “developing” countries. In the MDG literature one finds both this simple bipolar designation and a more complex continuum:

#### Developed—Developing—Least Developed

**Types of Developing Countries:** In discussing the flow of assistance from developed to developing countries, the UNMP authors put forward a nuanced continuum of developing countries based on five criteria: income level, governance capabilities, conflict, special needs, and geopolitical issues. They contend that considering these factors makes assistance more appropriate and so more useful. Thus they suggest:

- Middle-income developing countries can finance the goals themselves, with development bank and private capital flows. Here official assistance (ODA) should target pockets of poverty, and assist these countries through debt cancellation. Some of these countries (e.g. China, Brazil, and Malaysia) are themselves donor countries. Others (e.g. India) should consider becoming donors.
- Well-governed countries which are deeply impoverished cannot generate enough funds to finance the goals, and need ODA for that purpose. These countries are ready and able to absorb assistance to scale up their infrastructure, human capital, and public administration investments – so it is important that donors make the needed assistance available in a timely way.
- Some poorly governed impoverished countries have political leaders who are unwilling to focus on the MDGs; this is true of places like Myanmar and North Korea. Here the case for development assistance really cannot be made. If any is offered to the government, it should have economic and human rights policy conditions. Humanitarian assistance is, of course, another matter.
- Some poorly governed impoverished countries suffer from poor public administration, despite political will at the highest levels to adopt a development strategy. These countries have high potential, and donors should think of their governance problems as remediable, and should offer assistance targeted at strengthening public administration.

- Countries in conflict, just out of conflict, or going into conflict present urgent and different challenges. Aid (especially in the form of carrots, not sticks) should target ending conflict and building basic services. If it is timely, it can ensure stability.
- Some countries have special geographic needs: small islands, mountain states, landlocked states, and states vulnerable to natural disasters need special investments in transportation and communications, as well as investments in regional cooperation and integration.
- Finally, the report takes notes of countries which may get a disproportionate amount of assistance for geopolitical reasons. Iraq and Afghanistan are given as examples. While these countries have urgent needs, so do others and it strikes the UNMP authors as unfair for these countries to get more attention to their needs than do others. (Excerpted and paraphrased from UNMP, Box 9 pp. 43-44)

The UNMP authors make the point that the planning and implementation strategies they propose do not require “new development processes or policy vehicles.” The assistance agencies should just proceed along as usual – except that they should reorient their programs to focus on the Millennium Development Goals. (UNMP, p. 24) This begins with a country-level planning process.

**Country-level Strategy:** A fundamental premise of the proposed strategy is that development cannot be imposed; it is a transformative process which needs to be ‘owned’ by the community undergoing it. Thus, the core planning strategy recommended for attaining the goals is a country-level process, “chaired by the national government” but inclusive of “all key stakeholders.”

It is suggested that “each country convene an MDG strategy group chaired by the national government – but also including bilateral and multilateral donors, UN specialized agencies, provincial and local authorities, and domestic civil society leaders, including women’s organizations, which are traditionally underrepresented.” (UNMP, p. 25) This group would then design a national strategy for achieving the MDGs – all of them, not just the more popular ones. A four-step approach to designing such a strategy is laid out:

1. Using available data, each country should map the key dimensions and causes of extreme poverty by region, locality, and gender;
2. Using these maps, each country should do a needs assessment, to identify the public investments required to reach the goals;
3. Using the needs assessment, each country should develop a 10-year action framework, including public investment, public management, and financing;
4. Finally, extrapolating from the 10-year framework, each country should elaborate a 3-5 year MDG based poverty reduction strategy. (UNMP, p. 24)

The **operating strategy** is the 3-5 year plan which “outline(s) the specific and practical steps required to reach the goals.” In apparent recognition of how daunting a task that seems, the UNMP authors hasten to add: “Fortunately, these steps are known.” And they continue with examples of things required by the goals which we know how to do:

- Prevent mothers from dying in pregnancy and childbirth
- Encourage girls to enroll in and complete a full cycle of basic education
- Triple African maize yields
- Provide rural clinics and hospitals with uninterrupted electricity
- Increase tree coverage in deforested areas (UNMP, p. 25)

**Immediate Interventions:** The **implementation strategy** the UNMP authors recommend begins with some measures they designate Quick Wins. These, they promise, can bring “breathtaking results” in no more than three years. A synopsis of the Quick Wins list is presented below:

Directed towards school children:

- Eliminate school and uniform fees
- Provide free school meals and take home rations using locally grown food
- Provide annual deworming treatment in affected areas

Directed towards improving health:

- Eliminate fees for basic health services
- Distribute insecticide-treated bed nets
- Expand access to treatment for AIDS, malaria, TB
- Expand access to sexual and reproductive health services

Directed towards women (and children):

- Launch campaign to reduce violence against women
- Empower women to play a central role in policy making
- Design nutrition programs, including supplements, for pregnant and lactating women, and children under five years
- Guarantee women and children inheritance rights

Directed towards rural and urban needs, infrastructure, and policy:

- Train village workers in health, farming, and community infrastructure
- Provide affordable fertilizer
- Fund slum-upgrading and earmark public land for low cost urban housing
- Insure that social service institutions (e.g. hospitals) have access to electricity, water, sanitation, and the internet
- Provide community level support to plant trees
- Establish an office of science advisor to consolidate the role of science in national policy making (UNMP, p. 26)

**Long Term Interventions:** Beyond the Quick Wins, longer term interventions are needed to achieve the MDGs. The UNMP authors establish seven main “investment-and-policy clusters” and indicate best practices for each. This helps country level planners organize their individualized plans, and simultaneously draw on what is known to work well in achieving various goals. The clusters are summarized in the *Overview*; here we can just list their titles:

1. Rural development: increasing food output and incomes
2. Urban development: promoting jobs, upgrading slums, and developing alternatives to new slum formation
3. Health systems: ensuring universal access to essential services
4. Education: ensuring universal primary, expanded secondary, and expanded higher education
5. Gender equality: investing to overcome pervasive gender bias
6. Environment: investing in improved resource management
7. Science, technology, and innovation: building national capacities (UNMP, pp. 27-31)

For all of these clusters, the UNMP authors suggest an implementation strategy they call scaling-up. “National scale-up,” they write, “is the process of bringing essential MDG-based investments and services to most or all of the population, on an equitable basis, by 2015.” (UNMP, p. 31).

**Financing and Managing Implementation:** In addition to practical steps for realizing the goals, the 3-5 year plans are expected to include strategies for financing and managing the implementation of the recommended measures. On the finance side, the UNMP authors call for “co-financing” MDG investments by donor countries and the developing countries themselves. The developing countries, they suggest, should use their own revenues for “priority investments.” (UNMP, p. 23) But they also note that if the MDGs are to be realized, foreign assistance “needs to be both increased and predictable over the period 2005-2015, covering both capital and recurrent costs, including civil service salaries.” (UNMP, p. 35)

The actual process for transmitting aid is straightforward: the donor country gives directly to the receiving country. The donor country must report to the UN the amount and purpose of the amount given, and spell out its connection with the MDGs. The UNMP authors set target levels for ODA, reaching 0.7% of GNP by 2015. If these targets are met, they estimate that the costs of meeting the MDGs will be met. By contrast, another expert, Jan Vandemoortele looks at all cost estimates warily: “The simple fact is that it cannot be known in advance...how a specific MDG target will be achieved in a particular country. Therefore, it cannot be known in advance with any sensible degree of precision how much it will cost to meet the MDGs in that country.” (Vandemoortele, p. 6)

As for management planning, scaled-up development (reaching the whole population) requires a high level of public management capability: to set concrete objectives and work plans, to deliver on those plans, and to evaluate progress and make mid-course corrections as needed. Public sector managers need to be trained, and then retained. Both technical and financial assistance from the developing countries can make a significant contribution here.

**Good Governance:** Good governance is not a MDG – presumably because it cannot be quantified and measured as the selected goals can. But it is present in this report as an essential factor: when it is lacking, development is impeded; when it is present, development is possible. Good governance can be said to emerge as a precondition for achieving the MDGs.

The UNMP authors note that it is often the case in the developing world that poor governance is due to scant national resources, both financial and technical. In such cases, it is important to focus assistance directly on improving governance. When its successful, and good governance evolves, the path to achieving all the MDGs is opened.

### **The Millennium Villages Project**

This section of our report is a bridge between the discussion of MDG strategy and MDG progress. It describes a project, designed and directed by Jeffrey Sachs, to pour MDG-focused assistance into a dozen clusters of African villages, located in poor but well-governed countries, for five years.

