

Action Agenda: Beyond the Millennium Development Goals

Many civil society organizations argue that the Millennium Development Goals and Declaration are simply not enough. Some feel that they deal only with effects or with symptoms, not with causes. Many feel that poverty and vulnerability are recreated by unjust structures, whether based on gender, wealth, religion, or privilege.

According to our survey and other civil society input, further requirements must be met in order to achieve the goals and to bring the objectives of the Millennium Declaration to life.

Six areas require dramatic new thinking and bold attention:

- The injustice of inequality
- The failures of globalization: Financing development, aid, debt, and trade
- War, peace, and security
- Saving lives: AIDS and health systems
- Climate change
- Human rights

As well, there is an ever more urgent need to address the future of the United Nations and the larger issue of how the world is governed, and by whom. In this chapter we take a closer look at the six areas for new thinking.

TODAY'S PRIORITIES FOR TOMORROW'S WORLD

The Injustice of Inequality

Poverty is at the core of the Millennium Development Goals. Poverty is about more than money. It is about lack of capability and choice. Ending poverty means reducing inequality. But inequality is growing in many countries, rich and poor.

Many groups indicate that only by empowering the poor themselves will poverty and hunger be defeated.

The MDGs are only a minimum program for the next five to 10 years, and reflect only part of what is needed. More than 1 billion people live on less than US\$1 a day; almost half the world's 2.8 billion people live on less than US\$2 a day. As defined by the Millennium Goals, "reducing by half the proportion" of people living in absolute poverty at US\$1 a day is not enough.

Copenhagen to New York

Our survey partners remind us that the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) established a commitment from every country to reduce poverty, not just absolute poverty. The Beijing Women's Conference in the same year had similar goals, as a majority of the world's poor are women.

But since the mid-1990s, poverty has marched on (although there have been successes in India and China in reducing those in absolute poverty). Meanwhile the achievements of the global conferences have been pushed back. Goal 1, an estimable step, with welcome targets and benchmarks, is modest in the extreme. Millions are left out.

The occasion of reviewing progress on Goal 1 offers the opportunity to make course corrections, which are overdue. Some elements might include:

- Redefinition of poverty in its several dimensions
- Redefinition of poverty in relation to wealth
- Reconsideration of policies which reproduce poverty, reduce mobility out of poverty, and enforce discrimination and marginalization
- Implementation of policies that address root causes of poverty, including agrarian reform, redistribution of wealth, enhanced public services, the right to food, and policies to protect workers in the informal sector
- Enhanced respect and implementation of human rights essential to the eradication of poverty, including gender guarantees, labour rights and standards
- Inclusion of commitments to poverty eradication in wealthy countries as well as poor countries
- Enumeration of ways in which the poor themselves are to be engaged in defining and implementing poverty eradication strategies

Will 2005 bring a full commitment to eradicate poverty (not just a portion of absolute poverty), to reduce inequality (South and North), and to a future with decent work, and to gender equity and empowering the poor?

Getting at the roots

Getting at the roots of poverty means assessing several elements that are fundamental to the growing inequality which plagues many, if not all, societies. It is not simply a matter of statistics about minimum dollar-a-day benchmarks. At issue are:

- Distribution of income in society
- Distribution of assets
- Distribution of opportunities for work and employment
- Distribution of social services and benefits
- Distribution of political power, including access to information and political participation

Many women's networks point out that to assess the situation more accurately, including the gender implications, we need disaggregated (in terms of gender, locality, and age) statistics. There is still much work to be done in this area. Some CSOs, like Social Watch Philippines, are pioneers in assessing quality of life at provincial and municipal levels. The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) is studying and campaigning on the issue of women's access to assets and resources.

“Durable and sustainable solutions to poverty will require active involvement of the poor and civil society, a more comprehensive understanding of the root causes of poverty and its multidimensional and diverse consequences, and the right policies.”

- Statement of the Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum, October 6-8, 2003.

The current global distribution of wealth provokes the simple question: *how have we allowed this to happen?* The **richest 500 people** in the world have more money than the annual earnings of the poorest 3 billion. **The 10 richest** have a combined net worth of US\$255 billion, about 60% of the annual income of all of sub-Saharan Africa.

The overall situation is getting worse. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) points out that over the last 20 to 25 years, income inequality has risen, particularly "...between the groups at the two extremes of the income ladder, the rich have become richer and the poor have become poorer, in relative terms, and in some cases in absolute terms – and in a number of countries, inequality has also risen between the richest and the middle income groups."

Contributing factors include:

- Increased interdependence due to globalization is accompanied by a deepening of the gap between rich and poor regions and countries.
- Privatization policies have led to formerly public assets being concentrated in a few private hands, and in many cases taken over by foreign investors.
- Redistributive tax systems have been weakened. Tax havens, exemptions for foreign investors, and tax forgiveness have weakened the capacity of governments to redistribute income or support social services.
- Opportunities for employment lag behind demand for work, affecting particularly the young and pushing more and more people into the informal sectors.

The UNDP notes that countries can sustain growth and reduce inequality at the same time. But policy advice from the IFIs and business lobbies often assumes that growth is dependent on accumulation by an unequal few. UNDP points out that Japan, the Republic of Korea, Costa Rica, and Uruguay have adopted redistributive policies and succeeded. In the North, Sweden remains "competitive," growing, innovative, and also more egalitarian.

Building in more equality

Some of the elements to address inequality include:

- Universal access to core social services
- Redistributive or "progressive" tax policies
- Ending discrimination in employment
- Restoring balance between the interests and rewards of labour and capital
- Respect for internationally accepted labour standards
- International support for countries without adequate resources
- Policy autonomy or "space" to implement national policies that address the welfare of citizens

Among civil society networks, the international trade union movement has been in the forefront of proposals for specific measures and strategies that lead in these directions. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) has endorsed the MDGs (<http://www.icftu.org>). The ICFTU presses the international financial institutions to change policies which negatively affect the social impact of globalization, labour standards, and public services. It campaigns against discrimination and for youth employment opportunities.

Public Services International (PSI) states clearly that the sort of education and health services and access envisioned by the MDGs will require quality public services, for which they are leading a worldwide campaign. Gender equity is central to the strategy. PSI advocates fighting back against those who press for privatization, user fees, and market-dominated distribution of access, and calls for a Global Agreement for Public Services.

Our survey respondents believe that citizens' movements should engage even more with national, regional, and WTO negotiations like the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and Trade-Related Intellectual Property. Global rules must change. The Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization points out "there is an imbalance in the global rules. Economic rules and institutions prevail over social rules and social institutions...Unbalanced global rules can reinforce initial inequalities, work against the poor and the weak, whether those are countries, companies, or communities." (<http://www.ilo.org/wcsdgdg>)

Growing inequality, like poverty, is not an accident. Direct links can be established between the last two decades of globalization dominated by "neo-liberal," market-driven policies, and increased polarization of income and growing inequalities in access to assets. The right politics and policy changes nationally and globally are central to changing the balance in favour of more social justice.

The Failures of Globalization: Financing development, aid, debt, and trade

The MDGs require a global partnership between rich and poor countries. Seven goals identify development needs in poor countries. There is an underlying assumption that it is the poor countries themselves that have the primary responsibility for meeting these goals. But Goal 8 specifies "*a global partnership for development*." It sets out the tasks for rich countries and outlines the contributions they must make to all of the MDGs.

In 2003, the UN declared, "it is no exaggeration to state that the success or failure of all the MDGs hinges on whether developed countries meet their commitments in Goal 8."

The targets and indicators in Goal 8, despite being quite general, outline the measures that donor countries must take to become "global partners." They provide the means to hold donors to account.

Civil society's critique

A number of CSOs have pointed out that the MDGs, and Goal 8 in particular, are not only inadequate but are based on economic assumptions that recreate rather than defeat poverty. Unless these root assumptions and causes are addressed, the goal of eradicating poverty will not be met, they say.

According to the Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum (October 2003), "Addressing poverty and hunger requires addressing the social, cultural, political, and economic forces...that perpetuate vulnerability and marginalization." (<http://www.un-ngls.org/MDG/civilsocietyaction.htm>)

"If Goal 8 is ignored, it is hard to imagine the poorest countries achieving Goals 1-7."

- UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003*.

“We must recognize that it is time to consider the subject of alternative sources of financing as a top priority. The international community cannot afford a wait-and-see attitude. Each year lost represents an increase in resources needed in the run-up to 2015. Let us not waste further time.”

- *Action Against Hunger and Poverty, a Summary*

(The Report of the Technical Group on innovative financing mechanisms for Action Against Hunger and Poverty is available at http://www.mre.gov.br/ingles/politica_externa/temas_agenda/acfp/Report-final_version.pdf)

Critics argue that donor pressure to adjust labour and social legislation in what is termed “a flexible” fashion, leads to fewer protections for workers. “Increasing labour flexibility undermines job security by relying on temporary, contractual and subcontracted work in labour-intensive, export-oriented and service industries, and provides lower wages and less protection than traditional employment,” says the Asia Forum position paper. In short, the policies can contribute to sustained poverty.

Experts at Focus on the Global South label assumptions governing these policies “private sector fundamentalism.” These policies are driven and supported by conditionalities and policy advice which are usually part of international initiatives like the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Focus on the Global South notes, “Over the years, the Bank and the Fund have consolidated their policy advice toward market orientation, to the exclusion of alternative policies. They have thus failed to consider varied options for structural reforms.” (<http://www.focusweb.org>)

A wide variety of CSOs are pressing for increased policy space for developing countries.

The critique has been picked up by some CSOs in donor countries, as in a recent message to the Canadian finance minister: “We appreciate your candid questioning of at least some aspects of IMF and World Bank conditionality. However, we urge you to look deeper at the consequences of 20 years of experience with Structural Adjustment Programs. These have resulted in disappointing levels of economic growth, efficiency and competitiveness, the misallocation of financial resources, the destruction of national productive capacity, extensive environmental damage and growing poverty and inequality. We believe that it is necessary to abandon, rather than just modify, IMF and World Bank conditionality.”

