

Global Poverty Awareness

All 191 United Nations Member states have pledged to meet the Millennium Development goals by the year 2015.

Millennium Development Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

<p>Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day.</p>	<p>The following statistical indicators are used to measure progress:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1a. Proportion of population below \$1 a day. 1b. National poverty headcount ratio. 2. Poverty gap ratio at \$1 a day (incidence x depth of poverty). 3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption.
<p>Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Prevalence of underweight in children (under five years of age) 5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption

Poverty is a complex and multi-dimensional social and economic issue. It defies simple solutions and one-dimensional approaches. It requires integrated and sustained efforts to overcome the impacts of deprivation and its effects on a human life and a society. It has a tendency to impact women and children the greatest. Poverty mars human dignity, impairs social relationships, and prevents full participation in the wider society. Poverty, in its extreme form can be an indirect but lethal cause of death.

The Millennium Development goal to eradicate poverty presents a new moment of hope and an integrated effort to address the suffering of more than 1.3 billion poor people around the world. Specific targets, measurable outcomes, and monitoring mechanisms have been put in place on a global scale for the first time in history to focus and coordinate sustained, multi-dimensional efforts across the globe.

The Holy See takes this opportunity to appeal for an integrated strategy . . . At the core of this strategy there is a principle of collective responsibility, by which the shortcomings and less favorable conditions of poor countries should be tackled and remedied by the richer countries as if they were internal problems of their own.

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations. Geneva, July 1, 2003.

UN Finds Progress On World Anti-Poverty Goals, But Much To Do.

(United Nations, New York, September 7, 2004)— Developing countries are reducing extreme poverty, extending access to primary education and alleviating disease and hunger in many regions of the world, in pursuit of targets set in the year-2000 UN Millennium Declaration, according to an annual progress report from Secretary-General Kofi Annan released today.

In eastern, southern and south-eastern Asia, there are more than 200 million fewer people living in extreme poverty (on less than \$1 a day) since 1990. Primary school enrollment rates are above 90% in Latin America and the Caribbean, most of Asia, northern Africa and the former Soviet republics, nearing the target of universal enrollment by 2015.

According to recent statistics, there is improvement in access to improved water sources. While overall hunger is receding in all regions of the world since 1990, not everywhere is it diminishing at a rate sufficient to reach the 2015 target of reduction by half. The UN warns that progress has been hardest to come by in the poorest nations: those that are landlocked or least developed, and those that are in sub-Saharan Africa. In many cases, there is lack of significant progress or even reversals.

Source: United Nations Press Release 9/7/2004

http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/mdg_pr_09_2004.pdf

Progress, Possibilities and Pitfalls

From September 8-10, 2004 more than 1,800 representatives from the 540 non-governmental organizations based in 93 countries came together at the UN headquarters in New York to discuss the status of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In effect it was a “collective voice of global citizens”. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the progress and identify the critical areas of concern in meeting the targets set by the Millennium Development goals. Several needs and challenges were identified (see box at right).

Non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) have been striving to attain the goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration long before it was drafted. But the commitment to targets and deadlines across the world provides new urgency to make greater inroads in accomplishing the mission and vision of the NGO’s.

This difficult road of the indispensable transformation of the structures of economic life . . . requires resolute commitment by individuals and peoples that are free and linked in solidarity.

Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, 1979, No. 16

Greater engagement of ordinary citizens in the millennium development campaign was a consistent call heard during the conference. A focus on the need for the youth of the world to engage was also a significant desire.

Summarized from: United Nations Press Release NGO/549/PI/1612; <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/ngo549.doc.htm>.

A Focus on Youth

Over 50 per cent of the world’s population is under the age of 25. This presents an enormous challenge and opportunity! Youth should be encouraged and allowed to take an active role in shaping and influencing the future. Their idealism, skills, talents, interests and hopes are vitally needed in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Young people are one of the world’s largest untapped resources of innovation, creativity, and technical savvy. Their desire to be in solidarity with others around the world can be seen in the way they use technology and communicate across borders. They are open to new ideas, new ways of seeing and thinking. Their engagement in the Millennium Development goals needs to be sought out and encouraged as partners in shaping the future and formulating policy.

For Greater Progress on Poverty:

- ⊙ Creating political will is needed to translate rhetoric into reality.
- ⊙ Youth participation and engagement is needed to make the 2015 target goal a reality.
- ⊙ Greater engagement by citizens is needed in order to hold governments accountable.
- ⊙ Citizen campaigns are essential for generating political will.
- ⊙ Power relationships need to change.
- ⊙ Women need to be in positions of leadership to accomplish MDG goals.
- ⊙ Economic policy must be understood to be at the very heart of the achievement of these goals - not simply humanitarian efforts.
- ⊙ NGO’s need to capitalize upon the opportunity to work with other NGO’s internationally to expand their reach.

For the first time in human history, there was a political commitment on a grand-scale to assign responsibility for achieving the targets to both developed and developing countries, and an attempt to stop, once and for all, pointing fingers at each other while poor people continued to suffer.
Salil Shetty, UNDP

For more information, refer to:

United Nations: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>
United Nations Human Development Report:
<http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/>