The countries involved are Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda. The village clusters, comprised of 79 small villages, are located in distinctive agro-ecological zones: arid or humid, highland or lowland, grain producing or pastoral. These zones are representative of 93% of agricultural land and home to 90% of the agricultural population of Africa. Within these zones the village clusters were selected, in close cooperation with the national governments, because they are hunger “hotspots.” In each there is widespread chronic hunger, a high prevalence of disease, little access to medical care and very poor infrastructure.

Sachs and his partners want to show how villages such as these – hopeless villages – can be turned around by a two pronged MDG strategy:

- Community ownership of the project: by which members of each community identify its development needs, design action plans and appoint village committees for various aspects of the project (e.g. agriculture, education, health, water & sanitation, gender and disadvantaged groups).
- Outside financial and technical assistance: by which residents get improved seeds and fertilizer, safe water, bed nets and basic health care, and primary education.

The first village project began in August, 2004 in Sauri, Kenya, where villagers have gone from chronic hunger to a tripling of their crop production, which allows them to sell their produce in nearby markets for the first time in years. The experience has not been without its challenges: when it was time to elect

committees the dominant clan reportedly used scare tactics – witch-craft – so its members would capture all the leadership posts. Clannism then fostered nepotism and other forms of favoritism.

In 2006, the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) began working in Ruhiira, Uganda, designating it a research village. Now a cluster has formed, comprised of about 50,000 people in eight hill villages. This is an area with little rain, where crop yields were low – and declining. In the research village, many women walked three kilometers to get water from a filthy pond; malaria and TB raged, and only 85% of the school-age children were enrolled.

After the initial development plans were drawn, and the farmers received training in farming techniques, each household received an average of 10 kilos of K132 improved maize seeds and 25 kilos of DAP fertilizers. Despite poor rains, crop yields doubled.

In return for this assistance, the plans called for a contribution, known as a pay-back, to the community. Consultations had revealed that school children were starving – and until then there had been no meals provided at schools. So it was decided that farmers would give a pay-back of 10% of their harvest to be used for school meals, which has happened. A meal observed by an *Observer Weekly* reporter included first class posho (cornmeal) and fried bean sauce mixed with leafy green vegetables, all contributed as part of pay-back. Enrollment has increased from 515 to 638 pupils, perhaps as a result of the meals. The project has also given the school two water tanks and is helping to renovate a building.

At the same time, the Ruhiira Health Centre, which serves 5000 people, was being improved, with the local district government and the MVP both contributing. Its staff has grown from a nursing assistant with minimal training to include a medical doctor and a midwife. It is now stocked with essential drugs. A new out-patient block is being built, mostly with outside money, but also with local investments: \$1200 from the local council, and 28,000 bricks, water, stone and some sand from villagers. Due to MVP, 182 outreach workers have been deployed to promote community health, with good results. A major gift from Japan has made possible the distribution of 33,000 long-lasting, insecticide-treated bed nets. Malaria incidence dropped from 2,141 cases to 751 between August and October 2006. The Centre now sees as many as 60 patients a day, in contrast to the previous 2-10 per day.

Other interventions are underway to achieve piped water, provision of entrepreneurial training and creation of a bank. The organization of marketing groups for matooke (plantain) has resulted in better prices per bunch, and three nurseries are producing grafted fruit and other trees to improve the local diet, provide firewood and save the environment.

Of course, challenges remain. Land is in short supply and the rainfall is low. Some outsiders have voiced concern about the genetically modified seeds and chemical fertilizer, citing the Green Revolution which damaged the environment. Some question whether five years is enough for this sort of project – and wonder about whether gains will be self-sustaining. (See Bibliography for source materials.)

### III. MDG PROGRESS

The United Nations issues a Millennium Development Goals Report every year, summarizing progress for the world as a whole and in various regions: Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, Southeastern Asia, Western Asia, Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean, and in Eastern Europe the CIS (Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States). It is important to note that data in these reports is often a year or two behind – thus the MDGs report for 2007 typically summarizes changes between 1990 and 2005. Drawing on this Report, in what follows we offer two kinds of statements for each goal: a summary statement reflecting trends, and one or more interesting, illustrative facts; we conclude the section for each goal with a general citation of the relevant pages in the 2007 Report.