Financing development: Time for innovation

On September 24, 2004, Brazilian President Lula da Silva and French President Jacques Chirac met at the United Nations to launch *Action Against Hunger and Poverty*. Their effort was endorsed by the presidents of Chile and Spain, more than 100 other Heads of Government, and supported by a variety of civil society organizations. The focus of this initiative was to promote innovative ways to finance development (<http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon>).

This initiative seeks to broaden the base of financial resources to address urgent development needs. Aid has a valuable role, but today, as the study *Action Against Hunger and Poverty* supporting the initiative states, it may “be in need of a new — supplementary — approach aiming both at increasing the amount of resources available and ensuring better predictability of aid flows.”

The technical study concludes that a tax on foreign exchange transactions is feasible at a global level, bringing fresh support to the demand for a Tobin Tax proposed by the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens (ATTAC) (<http://www.attac.org>) and many other CSOs for the past decade. The study suggests a tax on the arms trade, ensuring transparency and accountability, and raising funds for socially oriented projects. It considers the UK-proposed International Financial Facility, which would front-load aid disbursements, to bring greater predictability to budget making in developing countries.

Another study on innovative sources of financing for development, commissioned by the UN from WIDER (The World Institute for Development Economics Research) (<http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/publications.htm>), was published in August 2004. Undertaken by Professor Anthony B. Atkinson of Nuffield College, Oxford University, the study examines some of the same potential sources for additional aid as well as considering how international taxes might be administered by national authorities.

In addition to the Tobin Tax, it considers a global environmental levy, a carbon-use tax, applied at a rate of US\$4.8 cents a US gallon (E 0.01 per litre). This tax “levied only on high-income countries could indeed raise some US\$60 billion a year.”

The WIDER study cautiously argues that such an approach yields a double dividend. A tax on goods that harm the environment would encourage people to switch spending away from polluting goods.

A currency transactions tax could dampen destabilizing currency speculation.

These two studies stimulate and encourage initiative for innovation. Opposition to the idea of global taxes is strong in some jurisdictions. Yet the prospect of providing adequate international financing for universal primary education, for reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, for the eradication of poverty, and for equality for girls and women is a powerful incentive for those seeking greater global justice.

Civil society and financing for development

CSOs active in support of the UN's Financing for Development (FFD) process advocated change at the 2002 Monterrey Conference. They have been involved in subsequent meetings between the UN, the Bretton Woods Institutions, and the WTO. The civil society groups present in Monterrey refused to endorse the consensus reached by state representatives. They issued their own declaration questioning the assumptions on which the consensus was based.

The FFD office of the UN (<http://www.un.org/esa/ffd>) has developed, in cooperation with a key NGO coalition, The New Rules for Global Finance Coalition, a series of multi-stakeholder consultations focused on systemic issues. The consultations involve academics, civil society representatives, and experts from government and the private sector. They seek out the best ideas and practices that could assist in meeting the Millennium Declaration and the development goals. (For more information see <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd>, <http://www.newrules.org>).

A similar series is being organized by the FFD office with business organizations.

The results of both sets of consultations will contribute to a High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development at the UN in June 2005.

This collaboration between the UN and CSOs encourages a serious and substantive discussion and can help to build consensus around needed reforms and alternatives. It moves along the spectrum from criticism and resistance to joint efforts to develop proposals based on the examination of evidence.

Will aid flows be enough to reach the Monterrey goals?

Country	Net ODA 2002 (\$ millions)	ODA as % of GNI	
		2002	2006
Austria	520	0.26	0.33
Belgium	1,072	0.43	0.46
Denmark	1,643	0.96	0.83
Finland	462	0.35	0.42
France	5,486	0.38	0.47
Germany	5,324	0.27	0.33
Greece	276	0.21	0.33
Ireland	398	0.40	0.63
Italy	2,332	0.20	0.33
Luxembourg	147	0.77	1.00
Netherlands	3,338	0.81	0.80
Portugal	323	0.27	0.33
Spain	1,712	0.26	0.33
Sweden	1,991	0.83	0.87
United Kingdom	4,924	0.31	0.40
EU members, total	29,949	0.35	0.42
Australia	989	0.26	0.26
Canada	2,006	0.28	0.34
Japan	9,283	0.23	0.26
New Zealand	122	0.22	0.26
Norway	1,696	0.89	1.00
Switzerland	939	0.32	0.36
United States	13,290	0.13	0.17
DAC members, total	58,274	0.23	0.29

These estimates are based on commitments made by donor countries at the UN Financing for Development Conference in March 2002.

Aid and aid targets

Aid is key to Goal 8 and is central to donor commitments to the MDGs as a whole. More and better aid is one of the three demands of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP).

GOAL 8

- calls on donors to contribute “more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction”
- reaffirms the longstanding target of 0.7% of GNI (gross national income) that donors should spend on aid and it stipulates that 0.15% of GNI should be directed to the LDCs
- identifies a number of areas in which donors should focus their efforts including: basic social services (such as basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation), the environment, the transport sector, landlocked countries, and small island developing countries
- draws attention to the importance of “untied aid,” aid that is not tied to the purchase of goods or services from the donor country

Although aid has come under criticism in recent years, it is a vital ingredient for development. For many years civil society groups have campaigned to promote the important role that aid can play in lifting people out of poverty. It means millions more children attending school in eastern Africa, free access to basic health care in some countries, roads to help farmers get crops to market, immunization, and eradication of some diseases.

Civil society groups are now increasingly vocal about the importance of aid. Aid will demonstrate the “global partnership” that lies at the heart of Goal 8 and at the heart of the development goals as a whole. Groups want more and better aid, scaled up quantity and upgraded quality. They are looking to donors to do things differently.

The quantity of aid

As civil society groups frequently point out, the situation is clear: donors are not providing enough aid. If all donors met the 0.7% commitment, there would be US\$120 billion available. This sum could meet all the MDGs and address other important development needs as well. The Millennium Project Report calls for 0.7% by 2015 and suggests interim targets for high-income countries: 0.44% in 2006 and 0.54% by 2010.

In the lead up to the summit in September 2005, civil society groups are united in their position that rich countries must meet their 0.7% obligations. For instance the Make Poverty History Campaign says, “Rich countries have promised to provide 0.7% of their national income in aid and they must now make good on their commitment by setting a binding timetable to reach this target.” (<http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/home.html>)

The quality of aid

Quality must go hand in hand with quantity. Civil society development organizations, in many cases as part of regional or global coalitions and networks, have identified a number of areas in which donors must address aid quality.

Over the last 50 years, donor countries have been consistently criticized for using aid to further their own interests. Civil society groups are now

closely monitoring whether donors use aid for their own purposes, or for primarily reducing poverty and promoting development. A number of donors have recently released policy statements in which they state a renewed commitment to poverty reduction. Despite these statements, aid continues to be strongly determined by other interests.

The short-term *strategic interests of donor countries* may overwhelm more humanitarian or developmental objectives. As noted elsewhere, in the last three years donors have increased the amount of aid but a large proportion of this increase has been linked to the war on terrorism. Much of it has gone to Pakistan and Afghanistan. As we know, some donor countries are now drawing on their aid budgets to finance anti-terrorism activities which have little connection to reducing poverty in developing countries. Eurodad (<http://www.eurodad.org>), a network of 48 development NGOs that campaigns and coordinates activities on debt, poverty reduction, and empowerment, raised this issue in a letter to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD: "All donors should explicitly adopt the principle that aid should be used for poverty eradication...Broadening OECD/DAC criteria to include anti-terrorism or donors' narrow security and defence concerns should not be used to artificially increase ODA."

Conditions attached to aid may make eradicating poverty more difficult. Civil society organizations note that aid packages often come with strings attached. In many cases, developing countries have had to agree to implement a long list of conditions in order to receive much needed aid. Much of the aid and loans provided by the IMF and the World Bank is conditioned on recipient governments opening markets, liberalizing trade, and privatizing or deregulating services. Conditions have often included cuts to public expenditure on health and education and requirements that citizens pay for these services.

There is no conclusive evidence that these macro policies lead to economic growth. At the same time they have measurable severe negative impacts on the poor. This type of aid conditionality requires developing countries to change policy to meet externally set criteria, and diminishes national ability to determine policy on the basis of local needs and the needs of the poor. Many NGOs seek an end to this approach.

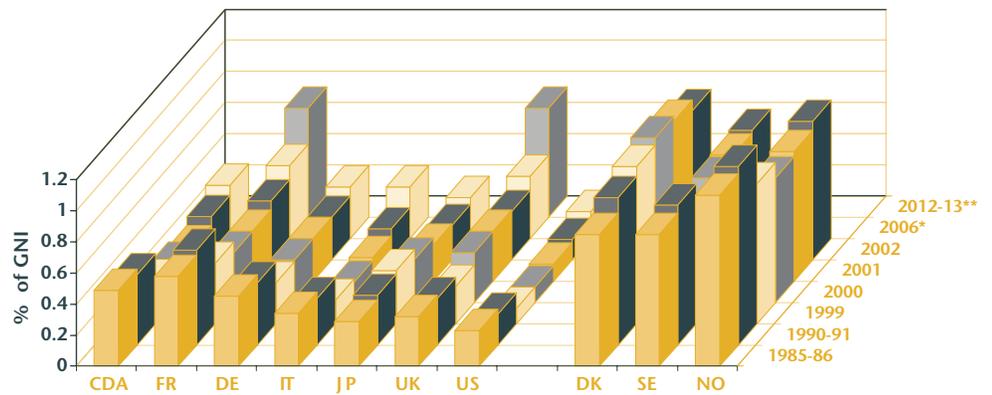
The international NGO coalition Reality of Aid proposed the following reform in its 2004 report on governance and human rights: "In establishing new and equitable partnerships with developing countries, the International Financial Institutions must abandon the practice of externally imposed policy conditionalities..."

(See <http://www.realityofaid.org/roa2004/2004report.htm>).

Aid conditionality is in direct contradiction to one of the core principles long promoted by CSOs: the principle that developing countries should retain "ownership" of their development. Donors have begun to recognize this principle in a search for "increased aid effectiveness" and new approaches.

Some of these new approaches include "program-based approaches" (PBAs), "sector wide approaches" (SWAPs), and direct budget support. Each is designed to provide coordinated support directly to programs that developing country governments have identified and planned, and that they will implement themselves.

Trends in G7 development assistance, with selected comparison countries



* Assuming all commitments made at Monterrey are fulfilled

** Promised

Source: Ronald Labonte and Ted Schrecker, The G-8, Globalization and Health. University of Ottawa, January 11, 2005

Civil society organizations support these new approaches, but warn that it is too early to assess their impact. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) (<http://www.ccic.ca>), a coalition of nearly 100 voluntary sector organizations working globally to achieve sustainable human development, states that “civil society critics and official donors agree on the importance of PBAs’ laudable goals,” including focus on developing country ownership and capacities. But the Council discovered that new approaches may not, in fact, contribute to increased developing country ownership, and that donors “are continuing to insist upon conditionalities for their aid,” and that the new approaches turn out to be “the next stage of external donor deep interference and control in the poorest countries.” Case studies undertaken on behalf of the CIDSE network (<http://www.cidse.org>) of Catholic aid agencies have come to similar conclusions.

Tied aid continues, where donors have required that developing countries use aid to obtain goods or services directly from them, rather than from the full range of sources that may be available. Tied aid of this sort limits the ability of developing countries to obtain the most appropriate goods or services for their needs, and it often means they get less value for money. Donors have recognized that tied aid is a poor use of aid funds, and that it limits aid effectiveness. In 2001 the OECD’s DAC agreed to untie aid to the LDCs; although they exempted a number of important categories of aid from this agreement.

Civil society groups have made tied aid a central issue for their advocacy work on the MDGs. The Make Poverty History campaign states, “Aid should no longer be tied to goods and services from the donor, so ensuring that more money is spent in the poorest countries.” ActionAid (<http://www.actionaid.org>) is an international NGO which works with poor and marginalized people to eradicate poverty in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Its efforts in drawing attention to the negative impacts of tied aid were a key factor in causing the UK government to untie all its aid in 2002.

Another key issue of aid effectiveness is *aid management*. For developing countries, this has often been a burdensome and time-consuming process, coupled with expensive transaction costs. The often complex demands of individual donor reporting requirements means developing country governments find themselves spending inordinate amounts of time meeting these demands and receiving and facilitating donor missions to inspect “their” aid projects.

Donors have acknowledged that the way they deliver aid has led to management headaches for developing countries and have committed to improving their performance. In 2002 at the Monterrey Financing for Development Conference and in 2003 at the Rome Conference on Harmonising Donor Practises for Effective Aid Delivery, donors promised greater transparency, a reduction in the number of donor missions, and a more harmonized delivery system.

Civil society organizations continue to monitor how donors deliver aid, how they manage their aid programs in developing countries, and the burden they place on the recipients of aid. Oxfam International, which undertook research on these issues in 2004, found that in 60% of reported cases, respondents said that World Bank and US reporting requirements were “too much” or “excessive” and that in 25% of cases, aid disbursements were received between six and 12 months late. While noting some improvements as a result of sectoral programs, the implementation of budget support, and the provision of aid directly through government treasuries, Oxfam cautions that “elements of the previous style of behaviour persist.” While donors exert pressure on developing countries to account for their use of aid funds, in contrast, “there is very little to hold donors to account for their behaviour toward aid recipients.” One way that donors could “make aid work best for poverty reduction,” would be to “fully implement the Rome Declaration commitments to improve the delivery of aid.”

Debt: From relief to cancellation

Few elements of international development policy have elicited as sustained and detailed civil society critique as bilateral, multilateral, and odious debt. The remarkable upsurge of public interest expressed in the Jubilee Campaign (<http://www.jubileecampaign.co.uk>) in the late 1990s put issues of debt reduction, sustainability, and cancellation much higher on the agenda of world leaders. Despite some reform initiatives, the stones of debt service and repayment weigh heavily on the hopes and capacities of many countries whether least developed, developing, or middle income.

The issues of domestic debt and deficits are becoming central concerns in the world’s richest nations.

Civil society organizations have been campaigning against debt for more than a generation. Cafod (<http://www.cafod.org.uk>), Eurodad, and Christian Aid (<http://www.christian-aid.org.uk>) make substantive arguments for debt reduction and cancellation:

- Debt relief acts as de facto direct budget support in the form of grants.
- Savings are clear, not unpredictable as in ongoing aid relations.
- Reductions in debt stock encourage growth and investment.
- Debt reduction could enhance the effectiveness of recipient country expenditures by allocating development funds according to transparent development criteria.

Debt relief, in support of “debt sustainability” has been around for some time through the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiatives (<http://www.worldbank.org/hipc/about/hipcbr/hipcbr.htm>). These initiatives have come under increasingly civil society scrutiny and criticism. They

are viewed as inappropriate, not truly aimed at poverty reduction, and failing to achieve “sustainability.” As Cafod and others point out, “...in fact, the HIPC initiative is an impediment to achieving the MDGs...A first step in any MDG forward financing package must view a 100% debt cancellation as part of a one-off investment in achieving the poverty targets.”

This conclusion by several Northern NGOs is supported by Jubilee South (<http://www.jubileesouth.org>), which notes that continuation of debt is as fundamentally political as it is economic in character. Jubilee South argues that the discussion should be less about repaying debt than about those who owe the South reparations for all the resources that have been plundered, and the decades-long payments made on odious debts accumulated by foreign-supported dictators.

There has been recent debt cancellation for Iraq to serve the interests of the occupying powers. Canadian debt monitors note that “Canada agreed to cancel, not just suspend, almost as much debt for Iraq alone (\$600 million) as the value of all bilateral debt relief granted by Canada to 14 HIPCs (\$609 million) over a period of four years.” Such developments can feed growing cynicism among those who continue paying huge debt service, but also lay bare the rationales for continuing some current arrangements. If debt forgiveness can be offered a government that succeeds an odious dictator in Iraq, how to justify payment of debts created by a Pinochet, a Suharto, or a Bokasa?

In response to the recent tsunami devastation in South Asia, a large number of civil society groups renewed the call for debt cancellation.

“Now, more than ever, at their hour of greatest need, the peoples of the South must be heeded in their long-standing demand for debt cancellation. In the face of this massive destruction, Northern and international creditors should not continue to hold South peoples in bondage for debts that have in large part, only contributed to their impoverishment and deprivation,” urged Jubilee South.

It could be argued that the Iraq debt cancellation and the significant debt moratoriums extended to Asia are part of a growing momentum for new proposals and solutions for the indebted. The UK government suggested early in 2005 its willingness to cancel some of its bilateral debt in Africa, and take on its share of African debt servicing to the World Bank at least until 2015, urging others to do the same. Amid talk of a “Marshall Plan for Africa,” the Africa Commission mandated by British Prime Minister Tony Blair is likely to follow similar steps for overall reduction of the debt load.

CSO critics, while supportive of the initiative, caution that to hold off on debt till 2015 is not really cancellation, and that the UK proposals are too closely dependent on questionable HIPC standards for eligibility to be helpful to many of the countries needing help. The initiative, they argue, is relief, not cancellation.

Further, an increasing array of groups seek government leadership to “secure the immediate and unconditional cancellation of 100% of the debts owed to multilateral financial institutions by all impoverished countries that need debt cancellation in order to meet the MDGs, including halting the HIV/AIDS pandemic.” With this they argue for an end to IMF and World Bank conditionality, an end to repayment of odious debt, and an increase in aid to 0.7%.

"We call on all organizations and social movements which have participated in the World Social Forum and those who could not be in Porto Alegre, to work together in the campaign for the IMMEDIATE and UNCONDITIONAL CANCELLATION OF THE FOREIGN and illegitimate DEBT of the countries of the South, beginning with the victims of tsunami and others that have undergone terrible disasters and crisis in the recent month."

Social movements at the World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, Brazil, January 31, 2005. http://www.movsoc.org/htm/call_2005_english.htm

Trade

The MDGs assume increased global trade as a principal motor of growth and thus a part of the alleviation of poverty, including a Goal 8 commitment to "develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system." The prosperous are to "address the special needs of Least Developed Countries," which includes "tariff and quota free access for LDC exports."

Five indicators are grouped under the heading "market access," as well as an additional indicator relevant to affordable drugs:

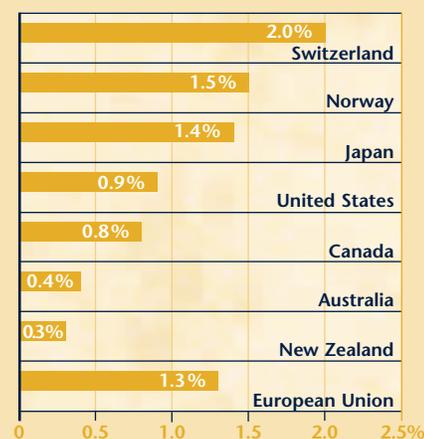
- Indicator 37: Proportion of exports (by value and excluding arms) admitted free of duties and quotas
- Indicator 38: Average tariffs and quotas on agricultural products and textiles and clothing
- Indicator 39: Domestic and export agricultural subsidies in OECD countries
- Indicator 40: Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity
- Indicator 46: Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis

All of these issues feature prominently in official trade negotiations, in particular those that occur through multilateral processes such as the WTO, and through regional trade arrangements such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations and bilateral agreements. They are addressed through the UN system by agencies such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), that have a direct trade mandate, as well as by agencies such as UNDP, whose trade mandate is part of a broader focus on development.