#### **Goal 1 – Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

Worldwide, poverty is decreasing: those living on less than \$1 per day have fallen from 1.23 billion in 1990 to 980 million in 2004. This puts the world and most regions on track for reaching the MDG poverty reduction target.

- Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most impoverished region, yet even here there is a ray of hope: poverty has fallen 6% since 2000. While this rate of change is not enough to meet the goal in 2015, it is positive change.

As regards hunger, the report focuses on children: some places, such as China, are surpassing the MDGs – but other places are below par and so depress the trend.

- “If current trends continue, the world will miss the 2015 (hunger) target by 30 million children, essentially robbing them of their full potential.” (pp. 4-9)

#### **Goal 2 – Achieve universal primary education**

Since 1991 the percentage of children in school has increased from 80% to 88%. This leaves 72 million children of primary school age who are not in school. Fifty-seven percent of these are girls.

- Making things worse, many children who are enrolled do not attend regularly, or drop-out. And making things worse still, many children start school late – in sub-Saharan Africa more secondary school age children are in primary school than are in secondary school. This means they are not starting basic learning at the developmentally optimal age, and that after the primary years they need to take on adult responsibilities incompatible with going on to secondary school. (pp. 10-11)

#### **Goal 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women**

Women’s participation in paid, non-agricultural employment has been increasing slowly, with good gains made in three regions with generally low female participation: Southern Asia, Western Asia, and Oceania.

- But in North Africa women’s rate of employment is low and stagnant: only 1 in 5 women are employed.

Women's political participation is also growing, albeit slowly; countries with gender quota systems for representation in parliament have done best. Rwanda is close to parity with 49% women, Sweden follows with 47% and Costa Rica has 39%.

- Gains have been recently made in three Arab states: Bahrain just elected its first woman to parliament, and in their first ever elections, Kuwait elected two women and the United Arab Emirates reached 23% female representation. (pp. 12-13)

#### **Goal 4 – Reduce child mortality**

Child survival rates are improving slowly, although unevenly, across regions and countries. Most progress took place among children living in the wealthiest households, in urban areas or whose mothers have some education. Despite progress, the mortality numbers remain depressingly high: estimates for 2005 indicate 10.1 million children died before their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable diseases.

- Measles is a leading preventable cause of death. Globally, measles deaths fell by over 60% between 2000 and 2005 because of vaccination programs – but the regions vary and some have had fluctuating rates, indicating that the programs are vulnerable and inconsistent. Other diseases and war also contribute to childhood mortality. (pp. 14-15)

#### **Goal 5 – Improve maternal health**

Some middle income countries have made rapid progress but maternal mortality levels remain unacceptably high across the developing world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. These regions have the highest percentages of maternal deaths, and correspondingly, the lowest percentages of skilled health attendants (doctors, nurses, midwives). Not surprisingly, a survey of 57 developing countries showed that urban women are more likely than rural women to have the assistance of skilled health workers.

- It is estimated that the rate of maternal death could be reduced by  $\frac{1}{4}$  by preventing unwanted pregnancies. Between 1990 and 2005, contraceptive use worldwide slowly grew from 55% to 64%, with sub-Saharan Africa lagging at 21%. And while the causes of maternal deaths vary across regions, they include unsafe abortion everywhere. (pp. 16-17)

#### **Goal 6 – Combat HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases**

Between 1990 and 2002 the percentage of people living with HIV was continuing to grow, in both developed and developing regions, but between 2002 and 2006 the percentages leveled off and remained steady in both regions. That said, the number of women with HIV is still rising.

- In developing regions, only about 28% of those needing it were receiving antiretroviral treatment in 2006; consequently, the AIDs death rate in sub-Saharan Africa is still rising and the care of AIDs orphans is a pressing problem.
- Correct knowledge about the transmission and treatment of HIV/AIDs remains a problem – especially among African youth.

Malaria control efforts are showing success, but additional efforts are needed. Only a few countries come close to the 2005 target of 60% coverage in the use of insecticide- treated bed nets, and coverage is inequitable.



- Around \$3 billion is needed worldwide to fight malaria, but despite a ten-fold increase in international funding, only about \$6 million was available in 2004.