Civil society, trade, and development

These and other trade-related issues are high on the agenda of a number of CSOs. Some of these organizations have been working on trade issues and calling for a fairer global trading system for many years. Some, like the gender and trade networks, address specific dimensions of international commerce. While working on poverty reduction and community development, many civil society groups have realized that to be effective, these efforts must go hand in hand with addressing issues in the broader, "macro" policy environment, including inequities in the global trading system, and its negative impact on the poor.

Total support to agriculture as share of GDP 2002 (%)



Source: <http://www.developmentgoals.org/partnership.htm> (accessed 2005)

One of many organizations now engaged in seeking “trade justice,” Oxfam International provides an example of a new level of sophistication, persistence, and detail in its approach to policy change. In *Rigged Rules and Double Standards*, Oxfam points out that during the Uruguay round of trade talks, in the 1990s, rich countries stated they would decrease agricultural subsidies. In reality, they did the opposite. In 2000 they subsidized their farmers to the tune of US\$245 billion, about five times the amount of annual ODA (http://www.maketrade-fair.com/assets/english/report_english.pdf).

Christian Aid (<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/indepth/409trade>) has a major trade campaign, and takes up the issues of subsidies in its report, *Taking liberties: poor people, free trade and trade justice*. It states, “While rich countries have demanded that poor countries open their markets and cut subsidies, they have continued to protect and support their own industries. US subsidies enable American cotton to be exported at up to 40% less than it costs to produce.”

These NGOs acknowledge that government intervention in agriculture, including subsidies to farmers, can play an important role in supporting important rural development and environmental goals. In the EU and US, however, current intervention is not achieving these objectives, and is instead resulting in serious impacts on farmers in poor countries. Oxfam calls for “a comprehensive ban on export subsidies, and a restructuring of farm subsidies to achieve social and environmental objectives, rather than increased output” (<http://www.maketrade-fair.com/assets/english/Oxfamresponse-to-EC.pdf#search=xfam%2C%20Rigged%20Rules%20and>).

The Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (Seatini) (<http://www.seatini.org>), aims to strengthen Africa’s capacity to be more effective in the global trading system. It points out that over 70% of Africans rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, but that they are prevented from using their comparative advantage because of industrialized country subsidies. It states, “South Africa in particular is giving the land back to black people but is forcing these farmers to compete with subsidized European and American imports. This is a recipe for disaster.”

While rich countries have reduced average tariff levels from around 10% in the early 1980s to about half of that by the late 1990s, the actual tariffs may remain high on products of particular export importance to developing countries, such as staple food products, fruits and vegetables, tobacco, textiles and clothing. “Tariff escalation” is a trade barrier that has particularly damaging impacts on developing countries, as it involves increased tariffs according to the level of processing on imported products.

Goal 8 doesn’t address a number of these issues, nor others that CSOs believe are central to a fairer, more just trading system. Organizations like Oxfam International urge rich countries to go well beyond Goal 8, for example, giving comprehensive duty and quota free market access to all low-income countries by 2005.

Re-thinking “free” trade

When demonstrators and developing country resistance “stopped the show” at the WTO Seattle Trade Ministers’ meeting in 1998, and again at the 2003 Cancun meeting, global attention began to focus on the limitations of the

current trade system, particularly as practiced by the “Quad” of countries – the EU, US, Japan, and Canada – who dominate the processes of the WTO. An international trade justice network has developed among development and related organizations. In the Americas, the Hemispheric Social Alliance brings together labour, peasant, Indigenous Peoples, women’s, religious, and cultural organizations in an ongoing struggle against a FTAA (<http://www.art-us.org/HSA.html>). African civil society organizations have been increasingly effective in analysis of the international agenda and advice to their own governments. An important body of civil society analysis fundamentally questions the current global system — including its structure, institutions, and decision-making mechanisms — and the concept of “free trade” that this system promotes.

Advocates of “liberalized” trade, including Northern governments, economic theorists, and global institutions such as the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF, have promoted free trade on the premise that it will stimulate international trade, lead to economic growth, and help reduce poverty in the South. Civil society groups have strongly challenged this premise, and have repeatedly drawn attention to the negative impacts of free trade on the poor in developing countries. Christian Aid says “the 20 year myth of free trade is exploding,” and goes on to say, “Inappropriate free trade policies forced on the developing world by rich countries and international institutions have failed to reduce poverty significantly and have devastated many poor communities.”

The International Forum on Globalization (IFG) (<http://www.ifg.org>) was formed in response to widespread concerns over economic globalization, a process it says is “dominated by international institutions and agreements unaccountable to democratic processes or national governments.” The IFG addresses free trade within the broader context of globalization and promotes equitable, democratic, and ecologically sustainable economies.

Some intergovernmental organizations caution against simplistic approaches to trade liberalization. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (<http://www.unescap.org>), warns that if market openings occur too quickly or too early in developing countries, there may be consequences such as “domestic deindustrialization, current account deficits and special threats to marginal farmers, who must remain in agriculture for lack of other options.”

Another commentator, the UNDP’s Jan Vandermoortele, warns that in an open market, “surging imports” have had a destabilizing impact in many developing countries and that heavily subsidized exports from developed countries have “played havoc” with the livelihood of millions of smallholders in poor nations.

Civil society organizations have worked hard to develop alternative approaches to trade liberalization and market opening, seeking better terms on which to relate to, and integrate with, the global economy. The Third World Network (TWN) (<http://www.twinside.org.sg>), an international independent network that since 1984 has undertaken detailed research on trade issues from a Southern perspective, is at the forefront of analysis and advocacy on these issues. Its director, Martin Khor, calls for “selective integration” of developing countries into the global economy. He argues that this

should replace the “big bang” approach to liberalization that continues to dominate and is inappropriate in its “one-size fits all” approach. Khor suggests that such a new, selective integration approach would allow developing countries to be more selective and deliberate in choosing how far, how fast, and in what sectors they integrate their domestic economy with the financial, trade, and investment aspects of the global economy. In particular they would choose how far they harmonize their policies with those of more developed countries, through commitments made in trade agreements.

The need for policy flexibility

Many developing countries do not have the freedom to choose their own approach to liberalizing their trade systems and economies. As a result, they have limited scope to use domestic trade policy as an instrument for shaping national development. In addition, globalization has meant that international factors may now be more important than domestic policies. As Martin Khor suggests, policies that may previously have been determined within the national context are now “significantly influenced or shaped” within the context of international forums, or by international institutions.

Developing countries, therefore, currently face an almost “no-win” dilemma. They can choose to engage in the global trade and economic system, in which case they must abide by rules that often override their ability to set domestic policy according to local needs and realities. Alternatively, they can choose to retain control over domestic policy; but this may mean staying outside global trade structures, in which case they are excluded from the benefits and protection these structures are designed to provide.

The terms policy “space” or “flexibility” are now used to describe the need for a global trading system whose rules and commitments allow developing countries to retain the ability to shape trade policy, and the rate and extent of “liberalization” on the basis of their own national development frameworks. This is particularly important for aspects of policy that may have a direct impact on poverty reduction and the poor.

Presenting a clear alternative to the free trade approach, Christian Aid says that the most important historical lesson is that “no country has developed without government intervention in trade.” While warning against excessive intervention, it points out that rich countries have often protected industry in order to help promote their own development. Governments of successful economies in Southeast Asia supported industry while at the same time ensuring they also competed in international markets.

The Third World Network makes several recommendations relating to policy flexibility. It recommends that conditionalities accompanying IMF-World Bank loans be reviewed and modified “so that recipient countries can own the priority setting, the policy assumptions, and the choice of financial, macroeconomic, trade, and other policies.”

It recommends that “the WTO review processes should consider giving developing countries adequate flexibility in implementing their Agriculture Agreement obligations, on the grounds of food security, rural livelihoods, and poverty alleviation.”

Similar concerns were raised in the joint statement of Commonwealth CSOs to the September 2004 meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers (<http://www.un-ngls.org/cso/cso5/cfmm2004statement.pdf>).

Reforming the WTO

Many CSOs do not necessarily reject the WTO outright. They point out that international trade rules have the potential to promote policies that can benefit the poor, and suggest that many in the developing world recognize that the WTO will be vital to their development in years to come. But even more advocate major reform of the WTO, regarding its rules and decision-making processes.

The CSO critique argues WTO rules strongly favour rich nations, and that benefits for developing countries, promised as part of WTO agreements, have not materialized. This applies in particular to the Uruguay Round of the WTO, in which developing countries agreed to liberalize their trading and economic systems, in return for agreements from rich countries that they would open their markets to developing country exports, in particular in the area of agriculture and textiles. While developing countries kept their side of the bargain, often at great cost to their economies and to the livelihoods of the poor, rich countries found ways to continue to protect their industries and to maintain barriers against imports from poor countries. Third World Network recommends that “Developed countries should meaningfully commit to opening their markets in ways that will benefit developing countries, including relation to products and services such as textiles, agriculture, labour services, products processed from raw materials.”

WTO governance is criticized, more for its actual operation than its design. “On paper,” the WTO is more democratic and has a more representative structure than other global institutions such as the World Bank or IMF. The WTO’s formal structure hides a serious democratic deficit which allows rich countries to set rules to their own advantage. Poor countries do not have the capacity and resources to support and maintain negotiating teams at the WTO on the scale that rich countries can afford. For example, while most rich countries have whole teams of negotiators and strategists at WTO headquarters in Geneva, 11 Least Developed Countries have no representation at all. Such differences in negotiating abilities create major inequalities within the system.