The number of TB cases per 1000 persons is leveling off globally – but due to population growth the absolute number of new cases is still rising. Reaching global targets for control will require accelerated progress, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the Commonwealth of Independent States in Europe and Asia. (pp. 18-21)

### **Goal 7 – Ensure environmental sustainability**

Deforestation, declining biodiversity, overexploited fish stocks, and greenhouse gas- induced climate change are global issues under the umbrella of environmental sustainability. Developed and developing regions contribute to and suffer from these problems – but when we consider environmental sustainability, there is an issue which stands out as uniquely relevant to developing regions. This is safe drinking water and basic sanitation. To increase the proportion of the population of the developing regions with access to good water and sanitation to target levels will require extraordinary efforts.

- In 2005 one of three urban dwellers was living in slum conditions, defined as lacking at least one of the basics of decent housing: adequate sanitation, improved water supply, durable housing and adequate living space.
- The rapid expansion of urban areas will make it challenging to meet the MDG target of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. (pp. 22-27)

### **Goal 8 – Develop a global partnership for development**

The 2002 *Monterrey Consensus* laid out a blueprint for development assistance which would take several forms, including aid, debt relief, and favorable trade policies. Initially debt relief rose dramatically, but is now nearing completion, so the ODA totals are smaller. In 2006 ODA recorded its first decline (1.8%) since 1997, and the trend was expected to continue in 2007 – despite renewed commitments by donors, including pledges to double aid to Africa by 2010.

- If the donors are to meet their pledges, then the current rate of increase to core development programs must triple over the next four years.

As pertains to trade policy, there have been some piecemeal advances, but no new coherent strategy.

- Advances include: eliminating duties and quotas on most goods from least developed countries, restructuring of trade flows on textiles and clothing, and more duty free access to the Chinese market. Each of these measures has been of benefit to some developing countries but detrimental to others.

Two final pieces of the economic development partnership are information technology and jobs.

- Technology is on the rise in the developing world, with mobile phones leading the way. Internet use is also growing, but is still at small to negligible levels.
- There are 195 million jobless people in the world, half of whom are youth. A problem everywhere, it is more emphatically a problem in the developing countries where 89% of the world's youth reside. (pp. 28-33)

#### IV. MDG CONCERNS AND CRITIQUES

In this section we will consider a set of concerns related to the last section, on MDG progress, and then will consider a critique which cuts to the quick of the MDG program and proposes an alternative.

##### Vandemoortele's Concerns

Measuring progress is a prominent part of the MDG program – and a controversial one. To explore this we turn now to a critic with insider knowledge of the program: Jan Vandemoortele, who currently serves as UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Pakistan.

As we have seen, MDG progress reports are based on whether or not the world, a region, or a country is experiencing a rate of positive change which puts it on track for achieving the numerical targets associated with the goals. Vandermootele has no quarrel with measuring world progress in this way, but he does object to measuring the progress of individual regions and countries in this way. He argues that because the numerical targets were set by extrapolating from global data, they are inappropriate for assessing the progress of individual regions or countries.

Furthermore, Vandemoortele does not think there is any other single “yardstick” for measuring progress. He writes that it goes against “the spirit of the Millennium Declaration...to impose a one-size-fits-all yardstick for judging national performances, regardless of historical backgrounds, natural endowments and particular challenges.” (p. 3) What he thinks each country should measure is the rate of acceleration in its own historical rate of positive change.

Vandemoortele believes that all countries should set numerical targets which reflect what is achievable in their circumstances; in some cases these will be more ambitious than the global targets, and in some less. To some extent this has already happened; the list of those setting targets above the global level includes Thailand, Viet Nam and Chile, while the list of those setting targets below the global level includes Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Mozambique. It is prudent, Vandemoortele argues, to do this: “A judicious balance between ambition and realism is essential for national ownership. Targets that are over-ambitious will not trigger action; targets that lack any sense of urgency will not motivate people or mobilize extra resources.” (p. 7)

This sounds reasonable – and yet, specially tailored targets will not change the fact that some countries and regions are trailing behind the rest of the world, and that the people in those places are grievously disadvantaged. This begs the question: Will more aid and a laser-like focus on the MDGs turn this around? The proponents of the MDGs clearly think so; but we turn now to Paul Collier who disagrees.

## Collier's Critique

Paul Collier offers an alternative to the MDG program in a new book: *The Bottom Billion; Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*. Collier was director of research at the World Bank for many years, and now continues his research as Director of the Center for the Study of African Economies at Oxford University.

Collier notes that there are about five billion people in the developing world, 80 percent of whom live in countries which are developing and are on track for achieving the MDGs. The other 20 percent – the bottom billion – live in the countries which are not on track for achieving the MDGs. About 70 percent live in Africa, the rest in countries scattered across the globe. The countries at the bottom are small, their economies are stagnant, and while they “coexist with the twenty-first century, . . . their reality is the fourteenth century: civil war, plague, ignorance.” (p. 3)

Collier argues that for decades the development challenge has been bridging the gulf between the developed one billion and the developing five billion. This is the problem the Millennium Development Goals are designed to address: bridging the gulf between the developed and developing countries in critical areas such as per capita income, health outcomes, and education. And the progress reports show they are doing so – except for the bottom billion.

This, Collier continues, changes the development challenge. Now we have five billion people living in countries where the MDGs have been achieved or are on track to be achieved, and one billion living in countries which are “falling behind, and often falling apart.” (p. 3)

Development, Collier insists, should focus on the bottom billion – but not with an MDG program. What distinguishes the developing countries which are doing well from those which are not is, Collier claims, their rates of economic growth. The middle income developing countries have experienced unprecedented growth since the 1970s, while the bottom billion countries have experienced stalled or declining growth. The divergence between them is “massive and accelerating,” and closing it should be our development priority, for humanitarian and security reasons alike. (p. 10)

Collier does not disdain the MDGs, but he does not think a MDGs program – even with more money – is what will meet the current development challenge. Economic growth is the engine, he argues, which will change the trajectory for the bottom billion countries, and several instruments of change will be necessary to accomplish that.

In the first part of his book, Collier presents empirical evidence about four traps which cause the bottom billion countries to be stuck, having to do with endemic conflict, bad governance, being landlocked, and having nothing but natural resources to trade – and not enough of them to become prosperous. He also examines why globalization no longer offers newcomers the opportunity for economic growth it so recently did.

- When the current wave of globalization began, firms off-shored to countries with little experience in the global economy – but with lots of cheap labor. It was risky to be a pioneer in a new place, but now those places offer more — appropriate physical, technological, and legal infrastructure, as well as lots of cheap labor. There is no reason to go to a small, fragile, inexperienced country with nothing but labor to offer. So it is harder now for developing countries to join the global economy – the bottom billion countries, Collier concludes, have missed that boat.

In the second part of the book Collier presents a discussion of four development instruments, in distinction to the MDGs program which focuses mostly on aid (and secondarily on trade).

- Aid is one of these instruments. It has made a significant contribution in the past: about 1% per year in added economic growth, “which has made the difference between stagnation and severe cumulative decline.” (p. 100) But aid, like everything else, has a point at which additional increments bring diminishing returns. There is evidence that current levels are at that point, so Collier is dubious that higher aid – e.g. the G8 plan to double aid to Africa – is prudent.
- Military intervention in failing states in order to expel aggressors, restore order, maintain post-conflict peace, or prevent coups is the second development instrument Collier proposes – and he acknowledges that nowadays it is difficult to drum up support for it. He begins by reminding us of Somalia, where media coverage of eighteen U.S. fatalities was so intense it doomed an intervention, with the result that Somalia remains a failed state in which hundreds of thousands have died. A spin-off occurred the next year, when the unwillingness to intervene in Rwanda led to hundreds of thousands of deaths there. Intervention can, he argues, have positive results.
- Changes in laws and charters is the third development instrument Collier presents. This includes changes in our own laws in ways that would help the bottom billion. One example is in the area of banking laws, which could be strengthened to make it easier to freeze and repatriate funds corrupt leaders have stolen from their public coffers and deposited in Western banks. Secondly, we can establish international charters about many things, e.g. natural resource extraction, media independence, and private investment. “An international charter,” Collier writes, “gives people something very concrete to demand: either the government adopts it or it must explain why it won’t.” (p. 143) In this way civil society will be reinforced in the bottom billion societies.
- The fourth and final development instrument Collier presents is trade policy. The idea is to help the bottom billion countries take part in the global economy. Central to this is implementing trade policies which help these countries develop an array of products for export. One recommendation is that the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development design temporary policies which would protect the bottom billion countries from the flourishing developing countries of Asia. Such a policy would ensure

that for a time “goods and services exported from the bottom billion to the rich world markets would pay lower tariffs than the same goods coming from Asia.” (p. 167) While imposing new tariffs on Asia is not conceivable, removing tariffs against the bottom billion but leaving them in place for Asia is. Calling this “a pump-priming strategy,” Collier defends it as necessary now, when it is no longer easy for developing countries to become actors in the global economy.