Another feature of the WTO democratic deficit involves power dynamics. Although the WTO operates on the principle of “one country, one vote,” actual power relationships between poor and rich countries are unequal. The normal operation of the WTO occurs not through voting but through consensus. This process has been strongly dominated by powerful countries and groups such as the US, the EU, Japan, and Canada, which have often negotiated and reached agreements outside the formal WTO processes. Although poor countries have begun to gain more influence, and since Seattle, Doha, and Cancun, WTO meetings have moved toward a greater degree of “power sharing,” they continue to contend with this inherent power imbalance, and continue to have limited voice.

The Third World Network proposes that “the WTO’s rules and operations should be re-designed, so that development is established as the overriding principle.” This sets the basis not only for the WTO, but for the global trading system. Under this principle, trade would not be pursued for the objective of increasing profits and economic advantage, but would become a tool for promoting development and reducing poverty.

Other trade and investment issues

Trade agreements often involve much more than trade, for example, provisions to extend protection to foreign investors. These investment-related efforts, under the WTO, often result in privileges and guarantees for outside investors not enjoyed by citizens of host, weaker nations. The NAFTA agreement includes a provision which allows foreign investors to sue the host government (including local and state authorities) for alleged injury to present or future profitability due to government policy. Similar provisions have been pressed by investors and by the US government in other bilateral and regional agreements.

Another element is contained in the WTO's Trade-Related Intellectual Property provisions or TRIPS. These have been instrumental in providing 20-year protection to the patents of global pharmaceutical companies. TRIPS "+" provisions, with further protection guarantees, are being pressed in a host of bilateral and regional negotiations. The Quaker UN Office has done remarkable work examining the implications of these provisions on the ability of governments to fulfill their human rights obligations, including the right to health, and to encourage domestic research and industry (<http://www.quno.org>).

Since the birth of the WTO, the last decade has seen growing civic concern about the "mission creep" of the WTO and of trade, investment, and intellectual property regimes; current negotiations for a new GATS is a case in point. Virtually any public service from playground attendants to sanitary services, libraries to water delivery can be considered affected, as can insurance services, a host of health and other professional services, as well as commercial and financial service industries. As these dimensions are increasingly drawn under trade rules and regulations, the ability of democratic governments to define social policy and public investment becomes more and more restricted, and with that, the rights of citizens to democratically choose alternate approaches are restricted as well.

Bilateral and regional trade agreements have been multiplying rapidly, sometimes with provisions in advance of those negotiated through the WTO. ActionAid has recently examined the implications. It argues that as some developing countries are gaining more influence at the WTO, economic superpowers such as the US and the EU are turning to bilateral and regional trade negotiations in order to establish new markets and to obtain concessions from poor countries that would be difficult to gain under WTO rules. In particular, ActionAid has highlighted the new "economic partnership agreements" (EPAs) that are now being negotiated between the EU and regional groupings of African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries. It suggests that EPAs are "premised on the assumption that indiscriminate trade liberalization and market deregulation are best for achieving development." It warns strongly against EPAs, stating that, "full reciprocal trade liberalization and negotiations on investment, competition policy, and public procurement be dropped from EPA negotiations. Alternatives to EPAs must be sought."

UNCTAD: A forum for alternative approaches?

UNCTAD (<http://www.unctad.org>) has been dealing with many of the current issues of concern for almost 40 years. Its 2004 conference, in Brazil, offered an opportunity, through a civil society forum, for concerned groups to meet and develop common approaches.

The UNCTAD Civil Society Forum illustrates how civil society groups, with diverse constituencies and varied approaches, can come together to present coherent and united perspectives on important trade issues. The Forum's declaration to UNCTAD XI (<http://www.unctad.org/Templates/Download.asp?docID=4873&intItemID=2068&lang=1>) identifies a number of trade issues that both reflect and expand on those addressed by other civil society groups. These include:

- the negative impact of “forced trade liberalization” on the day-to-day lives of millions of people and their environment, especially women in all regions of the world.
- the EU and US practice of dumping heavily subsidized farm exports onto world markets which has the effect of destroying rural livelihoods in developing countries.
- the need to replace “inappropriate one-size-fits-all, neo-liberal mentality” with “diverse and participatory economic systems that are flexible, fair, and sustainable.
- the need to refocus global governance systems, including reducing the scope and influence of the WTO, especially on non-trade issues; and for binding multilateral legislation to make transnational corporations accountable.

In relation to these and other issues, the Forum calls for:

- policy coherence, in which the international economic order is made subservient to sustainable development.
- policy space, so that developing countries and countries in transition can meet the challenge of designing national policies that are consistent with their stages of development and capacity to implement them; and
- real partnerships — between governments and civil society, between intergovernmental organizations, governments, and the private sector — based on mutual respect and common objectives for more equitable sharing of trade benefits.

Making trade work for poor people

The Forum's recommendations for UNCTAD are a small sample of the broader thinking and recommendations of civil society on reforming the global trading system. They lead beyond Goal 8 and its relatively narrow focus on market access issues.

“Global governance is not so much about world government as it is about institutions and practices combined with rules that facilitate cooperation among sovereign nation states, NGOs and firms.”

Governing Globalization: Issues and Institutions – A policy brief.
Deepak Nayyar and Julius Court
for UN and WIDER 2002 (available at <http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/pb5.pdf>)

TRADE JUSTICE 2005

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance has publicized a vision to make trade work for the poor. They note, “No country became rich without long periods of helping and protecting their vulnerable enterprises and traders until they were strong enough to compete. However, current rules and institutions of world trade deny poor country governments these rights.”

The Alliance calls for recognition of the sovereign rights of poor country governments:

- The right to protect poor and vulnerable farmers from cheap imports that would destroy their livelihoods.
- The right to protect infant industries from competition until they are strong enough to compete.
- The right to subsidize the costs of agricultural inputs and technical advice.
- The right to regulate the investment of transnational companies, make them buy materials locally, locate in poor areas, and train local people.
- The right to support local companies by giving them contracts to supply government offices, schools, and hospitals.
- The right to regulate prices to ensure stability for producers and consumers.
- The right to choose for themselves the best means of providing essential services to poor people, including the option of keeping public control.
- The right to limit the export of raw materials so that local companies can process them to add value to the country’s exports.
- The right to support the distribution of agricultural inputs and the collection of agricultural produce in areas where markets are non-existent or do not operate properly.
- The right to provide preferential credit to producers to help them invest and grow.

Source: Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, Action Guide (<http://www.e-alliance.ch/>).

Institutional reform

Developing countries are demanding more equitable representation in economic decision-making processes. A group of these countries, the G-24, supports new vote allocations in the IMF. The Monterrey Financing for Development Conference recognized the need and all governments made commitments to reform.

A number of civil society groups push for reform in decision-making, including the UBUNTU campaign (<http://www.reformcampaign.net>), the international NGO Facilitating Group on Financing for Development (see http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/cs-IFG_Core_Members0504.pdf), and the Global Problem-Solving Group of the Helsinki Process (<http://www.helsinkiprocess.fi>). Proposals abound. Action is lacking.

Recently, in its report, *World Economic Situation and Prospects for 2005*, the UN suggested it is now time to act on the promises made in Monterrey 2002 and elsewhere. The UN report notes, "Voice and effective participation are issues that go to the centre of the international financial institutions' legitimacy, relevance, and effectiveness."

The UN reports no progress changing quotas, capital shares, and voting rights of member countries in the IMF.

The head of the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs, José Antonio Ocampo, states what many developing countries and NGOs endorse: it is high time for political leadership rather than technical calculations. "The issue is stopped politically," he says. "The essential point here is that we can only advance if there is a political consensus. Technical discussions can go on forever."

Action

Poverty is real. The existing recipes and measures to end poverty generate increasing frustration. For many in civil society, current ideas to reform aid, debt, and trade appear to be insufficient. More and more people are calling for a whole new approach (<http://www.iisd.ca/4wcw> <http://www.unorg/esn/socdev/wssd>). The Global Call to Action Against Poverty is organizing to support demands for reform in three main areas: aid, debt, and trade. Many others are taking this year's opportunities to promote new thinking and radical shifts in policy.

When world leaders meet in New York in September 2005 to review progress on the MDGs they should be aware the dominant approach to economic policy and to development has failed poor countries and failed the world's needy. Change is necessary. Action on aid, trade, and debt will be central to that change.

War, Peace, and Security

Development and security

The impact of the war on terror, Iraq, and war in general is of great concern to those who support the MDGs. Diversion of attention and resources to fight poorly defined terror, to Iraq and the threat of other large-scale conflicts undermines prospects for development and wider human security.

World military spending is close to US\$1 trillion per year (2003), with the US portion at \$420 billion for 2005. Military spending has increased 18% over two years (up 6.5% in 2002, 11% in 2003). The US accounts for half: the wealthy countries together account for 75%. Developed countries now spend 10 times more on the military than they spend for development assistance.

At the same time, there are increasing pressures to redefine development assistance from rich countries to poor countries so that this includes more security-related spending. The Development Assistance Committee of the OECD (<http://www.oecd.org.dac>), the economic research and coordinating body of wealthy nations, is discussing a new definition of development assistance that would include security and security spending.

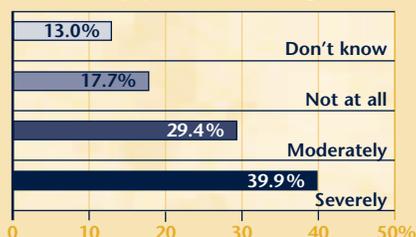
War "creates an environment of fear, of scarcity and competition and it usurps the funding that might otherwise go to needed international aid."

- NGO respondent from the US

"No State, no matter how powerful, can by its own efforts alone make itself invulnerable to today's threats."

- *A More Secure World: Our shared responsibility. Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (available online at <http://www.un.org/secureworld>).*

How does the security situation, including the war on terrorism, military expenditure, and new domestic or "homeland" security measures, impact on the achievement of the MDGs in the country you are working in?