In his concluding chapter, “An Agenda for Action,” Collier comments directly on the MDGs. They were, he notes, “a big advance” in that they “encouraged people to shift their agenda from inputs to outcomes: halving poverty, getting children in school, and so forth.” (p. 189) Nonetheless, they have two drawbacks: (1) they focus on progress in the successful developing countries, while the focus needs to be on the bottom billion who are falling behind; and (2) the MDGs program emphasizes one development instrument – aid – to the relative neglect of all others. Collier concludes: “In short, we need to narrow the target and broaden the instruments. That should be the agenda for the G8.” (p. 192)

In the context of a longer report on U.S. foreign assistance, Hindery, Sachs, and Smith offer what sounds like a rejoinder: “It is occasionally said that objectives such as the MDGs...are distinct from objectives to promote wealth creation and economic growth. We emphasize here that this is not the case. Achieving the MDGs and achieving long-term economic growth require the same policy focus, including increased investments in the core infrastructure (roads, power, and connectivity), health and skills of the labor force, and improvements in the business environment (transparency, macroeconomic stability, ease of doing business, and a vibrant financial sector). The fight against extreme poverty and the challenge of long-term economic growth and wealth creation go hand in hand.” (HSS, p. 170)

## **Conclusion**

Development is a complicated and enormous process of societal transformation, which the world community has agreed to tackle through the Millennium Development Goals program. We have reviewed the program’s mission, its strategies, and its progress; and we have briefly reviewed the United States’ policy and financial commitment towards it. Finally, we have reviewed concerns and critiques – including an alternative approach to development. It is our hope that this discussion will help readers reflect intelligently about the challenge of development, the MDGs program, and United States policy.

## Bibliography

The materials cited in the text are listed below – with the name used in the citation coming first. They are further categorized as: Basic MDG Documents, Millennium Village Project Sources, and Other Books and Articles.

### Basic MDG Documents

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[http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/Monterrey\\_Consensus.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/Monterrey_Consensus.htm)

*Declaration* = United Nations Millennium Declaration. Found online at:

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

UNMP = U.N. Millennium Project 2005. *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Overview.* Found online at:

<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/index.htm>

*Report* = The Millennium Goals Report 2007. Found online at:

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg2007.pdf>

Our MDGs Chart is comparable to one in UNMP pp. xii-xiii.

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HHS = Leo Hindery Jr., HELP Commission Vice Chair, and Commissioners Jeffrey D. Sachs and Gayle E. Smith. “Revamping U.S. Foreign Assistance,” pp. 163-195 in *Beyond Assistance: The HELP Commission Report on Foreign Assistance Reform*. 2007. Found online at:

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## APRIL UNIT AGENDA

## Discussion Questions

1. What have you read or heard about in the news that gives you a sense these goals are achievable?
2. Do you think the action strategies for country-level planning and foreign assistance are sound? Do you think they are enough, or do Collier's additional strategies (aid + military intervention + laws and charters + trade policies) strike you as also necessary?
3. Using the medical concept of triage, where would you concentrate scarce assistance: On countries on track for the goals? On the bottom billion countries? On specific goals? On economic growth?
4. Do you think good governance is a necessary precondition for foreign aid? Should a country's human rights policies be a criterion for giving assistance?
5. What do you think about the United States' policy on the MDGs and financial commitment to them, as briefly described in the Background section of the report?
6. Is there any message about the MDGs program (mission, strategy, progress) or about the U.S. position vis-à-vis the MDGs, that your Unit would like to convey to the national League?

## Calling All Readers!

We are developing a Bibliography of Readable Books on each of the eight Millennium Development Goals. Vicky Downs' book reviews in this Voter will give you an idea of what we have in mind. Fiction and non-fiction suggestions are welcome, as are all genres (poetry, anyone?) So, Readers! Please bring titles and a couple of sentences describing each one to your Unit discussion or send them to [ellenzberg@msn.com](mailto:ellenzberg@msn.com) – and thanks in advance for participating!