Views from the survey

A dramatic result from this year's survey is the view from 70% of the 439 worldwide respondents that the war on terror and Iraq are having a negative impact (either severe or moderate) on development work and on achieving the MDGs. This view is held among respondents in societies as different as Haiti and Switzerland. Particular concerns include:

- Resources and attention are diverted from development
- War displaces populations and destroys people, schools, hospitals, farms, and factories
- Many development and humanitarian organizations have to withdraw staff from conflict zones
- A focus on security and terror generates a climate of fear, feeds xenophobia, and undermines cooperation
- Armed conflict undermines the confidence necessary for investment

An Irish respondent observes, "The over-emphasis on security issues in the EU and OECD has meant that existing aid resources are likely to be channelled increasingly in ways that do not primarily target poverty reduction, but aim to strengthen the State's efforts to combat terrorism. This leads to an emphasis on the potential of violent threats, rather than more systemic and less visible threats to human security, such as hunger, poverty, disease, and human rights violations."

Others note that changes to the EU aid budget could result in higher spending on counter-terrorism measures. Specific counter-terrorist measures such as surveillance could be counted as ODA. This would seriously undermine the poverty/MDGs focus of ODA. It could lead to the reallocation of resources to those countries considered as priorities in the war on terror.

Canadian groups are concerned about changing the definition of ODA. One respondent notes, "Canada is pressing to open up the definition of ODA at the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is increasing its support for security sector reform in the South. We are diverting very large amounts of small aid increases to Afghanistan and Iraq under pressure from the US government."

The war on terror

There is additional concern that due to the war on terror and the militarization of aid, countries directly involved in the fight against terrorism will be preferred for development aid, and others sidelined. A survey respondent from Vietnam notes, "Since Vietnam is not involved in the security issue, funds might preferably go to other, more needy, countries." Several participants note that Iraq and Afghanistan have been the largest recipients of aid since the start of the war on terror. Says one US NGO, "In the US this has drastically affected resource allocations and priorities to the Middle East and North Africa region at the expense of other regions of the world."

Other groups report additional concerns about the militarization of civil conflicts, increased military responses to political problems and increased military/security spending. Some fear that the war on terror is being used to transform and prolong existing conflicts. A Colombian group reports:

“In my country, there is a convergence of the war against drugs developed by US troops and agencies, with a prolonged internal armed conflict, and a response to all conflicts from the standpoint of the war against terrorism. This absorbs most of the resources that are not absorbed by the foreign debt payments.”

A US group suggests that the war on terror is used to further the adoption of neo-liberal policies and to repeal civil and human rights. “The war on terror is being used by the government as an excuse for increasing military expenditures (thus cutting social spending); advancing neo-liberal economic policy; reversing gains in civil liberties and rights; legitimizing the lack of transparency by the government; and mitigating proposals for peace and development by civil society.”

As well, respondents believe war and the war on terror are eroding respect for human rights and civil liberties. Organizations such as the Red Cross have expressed concern about violations of the Geneva Convention by the US government in the Abu Ghraib tortures. The 2004 Reality of Aid Report (available at <http://www.realityofaid.org/>) suggests that some anti-terrorist legislation adopted by various countries is in violation of UN treaties and declarations including, the UN Declaration of Human Rights (<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>), the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm), and the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ceschr.htm).

The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (for more information, visit <http://idrf.ca/IDRF-CCIC-ICLMG.htm>) expresses concern about the increasing ease with which governments are willing to violate human rights: “Many countries, including Canada, have adopted or revised laws and measures to increase surveillance of the lawful conduct of their citizens. Fundamental rights and basic civil liberties are being eroded under the guise of the so-called war on terrorism ... Anti-terrorism legislation around the world ... has contributed to an increase in racial profiling and institutionalized racism ... Canada, which has always prided itself for its policy of official multiculturalism and its human security policy, has followed the lead of the US and of the UK in replicating and expanding the most controversial parts of their laws designed to wage war on terrorism. Those tough measures, which include the reversal of the burden of proof, contravene Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).”

The UN Global Security Forum in its paper titled, “*How to Approach Human Rights as a Central Issue of Security*” (available at <http://www.un-globalsecurity.org/pdf/vieira.pdf>), notes that human rights must be a fundamental component of security policies. This incorporation of human rights into policies will foster mutual concern and respect. In this regard, the MDGs “can be considered an important first step to meet the challenge to create an international environment where human rights can be universally realized.”

The roots of conflict

Survey respondents overwhelmingly suggest that the most constructive way to tackle insecurity and terrorism is to address poverty and the inequalities that exist across the globe. "Threats to peace and security emanate, in part, from inequitable distribution of resources and global power," according to one UK NGO. "Government funding for arms could be better used to fund MDGs and development needs. The best way to deal with insecurity is to tackle poverty."

A respondent from Panama says "this country is spending billions and billions on spurious security measures. The money would be better spent on achieving MDGs. Indeed, spending on MDGs might be a way of increasing security."

These concerns are also echoed by Social Watch. The 2004 Social Watch Annual Report, *Fear and Want* (<http://www.socialwatch.org/en/portada.htm>), notes that the war on terror "is threatening to undermine the UN-led global war against poverty."

HUMAN SECURITY

Our survey respondents adhere to the belief that national security cannot be achieved without addressing human security, economic, nutrition, gender, education, and health needs. Addressing these can attack the roots of violence, insecurity, and terrorism. As the UN's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (<http://www.un-globalsecurity.org/panel.asp>) notes, "Poverty is strongly associated with the outbreak of civil war." Poverty is strongly connected to environment degradation that can lead to conflicts over land and other resources. Additionally, the Panel notes efforts to promote social and political rights, the rule of law, and education are broad and comprehensive methods of fighting terrorism.

The Panel urges all nations to contribute to a more effective UN for our century. "The United Nations," it stresses, "was never intended to be a utopian exercise. It was meant to be a collective security system that worked." The Panel makes comprehensive recommendations for making the UN an effective and more powerful guarantor of security.

Complementing these proposals, leaders and governments must bring political attention, will, and resources to the MDGs as an essential response to real global threats to peace and security.

"We saw the UN as a fresh start for a world trying to work out its problems together rather than a return to a nineteenth-century world where the great powers carved it up...Who wants to go back to the jungle?" - Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand, *The Guardian*, May 3, 2003

Saving Lives: AIDS and Health Systems

The MDG on HIV/AIDS is scandalously modest. Set in 2000, Goal 6 takes inadequate note of the far-reaching impact of the disease on development. The current goal ignores the lifesaving potential of new treatments. Furthermore, the HIV/AIDS goal lacks the specific benchmarks that make progress on other goals measurable and verifiable.

Sensibly, the United Nations has moved beyond the limitations set in 2000. The Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 (UNGASS) and a unique session of the Security Council helped (<http://www.un.org/ga/aids/coverage>). The creation of UNAIDS, the WHO program to bring treatment to 3 million people by the end of 2005, and the creation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria have also helped (<http://www.theglobalfund.org/en>). However, these initiatives are only a fraction of what is needed. As well, the resources to bring them to adequate scale are still too limited, despite increased commitments from the United States, Canada, and other donor nations.

The AIDS tsunami

A “silent tsunami” of HIV/AIDS continues to take 2.2 million people per year – over 6,000 a day – in sub-Saharan Africa alone. Twelve million children in sub-Saharan Africa have lost one or both parents to AIDS, a number estimated to grow to 43 million by 2010.

The course of the disease continues through Russia and Central Asia, India, China, Vietnam, and vulnerable populations around the world. The scale of infection, disease, and death is staggering.

Our survey respondents report much work in public awareness, prevention, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. They report work to reduce stigma and defend the rights of vulnerable populations. They note that the empowerment of women and the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights for women and men are instrumental in prevention.

Among the changes they recommend are: access to anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs), investment in community-based health care facilities and services, and programs on sexual and reproductive rights. They recognize that poverty, inadequate sewage and waste management systems, water pollution, and inadequate access to safe food are all part of the determinants of health.

Development impact

United Nations agencies and government policy-makers are still calculating the impact of HIV/AIDS on food production, labour force, and the availability of teachers and other essential public servants. In Zambia, teacher deaths from AIDS are equivalent to half those trained annually. With an infection rate of 20%, countries in sub-Saharan Africa will have a national income 67% less than it would be otherwise, 20 years from now.

The other seven development goals simply cannot be met unless HIV/AIDS is dealt with. Successful efforts to address poverty, maternal health, and education are an essential component to eroding the impact and dangers of HIV/AIDS.

Health systems

Perhaps the most serious obstacle to success against HIV/AIDS is the weakness of health service at the community level. As the Millennium Project Task Force (http://unmp.com/enght_html_02html) testifies, “the elusive goal of bringing basic health services to all will never be met without vigorous financial and political commitment to health systems.”

One essential component is trained, skilled health workers. While the urgency of the AIDS and tuberculosis epidemics is clear, it is important that investments be made in existing and broadly mandated community health services, rather than creating a parallel system of disease-specific efforts. Priority must be placed on scaling up systems that benefit the poor, with attention to gender equity, so treatments do not benefit only the well-off and men.

There must be assured access to radically strengthened health systems. A failure to embody the right to health in national strategies is killing people. As one Ghanaian writes, “pay cash or carry death.” In Vietnam, out-of-pocket payments for health care pushed 2.6 million into poverty in 1998. In Mexico, where half the population is without health insurance, more than half of health spending is out-of-pocket. Global support and leadership by multilateral financial institutions in assuring universal coverage and equitable access is more urgent than ever.

Access to life-extending medicine

The WHO set a treatment target of reaching 3 million people in 2005. Part way through 2004, only 440,000 people with HIV were receiving treatment, about half of them in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2005 that number had improved to an estimated 700,000. However, it will take a massive effort to reach the 3 million target by January 2006. But even that ambitious target pales when we realize that there will be 4 million new infections in sub-Saharan Africa and a further 2.2 million deaths in 2005. The fight and humanity are losing ground.

Assuring access to treatment has been further set back by the strenuous efforts of large drug manufacturers to protect their patents and intellectual property. Battles led by CSOs in countries as diverse as South Africa, Brazil, and Canada have led to changes in national policy and legislation. International campaigns have forced the WTO to modify its interpretation of TRIPS agreements, and to recognize, at least partially, the human right to health. Legislation to facilitate export of accessible pharmaceuticals has been pioneered in Canada and Norway. But implementation has been regrettably slow.

However, national legislation in countries like Brazil has extended free access to treatment to hundreds of thousands of infected people. Civil society organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières (<http://www.msf.org>), in cooperation with local partners, have played a pioneering role in demonstrating how treatment can be extended.

An international civil society campaign to assure free and equitable access to treatment is under way. Developed by health economists at the University of Kwa-Zulu in Durban, South Africa, together with Médecins Sans Frontières and other NGOs, the “Free by 5” initiative is based on the

conclusion that “Most people living with HIV will die simply because they cannot afford the contribution which is sought from them,” due to user fees for services.

The sponsors report “evidence that user-fees for AIDS treatment are barriers to equity, efficiency, and quality of treatment programs. They threaten the possibility of scaling up these programs.”

To mobilize public support, the groups have launched a sign-on declaration which seeks to provide a rights-based basis on which scaled up medical services could be delivered: “We believe that, for human rights, public health, and economic reasons, there should be free access for all to a comprehensive minimum medical package, including ARVs.”

On February 1, 2005, at their Summit in Abuja, Africa’s leaders called for a pharmaceutical manufacturing plan to bring “quality” generic drugs to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and polio across the continent. The plan will help in the production of reduced-cost drugs in coordination with support from international groups.

Other challenges

In addition to the lack of affordable access to care, stigma and repression of vulnerable populations also play a deadly role. Access to care for women and children under 15, for injection drug users, men who have sex with men, sex workers, and ethnic minorities needs to be monitored and assured.

While recognition of the murderous course of the disease is increasing, HIV/AIDS still lacks an essential, coherent “Marshall Plan.” Anti-retroviral drugs have been available to some for 10 years. The work of UNGASS in 2005 and 2006 should be devoted to developing a comprehensive AIDS Marshall Plan.

Improving the targets

The Millennium Project Task Force recognizes that the AIDS-related development goals need to be enhanced. They suggest that targets for prevention are needed to assure an increased momentum of effort.

The UNGASS targets are reduction of prevalence among young people by 25% in the most-affected countries by 2005, and globally by 2010. The Task Force suggests more specific targets and measures.

As the Task Force points out, “the diversity of infections and vulnerability make development of country and sector specific approaches essential. The need to redefine and make more exact specific targets and dates is clear. National AIDS strategy councils and health ministries can develop appropriate measures.”

Scaling up

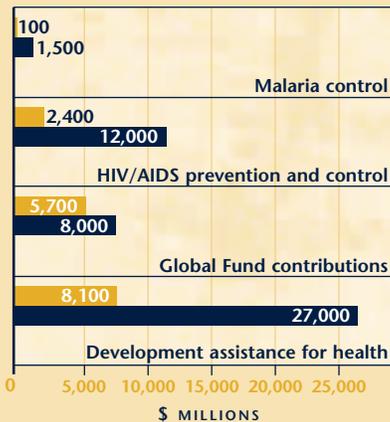
In 2001, the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health (<http://www.cmhealth.org>) estimated that 8 million lives a year could be saved by 2010, with an investment of US\$30-\$45 per person in the world’s poorest countries. This investment would create a “minimal” health system. This would cost an estimated US\$27 billion a year (by 2007).

The ultimate objectives of the Free by 5 Declaration are:

- to provide economic and public health evidence that could help inform the decisions of policy-makers and governments on the issue of free treatment;
- to urge UNAIDS, WHO, the Global Fund, the World Bank, PEPFAR and other donors to adopt guidelines and actively promote the principle and implementation of free treatment; and
- to assist activists and others in their advocacy efforts to obtain free treatment.

Source: <http://www.nu.ac.za/heard/free/freeby5.asp>

Needs and responses: health and health systems



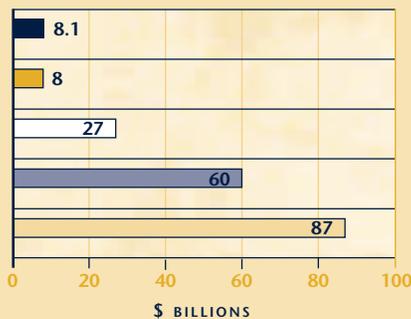
■ Actual donor financing, most recent year for which data available (or cumulative total in case of Global Fund)

■ Anticipated annual need, authoritative assessment

Sources:

Narasimhan and Attaran, 2003; Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, 2001; UNAIDS, 2004.

Interrogating "scarcity"



■ Value of development assistance for health, 2002

■ Amount spent annually in US for bathroom renovations

□ Donor financing needed for health in 2007

■ 2007 value, 2001 US income tax cuts for top 1%, avg. income \$1.3 million

□ Added funds requested by President Bush for pacification of Iraq, September 2003

At least US\$3.5 billion a year is needed to provide anti-retroviral drugs to 6 million people. With increased committed resources to support the momentum of the Global Fund on AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, some 2 million more people might have access to the necessary drugs by 2008. But the Fund, like the WHO, requires a massive scaling up of funding.

Funding is not only required for health systems and treatment, but for research. Research on vaccines for HIV/AIDS and for tropical and neglected diseases must be enhanced. Only about 10% of global health research spending addresses 90% of the global burden of disease. This burden is borne mostly in poor countries.

The need for stable, predictable funding is clear. Development assistance funding can help, as can domestic budgets in poor countries for health expenditures. Removing debt burdens would help. And where they exist, policy restraints to AIDS funding must be removed. ActionAid reports policies on inflation imposed by the IMF led at least one country to refuse AIDS-specific funding, a tragic approach to priorities.

The MDG for HIV/AIDS has already been improved but more resources, including human resources, and more funding from more sources are desperately needed. The vast challenge of HIV/AIDS requires a massive, scaled up, comprehensive, strategic effort which will require committed, sustained, and guaranteed large-scale funding. Utilizing slogans like "AIDS:G-8 must pay up" and "We demand treatment now," a diverse coalition of CSOs has begun a campaign to "Make AIDS history" in 2005.

Climate Change

The Millennium Declaration considers "respect for nature" a fundamental human value. It cites the "precepts of sustainable development." The Declaration calls for "prudence" in the management of all living species and natural resources, and calls for changes to current "unsustainable patterns of production and consumption."

MDG 7 sets out a range of targets to secure a sustainable environment:

- reverse loss of forests
- double the proportion of people in urban areas with improved drinking water
- double the proportion of people in rural areas with improved drinking water
- halve the proportion without sanitation in rural areas
- improve the lives of slum dwellers

The 2004 report of the UN Secretary-General (available at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>) highlights some aspects of the global environment situation. "Even regions that have made significant progress toward achieving many other goals, such as parts of Asia, tend to have a poorer record on environmental issues. The good news is that ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons have been almost eliminated. The bad news is that forest cover has been lost, notably in tropical forests, and energy use and per capita carbon dioxide emissions have increased in many developing countries."

Meanwhile, implementation of key global agreements is mixed:

- The Desertification Convention is hampered by lack of resources (See <http://www.unccd.int/main.php>).
- The parties to the Biodiversity Convention (<http://www.biodiv.org/convention/articles.asp>) have adopted indicators and specific goals to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.
- The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (available at <http://www.biodiv.org/biosafety/protocol.asp>) has come into force.

The World Conference on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002, held 10 years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, reaffirmed Rio's Agenda 21 as well as the MDGs. The conference addressed water and sanitation, energy, health, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, and ecosystem management. A number of countries announced particular initiatives, like the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, new conservation areas, or increased funding. Finance and trade policies were discussed, including the phase-out of all forms of export subsidies and subsidies for fossil fuels, as well as increases in development assistance. (For more information, see <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org>).

The environment and development

A central question remains: *How are policies for rapid development to relieve poverty to be implemented without the extreme environmental degradation that often accompanies such growth?*

The close link between poverty, hunger, and disease on the one hand, with continuing environmental degradation on the other, is the starting point for work on Goal 7 by the Millennium Project. It calls for environmental safeguards to be included in all planning for poverty reduction and other development goals. This requires access to environmental information to assess the consequences of actions.

The Project advocates that the full value of ecosystems and the services they provide be taken into account in trade and other market activities. Many ecosystems transcend boundaries, so international agreements should assure equitable access to and protection of natural resources. Development and environmental plans must be based on realistic estimates of future population growth and distribution.

The environment and security

The High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change recognizes that environmental degradation is a significant threat to security. Renewable and low-carbon energy sources and low greenhouse gas-producing technologies sources should be part of development plans.

The Panel notes that although the Kyoto Protocol comes into force in 2005, the United States, which produces one-quarter of world emissions of greenhouse gases, refuses to ratify the Protocol. Developing countries have resisted binding caps on emissions. The Protocol is insufficient to deal with the problem. It only deals with the period ending in 2015. The Panel urges member states to "re-engage with the problem of global warming" and develop a long-term strategy leading beyond 2015. (<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.html>).

"The challenge of reversing the degradation of ecosystems while meeting increasing demands can be met under some scenarios involving significant policy and institutional changes...Achieving this, however, will require radical changes in the way nature is treated at every level of decision-making and new ways of cooperation between government, business and civil society. The warning signs are there for all of us to see. The future now lies in our hands."

- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) Synthesis Report (<http://www.millenniumassessment.org>)

“The impacts of climate change will fall disproportionately upon developing countries and the poor persons within all countries, and thereby exacerbate inequities in health status and access to adequate food, clean water and other resources.”

- R.K. Pachauri, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (<http://www.ipcc.ch>)

“Here on the small island atoll of Kiribati, the impacts of human-induced climate change are already visible. The sea level is rising. People’s homes are vulnerable to the increasingly high tides and storm surges. Shores are eroding and the coral reefs are becoming bleached. The water supplies and soil fertility are being threatened by the intrusion of salt water. Weather patterns are less predictable, posing risks to fishing and farmers.”

- *Otin Taai Declaration, Pacific Churches’ Consultation on Climate Change, 2004* (available at http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/otin_taa_i_declaration.html).

Being impact-conscious

The World Conservation Union (<http://www.iucn.org>) defines sustainability as “improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems.” Carrying capacity means the maximum population of a given species that an area can support without reducing its ability to do so in the future. When we calculate the “footprint” a person leaves on the earth, given his/her consumption, a Canadian currently requires 4.3 hectares of land. The amount available per capita on the globe is 1.5 hectares. Currently, a US resident requires 5.1 hectares, a resident of Japan 2.5, and a resident of India 0.4. Some are borrowing carrying capacity from others.

The implication is that Northern consumption must be reduced to make room for others. Current campaigns to implement Kyoto commitments to reduce consumption of fossil fuels are an attempt to move in this direction.

Climate change: A civil society challenge

Climate change is probably the single greatest environmental threat, one that bears heavily on the poor and on women. Goal 7 does not highlight climate change nor deal with it effectively.

Up in Smoke, published by The Working Group on Climate Change and Development (UK), outlines the dramatic effect even small variations in temperature can have on rain-fed agriculture, on food security and the availability of water, health, and migration. (The report is available at http://www.iiied.org/climate_change/pubs.html).

Increasingly variable weather, escalating natural disasters, and changes in sea levels will affect tens of millions of people. The impact will be in rich countries and in poor ones like Bangladesh. The poor will have few resources to adapt to these impacts.

While changes may initially appear subtle, the eventual costs are astronomical, according to *Up in Smoke*. “Assuming that current trends were to continue, by shortly after the middle of this century — in 2065 — the economic costs of natural disasters and increasingly volatile climate would exceed total world (economic) output.”

Climate change and women

Up in Smoke points out that little attention has yet been paid to the social and gender implications of climate change, partly because of the lack of women in decision-making at all levels. Women make up 70% of the poor in the developing world, and are more vulnerable to the hazards of climate change, but have little or limited access to resources and services to assist adaptation and survival. Drought, reduction in fish stocks, climate impact on agriculture — all affect women who cultivate or find food for their families. In adapting to impacts in agriculture, for example, women who are almost 80% of the agricultural sector in Africa, must have access to education and investments to help them adapt to changing circumstances.

Growth strategies and trade dependence

The dependence of current development strategies, including the MDGs, on trade-led growth contributes to climate change. While production is up by a factor of five between 1950 and the mid-1990s, *Up in Smoke* reports that exports are up over 14 times. Production is globalized, much of it within transnational businesses, and “lives in a bubble.”

International aviation and marine fuels are not taxed in a way that would reflect the real costs of shipping and transport. Greenhouse gas emissions from international transport are also exempt from Kyoto targets. The same transport networks are heavily subsidized (rich country subsidies to fossil fuel industries were US\$73 billion per year in the late 1990s).

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) states that trade liberalization in developing and transition economies is having “serious environmental and related social impacts” in such areas as water pollution, biodiversity loss, and obstruction of policies to mitigate environmental damage.

There is an urgent need for new models of trade if climate is to be protected.

Migration

Global warming may exceed war or political upheaval as a producer of displaced people. Environmental refugees already exist. By some estimates, their number is likely to multiply to 150 million by mid-century.

Building a better response

There remain significant gaps between those working on “development” and those working on environment. Much work is needed to better understand climate change, calculate impacts, and plan. To sustain the environment and to address climate change implies deeper questions about current dependence on overall economic growth. The fight against poverty implies a much more equitable sharing of the world’s space and carrying capacity.

Models and risk assessments are likely to play a role in further work. A handy approach to relating economic, social, and environmental factors has been developed by the New Economics Foundation, in “The Risk Equation” (<http://www.neweconomics.org>).

Civil society organizations could work much more effectively toward a collective understanding of the threats posed by some kinds of economic growth, climate change and environment failures.

We need to stop and reverse further global warming. We need to design a new model for development that is “climate friendly” and equitable.

Human Rights

The Millennium Declaration urges governments to “spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development.”

In support of the Declaration, governments have agreed to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and have agreed to protect and promote the full spectrum of rights (including civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights). As well, governments have undertaken to

THE RISK EQUATION

$$\frac{\text{Hazard} \times \text{Vulnerability}}{\text{Capacity}}$$



Unsustainable development drives disaster risk by exaggerating each of these factors:

HAZARDS INCREASING:

The unsustainable use of fossil fuels is warming the planet. The resulting change in climate is increasing the frequency and severity of weather-related hazards (e.g. floods, droughts, windstorms) and expanding the range of disease vectors.



VULNERABILITY INCREASING: Hazards only become disasters when people get in the way. Unsustainable development involves poor land use (e.g. building on flood plains, unstable slopes, and coastlines) and environmental degradation (e.g. bleaching of coral reefs, destruction of coastal mangroves, deforestation of water catchments), which are increasing vulnerability by putting millions more in harm's way.



CAPACITY DECREASING: To cope with the effects of climate change, vulnerable communities need enough skills, tools and money. Yet debt repayments, inequitable trade arrangements, selective foreign investment, and the redirection of aid funds towards geo-strategic regions, mean that the poorest and most vulnerable communities lack the resources to cope. Meanwhile, the inexorable migration of millions from rural to urban areas – in the hope of finding work and avoiding disaster – is undermining traditional coping strategies. On top of this, disasters driven by global warming hit the most vulnerable hardest, further undermining their capacities to cope with future disasters.

Source:

<http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/uploads/gieebque013nyv455whn42vs19102004202736.pdf>

strengthen democracy, including genuine citizen participation, and to combat violence and discrimination against women.

However, according to some civil society groups, the MDGs lack specific human rights goals and analysis.

International human rights groups, and in particular women's rights groups, have been fairly critical of the MDGs. Some question the value of supporting them at all. More optimistic civil society groups are hopeful that the goals can be useful to human rights. They insist, however, that the MDGs can only be achieved by employing rights-based approaches to development.

The question arises: *What is a rights-based approach in practical terms?*

A rights-based approach

In human rights work, process is as important as outcome. Therefore, a rights-based approach to the MDGs would involve particular attention to monitoring progress to ensure that all steps are respectful of human rights. The achievement of goals must be compatible with human rights. Measures to achieve the goals should not neglect individuals and their rights.

In a rights-based analysis, there are both claimants of human rights and duty holders. The duty holders in development (i.e., communities, international institutions, governments, the private sector, civil society, others) are responsible to claimants if the right to development has been violated. Appropriate legal frameworks are required to ensure the accountability of the duty holders.

The role of civil and political rights must be strengthened so that citizens can have input to decision-making and access to adequate and accurate information. Not only are these rights of inherent value, they allow citizens to articulate their economic, social, and cultural needs and help keep duty holders accountable.

Finding common ground

According to Philip Alston, Special Advisor to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, what is necessary is "a judicious blend of elements from the human rights framework," poverty reduction strategies, and the MDGs. Alston says human rights groups should be encouraged to "develop critiques of the ways in which the MDGs are interpreted and applied."

One example of how a rights-based approach can be applied to the eight goals is the proposal for participatory budgeting. Citizens monitor public spending and have a direct say in the allocation of resources and setting social policy. A space for civil and political rights is created, and social and economic rights may be given priority in budget and spending. World Social Forum visitors to the Porto Alegre communities experimenting with this kind of budget making, have carried word of its potential around the world. Participatory budgeting can help ensure that poorer citizens receive a larger share of public resources.

The Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Civil and Political Rights, together with the Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and All Forms of Racial Discrimination and agreements on the Rights of the Child, provide a basis to evaluate the MDGs. These agreements can be used to help set human rights benchmarks.

MISSING IN ACTION: SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

Many human rights and development groups argue that a critical step in ensuring the compatibility of human rights and the MDGs is more explicit recognition of human rights obligations. Women's rights groups are still seeking recognition of the importance of sexual and reproductive health rights 10 years after the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. This conference recognized population and development issues were no longer about a "population bomb," but about empowering women and men to exercise their reproductive rights. Population stabilization can be achieved through choice, not coercion. The Cairo conference Program of Action aims for universal access to quality reproductive health services by 2015.

The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) put forward the concept that: "The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality."

Despite the results of these two meetings, both the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs fail to mention sexual and reproductive health rights. UN Population Fund (<http://www.unfpa.org/>) executive director, Thoraya Obaid, says that "the attainment of reproductive health and reproductive rights are fundamental for development, for fighting poverty, and for meeting the MDG targets."

Women's rights organizations and other groups demand that sexual and reproductive health rights targets and indicators be included in the MDGs: some insist that a ninth goal be added in recognition of the essential nature of these rights and their importance to the achievement of all the goals.

The absence of any mention of these rights is frustrating for some women active in civil society because it calls into question the progress in women's rights achieved in Cairo and Beijing. In some sensitive cultural and religious contexts these rights are controversial. That makes it even more important that sexual and reproductive health rights be recognized in international agreements such as the MDGs.

As well as civil society advocacy, other attempts are underway to include sexual and reproductive health rights, and necessary indicators and targets in the MDGs. "Guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights and health," is a strategic priority for the Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. The Project's Final Report recognizes the direct relationship between these rights and goals 4, 5, and 6. The report also recognizes the indirect relationship to all the other goals. It recommends increased efforts and resources to advance sexual and reproductive health rights as an important part of the strategy to meet the MDGs (<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/>).